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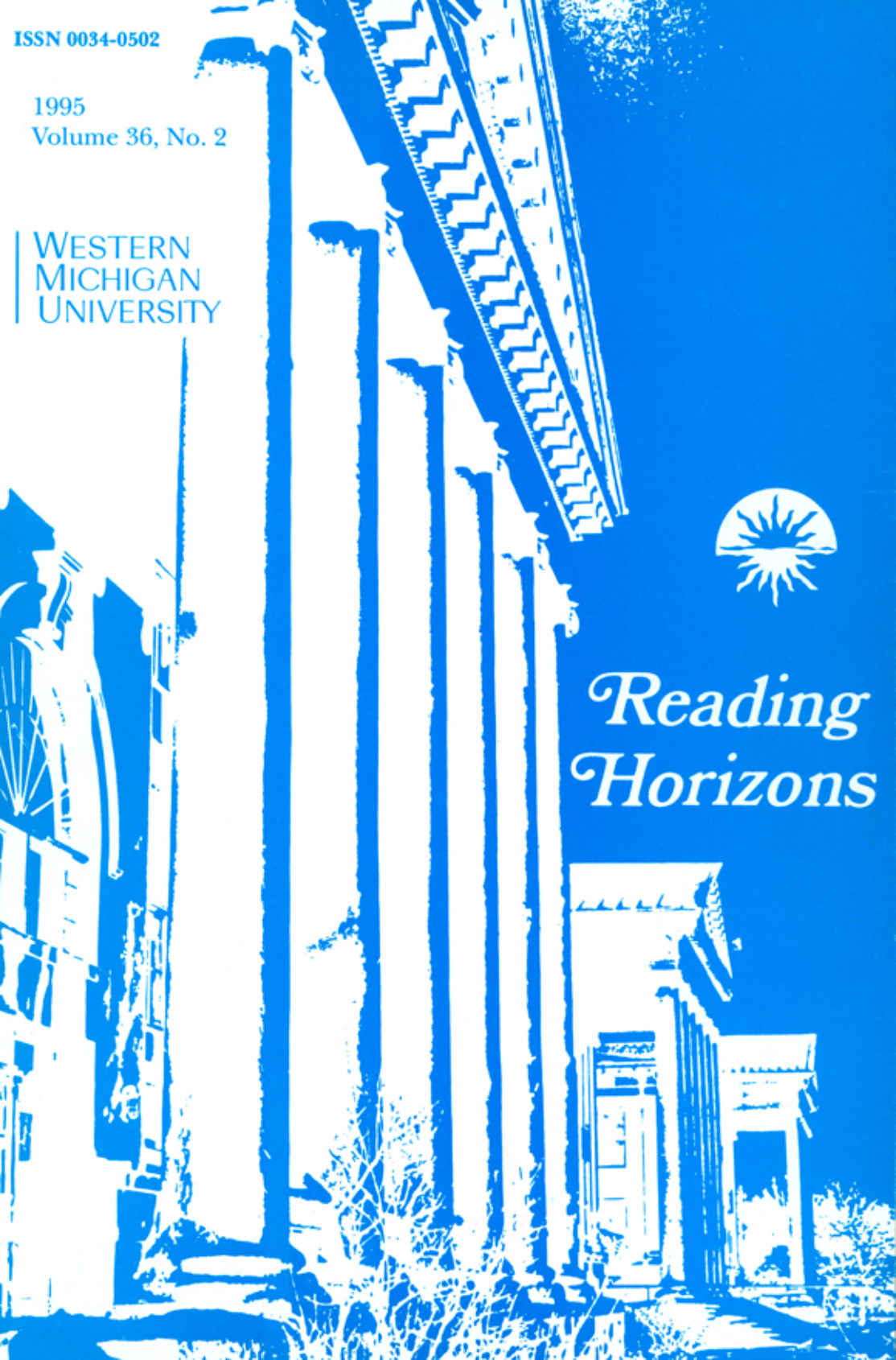
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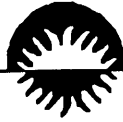
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Reading Horizons





READING HORIZONS

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**READING HORIZONS
VOLUME 36 NUMBER 2**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Round Robin Reading: Considering Alternative Instructional Practices That Make More Sense <i>Patricia R. Kelly</i>	99
Whole Language Teaching and Learning: Is It For Everyone? <i>Anne Crout Shelley</i>	116
A Portrait of a Reading Teacher <i>Barbara J. Griffin</i>	126
Teacher-Mediated Learning for Young Readers: Successful Strategies with Predictable Book Reading <i>Janice Porterfield Stewart</i>	131
A Comparison of Young Children's Writing Products in Skills-Based and Whole Language Classrooms <i>Penny A. Freppon</i> <i>Ellen McIntyre</i> <i>Karin L. Dahl</i>	150
Transactional Criticism and Aesthetic Literary Experiences: Examining Complex Responses in Light of the Teacher's Purpose <i>Joyce E. Many</i> <i>Jacqueline K. Gerla</i> <i>Donna L. Wiseman</i> <i>Linda Ellis</i>	166
Reviews	
Professional Materials <i>Mary E. Jellema</i>	187
Children's Books	190

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Round Robin Reading: Considering Alternative Instructional Practices That Make More Sense

Patricia R. Kelly

As a teacher educator in reading, I am interested in how well classroom practices which preservice students observe during fieldwork coincide with what they learn in my courses. Through discussions with my students, as well as my own classroom observations, it appears that there is not always a fit between current theory and the actual classroom practice. For example, round robin reading, the practice of one student at a time reading a portion of text aloud while other students listen, became the center of a class discussion recently.

In discussions about effective oral reading strategies, I had pointed out that professional opinion did not support the use of round robin reading. However, several of my students indicated that they frequently observed it during their visits to classrooms. My students and I decided to carry out a study about round robin reading. We designed a survey for students to use during their fieldwork observations in which they recorded occasions where round robin reading was being used, and, when possible, asked teachers about their reasons for using this practice.

I believed that this provided an opportunity for my students to engage in classroom research which would enable them to study a real situation, collect data, and draw their own conclusions, thus promoting inquiry and reflection. According to Wells (1989), "If teachers are to create classroom communities in which students learn through active, collaborative inquiry, they must have similar learning opportunities themselves" (p. vii). The implementation of a teacher researcher model during fieldwork furnished the means by which my students could construct their own learning and "be involved in active inquiry — asking questions, looking for answers, figuring out what's best for children, constantly examining the teaching/learning process" (Farnan and Fearn, 1992, p. 51).

This article examines the results of this study, and provides some effective researched-based alternatives to round robin reading.

Background

Round robin reading has been one of the most enduring practices seen in elementary classrooms. According to Millward (1977), round robin reading has been used for more than two hundred years. Over the last four decades, investigators have found that it is a popular instructional practice, even though it is pedagogically obsolete. For example, in the fifties, Spache (1955) wrote,

We see classroom teachers persist in methods which are antagonistic to the broad aims of instruction... The oral reading in turn in which listeners try to follow the leader — is probably the best type of practice in trying to read badly that has yet been devised. (p. 25-26)

Others have found round robin reading to be both firmly entrenched and of little benefit. Artley (1972) surveyed over 800 teachers. He reported that almost half of them justified round robin reading by saying it provided all children with an opportunity to practice word recognition skills. Millward (1977, p. 289) described round robin reading as "a non-objective, non-educational and non-positive approach to the process of educating students."

Round robin reading has been found to reach beyond reading instruction into the content areas as well (Hill, 1983a; Millward, 1977). Hill (1983b, 1983c) reported that 96% of the teachers he surveyed indicated that they used round robin reading as a major instructional strategy; students he surveyed substantiated the use of round robin reading in science and social studies classes. Johns (1982) advocated abolishing the practice of round robin reading in reading instruction and content area lessons:

[O]nly one student at a time is actively participating; moreover, participation of this sort is a questionable educational practice. Because many students are put 'on the spot,' they may become frustrated or upset. Favorable reading attitudes are unlikely to be fostered in such situations. (p. 202)

Additional problems with round robin reading have been described by others including that it is competitive and unfair to less capable readers, and it does not foster oral interpretation, communication, or comprehension (Artley, 1972; Briggs, 1978; Hoffman, 1981; Millward, 1977). Lynch (1988) reported that reading comprehension declined during round robin reading as compared either to listening to a fluent reading of the text or silent reading.

Durkin's (1993) description of instructional reading practices included an examination of round robin reading. Based on classroom observation research, she concluded that round robin reading consumes a considerable amount of time in primary grade classrooms and, when used in reading instruction with older students, they are usually the poorest readers. A second conclusion was that it is commonly used in social studies in middle- and upper-grade classrooms as a way to cover the content of textbooks. In her discussion, Durkin (1993) voiced several concerns about the use of round robin reading including that it was likely to foster purposeless subvocalization, and that the kind of halting, listlike reading of text often heard in round robin reading may "obscure rather than elucidate meaning" (p. 53). One of Durkin's (1993) most serious concerns about round robin reading was

the misconception it fosters about the nature of reading. That is, by assigning importance to naming words correctly and with expression, round robin reading plays down the need for making semantic connections... (p. 53).

It appears that round robin reading, as an instructional practice, has been questioned for many years. It is reasonable to assume, then, that today's teachers, most of whom were educated during this time frame, were most likely not taught to use round robin reading as an instructional practice during their teacher preparation coursework.

In conflict are the historical denunciation of round robin reading and its apparent enduring presence in classrooms. Two questions emerged that guided my students' research: 1) How popular is round robin reading as an instructional practice in classrooms of the nineties? and 2) If round robin reading is commonly used, why has it persisted?

Preservice students become classroom researchers

Seventy-two students enrolled in my reading methods courses participated in this study which took place in two large Southwestern counties that included urban, suburban, and rural schools. Although specific data regarding the types of reading programs used in each classroom were not gathered, literature based basal reading series, such as those published by Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan, and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich were used in all of the classrooms in which students observed.

Each student engaged in approximately 20 hours of field experience in elementary classrooms for eight weeks, where they observed, taught two lessons, and worked with small groups or individual children. Most of their school observation time took place during reading/language arts instruction, however, some content area lessons were also observed during this fieldwork. Students completed surveys about the use of the round robin reading in the classrooms where they did their fieldwork. On the survey, round robin reading was defined as "unrehearsed oral reading of stories or content area texts in which one student at a time is called on to read aloud whether or not they volunteered to do so." This definition was based on the most common definitions used in the literature.

The first question on the survey asked whether or not round robin reading had been observed. Overall, 68% of my students indicated that they had observed round robin reading during their fieldwork, while 32% said they had not. The grade-level breakdown of results (see Table 1) shows that round robin reading was slightly more popular in primary than intermediate classrooms, but differences between the grades were not large.

Table 1
*Elementary Classrooms in Which
 Round Robin Reading was Observed*

<u>PRIMARY</u>					
	First Grade	Second Grade	Third Grade	Totals	Percents
Total Classrooms	14	9	14	37	
Round Robin	10	6	11	27	73%
No Round Robin	4	3	3	10	27%
<u>INTERMEDIATE</u>					
	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade	Totals	Percents
Total Classrooms	11	14	10	35	
Round Robin	4	10	8	22	63%
No Round Robin	7	4	2	13	37%
<u>COMBINED</u>				Totals	Percents
Total Classrooms				72	
Round Robin				49	68%
No Round Robin				23	32%

Furthermore, of those who had observed round robin reading, many indicated that it was seen in content area classes as well as during reading instruction, but there were grade level differences (See Table 2). A higher percentage of primary teachers used round robin reading only during reading instruction. Here, as in the research reported by Durkin (1993), proportionally more intermediate teachers used round robin reading in both reading and content areas. Social studies was most often cited as the content area where round robin reading was used, followed by science.

According to student observations, a couple of new twists had been added to the practice of round robin reading. In some classrooms, teachers had popsicle sticks on which students' names were written. To assure student attention, or random

selection, teachers chose readers by drawing sticks. The other new version of round robin reading was called "popcorn." Here, students read as much or as little as they wished, then said "popcorn" and called on another student to continue reading the passage.

Table 2
*Types of Lessons in Which
Round Robin Reading was Observed*

Reading Situations	Reading Lessons Only	<u>PRIMARY</u>	Content Area Lessons Only
		Reading & Content Area Lessons	
Observations of RRR	13	13	1
<u>INTERMEDIATE</u>			
Observations of RRR	4	15	3

Regardless of what method for student selection was used, round robin reading was found to be alive and well by two-thirds of my students. The question is why? To answer, my students interviewed classroom teachers regarding their purposes for using round robin reading. Among the reasons given by the teachers interviewed in this study, the most popular were: 1) to involve students in the reading; 2) to insure that each student follows along; 3) to develop oral fluency; 4) to cover the material; and 5) to evaluate students' reading. (However, my students did not observe these teachers recording any information as their students read aloud). Other reasons less frequently cited by these teachers included: boosting the egos of the good readers, exposing ESL students to English, providing a model other than the teacher, helping build self-confidence (the teacher, who made this comment, limited each

student to reading just two sentences), and developing comprehension.

While the majority of teachers observed in this study used round robin reading, approximately one-third did not, and some indicated that they never used it because it was not a beneficial practice or that it was unfair to less able students.

One explanation about why round robin reading is employed so frequently in classrooms despite decades of evidence against the practice might be that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught, rather than the way they were taught to teach. Recently, Searls (1991) addressed this matter:

Research shows that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. Through 12 years of school and 4 years of college our students learn about teaching by observing those who teach them the content of their courses. It's little wonder that our reading methods courses don't 'take,' even when we are modeling the best behaviors and strategies for our preservice teachers. There is too much old learning to be unlearned before the new learning can be assimilated. (p. 1)

It is apparent that teacher behaviors are the result of several factors, including their experiences as students from kindergarten through college. Hoffman's (1987) interviews with teachers indicated that they had learned the practice of using round robin reading from their own experiences as students, from observing other teachers, and from their experiences working with their own students in basal instruction. Durkin (1993, p. 55) suggested that the use of round robin reading "might be the result of not knowing what else to do."

Value of a teacher researcher model

Through participating in research and being careful observers in the classroom, my students became acutely aware of what really goes on among children during round robin reading, as well as teacher behaviors. They commented on how few children were actually paying attention during round robin reading, and how embarrassing this practice was for many children. They noticed that teachers often immediately supplied unknown words and corrected children's errors, providing little time for readers to figure out new words or to self-correct miscues. They also noticed how difficult it was to listen to non-fluent readers reading a passage they had not rehearsed. They admitted that even they had had difficulty comprehending what was being read under these circumstances. Many of my students concluded in their written reflections following their fieldwork experiences that they would not use round robin reading when they became teachers because they now saw its many disadvantages. Given this, one of the greatest advantages of my students' participation in this research may be that perhaps they will not slip back into the teaching-as-they-were-taught mode. Conceivably, the teacher researcher model has interfered with years of "on the job training." Only time will tell.

In order to prevent my students from falling into Durkin's (1993) category of teachers who simply do not know what else to do, I introduce them to several alternatives so that they will have a variety of ways to immerse their own students in reading. Additionally, I go beyond mere discussions of the alternatives and engage my students actively in whatever technique I introduce, because I want them to have personal experience with each instructional technique. The remaining section describes effective alternatives to round robin reading that can be implemented in classrooms, depending on the purpose for the reading.

Alternatives to round robin reading

There are several viable alternatives to round robin reading; however, *the alternative selected should depend on the purpose* for which round robin reading was being used. Depending on the teacher's objectives, as well as the grade level and the needs of students, the following activities offer effective ways to engage students in reading.

Objective 1: To involve students in reading. If round robin reading was used for management purposes, such as to ensure that students follow along, or to involve all students in reading, there are several effective ways to motivate student interest. Teachers can select highly appealing reading materials, ones they and their students love, to help foster students' interest. There are many sources of excellent children's literature, including a monthly column entitled "Children's Books" in *The Reading Teacher* which focuses on a different genre each month and discusses a wide variety of new books, as well as old favorites. Another source is *Children's Choices* published annually by The International Reading Association. This source discusses books chosen by children as their favorites.

Objective 2: To build confidence and develop schema. Preparing beginning or struggling readers to read a new story is important in fostering interest and confidence, as well as developing schema for the text. Clay (1991b) describes activities that teachers can use before reading takes place which enable emerging readers to read a new book independently and fluently. The richness of the introduction and activities used will depend on the book and the students' previous experiences with similar texts. The teacher might do any of the following: 1) share the illustrations, inviting children's responses and linking the text with other books they have read or heard; 2)

encourage students to share their own experiences which may be related to the new text; 3) give an overview of the plot or story structure without giving away the ending; 4) develop deeper understanding of a theme or topic which might be confusing to the students; 5) use any novel words or language which appear in the book in her interactions with students in a deliberate way so that the words/language are modeled for students before they are encountered in print (Clay, 1991b). These book introduction activities draw on students' prior knowledge and supply new information in order to prepare students for reading an unfamiliar story, thus building schemata, confidence, and the ability to make meaningful predictions about unknown words.

Objective 3: To foster comprehension. In addition to building schemata as noted above, providing reading materials at appropriate reading levels for each child is crucial if a teacher's objective is to foster comprehension. It is difficult for students to remain interested in or to understand materials that are too difficult for them to read. Selecting stories at the appropriate reading level, with some, but not too many, unfamiliar words, concepts, and language structures, provides students with enough familiar and predictable text to draw upon as they read (Clay, 1991a). Many "little books," such as those published by the Wright Group, Rigby, and others, are now available for beginning readers, while trade books at varying levels are available for primary and intermediate readers. Introducing these books using ideas from the previous section will enhance students' abilities to engage with the literature.

Content area learning also requires that teachers prepare students for the reading and provide appropriate materials because there are so many new concepts and text structures in content materials. Teachers can prepare students for content reading by engaging them in prereading activities to develop

background knowledge, including the ideas mentioned above, as well as brainstorming activities such as K-W-L (Ogle, 1986). K-W-L is an activity in which teachers or students record what students know about a topic, as well as what students want to know, prior to students' reading of texts. This builds schemata and helps students set a purpose for reading. Following the reading, students or teacher record what they learned.

Because the materials used in content areas greatly affect comprehension, teachers need to supply books at various reading levels, focusing on the specific topics or themes being examined, so that all students can find books they are able to easily read. Children can then share what they have learned with others in the class through discussions or brainstorming activities which are recorded on charts. In this way each child contributes at his or her own level and feels successful doing so.

The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (Stauffer, 1975) is an instructional method that is far more likely than round robin reading to promote comprehension. DR-TA is a method of guiding students' reading by having them first predict what each page or two is about, then read to verify their predictions, and finally prove their interpretations of what the author has said.

Comprehension is also fostered through listening to a fluent reading of the text. One way to accomplish this is to have the teacher read materials to the class or tape record the readings for students' listening. Tape recordings are especially effective for use with beginning and struggling intermediate age readers because they can have several opportunities to listen to and read along with the text.

Objective 4: To assess reading. If the objective for oral reading was assessment, this can be done through individual

sessions with each child during which the teacher takes a running record (Clay, 1993a) or writes anecdotal notes about miscues, self-corrections, fluency, and the like as the child reads aloud. In this way, less able readers are not embarrassed or ridiculed by more proficient readers in the class, and the teacher has a written record about the child's reading behaviors. This one-on-one time also gives the teacher an opportunity to ask children about strategies they used when reading. For example, a teacher might ask the child how they figured out certain words. This helps the teacher gain insights about strategies children are using to problem solve unknown words. If teachers feel they do not have enough time for individual sessions with each student, they may have students read into a tape recorder for later analysis.

Objective 5: To develop fluent reading. Developing fluent reading has been the goal of many teachers who use round robin reading. Various experts have examined and defined reading fluency. Rasinski (1989) used the term "the smooth and natural oral production of written text" when discussing reading fluency (p. 690). DeFord (1991) characterized fluent reading in terms of reading at a "smooth pace, using linguistically correct phrases" while Zutell and Rasinski (1991, p. 212) suggested that there are three ingredients in fluent oral reading:

(a) the reading appears fairly effortless or automatic, (b) readers group or "chunk" words into meaningful phrases and clauses, and (c) readers use pitch, stress, and intonation appropriately to convey the meanings and feelings they believe the author intended. (p. 212)

Additionally, Nathan and Stanovich (1991, p. 176) described the role of fluency in comprehension: "The ability to recognize words rapidly and accurately is emphasized in

current reading theory because it is the key to good reading comprehension."

Several principles can guide a teacher's approach to developing fluent reading. Among these principles are providing frequent opportunities for rereading familiar passages, modeling fluent reading, providing direct instruction and feedback, demonstrating phrasing, furnishing easy materials that lend themselves to fluent reading, and allowing children to both read what they have composed and to have choices about what they read (Clay, 1993b; Rasinski, 1989). The following activities encompass many of the aforementioned principles.

One of the most effective ways to develop fluent oral reading is through the rereading of easy, familiar materials, particularly texts with rhythm-like songs and repetitive patterns (Clay, 1993b). Many books currently being published for use with emergent readers are excellent sources of repetitive, easy texts. Older struggling readers also benefit by rereading easy materials. An enjoyable approach here, which eliminates the embarrassment of reading "baby" books, is having students select easy books and practice reading them aloud in preparation for reading to younger students. Such peer reading can help to develop fluent reading, along with enthusiasm and confidence.

A second effective way to engage students actively and develop fluent reading is through Readers' Theater. In using Readers' Theater, teachers supply students with a story, poem, or passage that has been scripted with several different parts for students to read as if they were performing a play. These parts are not memorized, but read by individuals assigned to their respective parts. It is easy to divide a whole classroom into small groups, using different scripts for each group. The

teacher rotates around to the groups, listening to their rehearsals and offering help as needed. After several opportunities to rehearse (this may take only one or several days), each group performs its script for the rest of the class, or for other classes in the school. I have found that students enjoy being audio- or video-taped while they are reading so that they can watch or listen to themselves afterwards.

Another fluency building activity, which I have found particularly enjoyable for students in grades 2-4, is paired repeated reading (Koskinen and Blum, 1987). In this activity, pairs of students select different 50-75 word passages which they first read silently, and then read to their partners three times consecutively. After the third reading, the partners switch roles, and the listener becomes the reader, and the reader the listener. Readers then evaluate how well they think they did, and listeners can also give feedback about their partner's reading.

Other formats which provide opportunities for repeated readings have also been found to be effective in developing fluency. Choral reading helps to develop fluent reading because of the support given during reading. There is little pressure on individual readers since several readers are participating at the same time. Echo reading, in which the teacher reads one or more sentences and the group or an individual repeats what has been read, is also supportive and valuable in developing fluent reading. With this technique students hear the correct words and intonation before they attempt reading. Both fluent reading and confidence building result from this practice (May, 1994).

Final note

It is apparent that although round robin reading is still being used in classrooms today, it need not be. There are better

ways to manage, involve, or assess students, and to foster fluent oral reading and comprehension. Perhaps through teacher education in which classroom research and reflection are components, the second half of the 1990s will bring about the unlearning of antiquated practices such as round robin reading, and increase the use of more effective alternatives.

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Whole Language Teaching and Learning: Is It For Everyone?

Anne Crout Shelley

Beginning the formal study of music theory well into mid-life has enabled me to focus with new clarity on a gnawing concern. This concern, which has pursued me as I have walked with my undergraduate majors into the era of whole language, has two dimensions — both young children and novice teachers. The first concern is those particular young children, who when immersed in a print rich environment, fail to make the inductive leaps which allow them to become emergent readers (O'Donnell and Wood, 1992). My second concern is the early childhood and elementary preservice teachers who are so indoctrinated in the practice of whole language that they have few alternatives when this approach fails to provide success for every child.

You might wonder how my personal experience with music theory has any bearing on my concerns about whole language. Let me elaborate. I grew up in a home where music was an integral part of life. One of my most vivid memories of large family reunions is gathering around the piano for an hour or more of hymn singing. As a child and adolescent, I had both keyboard and vocal instruction. As an adult, I have been a part of very fine choirs — most recently a choir so

accomplished that we performed Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* and Bach's *Magnificat*.

I am not a stupid woman — but, after all these years of being immersed in music and reading notes and other musical markings with some proficiency, I still lacked any understanding of the relationship between the key in which a piece is written and the progression of notes and chords. At no point did I make the inductive leaps to allow me to understand the mathematical-spatial dimensions of music — a deficiency which I found extraordinarily frustrating. Finally, a sabbatical from university teaching responsibilities allowed me to enroll in an introductory level music theory course. The material was difficult, but given high motivation, weeks of direct instruction, and intense practice and review, I began to see some order in the chaos.

Young children and whole language

What I suspect is that my experiences with music are not too different from those of many young children who, despite immersion in print (O'Donnell and Wood, 1992), shared reading experiences (Holdaway, 1979), and the use of invented spelling (Gentry, 1982), fail to make sense, inductively of the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cuing systems of our language. A specific child comes to mind — a child I will call Ryan.

Ryan, an only child, comes from an upper middle-class, stable home. He began a part-time preschool program when he was three years old. His parents provided a nurturing environment rich with educational experiences. As a preschooler, Ryan was read to with great regularity by his parents and members of his extended family. He began kindergarten with the kind of background experiences applauded by teachers of young children.

Ryan's kindergarten teacher was committed to whole language. Her classroom was the epitome of a literacy rich environment. Children read big books together, explored books of choice independently, engaged in authentic writing activities, and were encouraged to use invented spelling. Parents were asked to read to their children every day. As the year progressed and his peers began to make sense of print, Ryan, a model child, made little progress in learning to read and write though he quickly picked up mathematical concepts. He was neither able to remember whole words nor to grasp the rudiments of the sound-symbol connections of the language. Despite persistent patience and encouragement from his teacher, class work papers were frequently covered with scribbles. He disrupted shared reading experiences by clowning and became increasingly aggressive. Though his mother was a regular volunteer in the classroom, by the end of the year Ryan was the most notorious behavior problem in the class.

The guidance counselor and Ryan's teacher, working closely with his parents and child psychologist, sought to understand the deterioration in Ryan's behavior. Eventually they determined that when Ryan realized that he could not be completely successful at a task, he refused to try and in his frustration, he engaged in acting-out behavior; the risk-taking required in a whole language classroom, especially guessing the meaning of unknown words from context and using invented spelling, proved too threatening for Ryan (O'Donnell and Wood, 1992). Likewise, the sound-spelling patterns of the language, easily assimilated by many children, remained an unintelligible jumble for Ryan. Further evaluation showed Ryan to be a very bright child with unusual artistic gifts. Given these discoveries, Ryan's first grade teacher was chosen with extreme care.

This teacher is highly structured. She has an eclectic reading program supplementing basal readers with heavy doses of children's literature (Bastolla, 1994; Cotheren, 1992; Erpelding, 1990; Griffith, Klesius, and Kromrey, 1992, Midvidy, 1990). Time is provided in every school day for self-selecting reading. New vocabulary is presented systematically with generous opportunities for children to practice these words both in context and in isolation (Adams, 1990). Children are expected to read a story from their basal reader with a caregiver every evening. Parents are also encouraged to read to their children. The teacher has a list of words children are expected to learn to spell correctly over the course of the year, and this list is made available to parents; frequently used words are displayed on charts around the room (Routman, 1993). Invented spelling is encouraged when children are using new words in writing but support is available for children who are less willing risk takers.

Ryan is thriving in this environment. He works hard at reading and writing and as he succeeds, his self-esteem and his behavior are improving. Certainly the structure, the direct teaching of both sound-symbol relationships and vocabulary, ample review and practice, and the scaffolding provided in terms of spelling when children are asked to write are contributing to Ryan's success at developing literacy.

I know Ryan is not alone. There are other children who fail inductively to discern the cuing systems of our language (Adams, 1990; Ehri and Wilce, 1985; Stahl, 1992). As friends "catch on," their frustration builds as it did in Ryan's situation. Many children express their frustration in "acting-out" behavior; others withdraw and reconcile themselves to failure. Immersion in print needs to be tempered with a good measure of direct instruction (Chaney, 1990; Smith, Reyna,

and Brainerd, 1993; Spiegel, 1992; Routman, 1992). Children need to be taught the grapho-phonetic, the syntactic, and the semantic cuing systems of the language thus having at their disposal alternative ways of recognizing unknown words. Of course, these are appropriately taught in the context of authentic reading and writing with the overarching premise being that reading and writing should make sense.

Novice teachers and whole language

I can already envision the rising hackles of many in the whole language camp at even suggesting the "p" word (Ehri and Wilce, 1985; Freppon and Dahl, 1991; Stahl, McKenna, and Pagnucco, 1993). However, if you observe effective whole-language teachers working with real children, you would see them teaching the grapho-phonetic, the syntactic, and the semantic cuing systems of the language. Good primary grade teachers, who buy whole language for all the right reasons (connections with oral language, good children's literature, authentic purposes for reading and writing, high interest, positive attitudes), intuitively weave direct instruction into literacy development. Indeed most scholars who promote whole language as an approach assume that children will be introduced to these cuing systems as the opportunity arises in the classroom (O'Donnell and Wood, 1992). This requires, of course, that early childhood/elementary teachers, themselves, understand the cuing systems of the language. This brings me to the second dimension of my second concern.

Having been a teacher educator with expertise in reading for almost twenty-five years now, I have come through psycholinguistics and the construction of meaning to whole language. My undergraduate students — on many different fronts — are persuaded that whole language, is THE way to teach literacy. Given the current emphasis on children's

literature, on connecting the new and the known, on reading and writing for authentic purposes, on cooperative learning, and on integrating the learning environment, preservice teachers must know whole language. However, their education remains stunted if a limited conception of whole language is their only alternative for reading instruction. Where can these teachers turn when a child like Ryan enters their classroom? How can they structure a classroom so that a child like Ryan won't have such a devastating experience in the primary grades.

For me, this problem requires a hard look at preservice teacher education programs. Given the current emphasis on children's literature, most preservice teachers have a rich knowledge of children's books. In planning a lesson, choosing the book is the easy part; the hard part is what to do with the book once it has been read, reread, discussed, and even dramatized. My students falter when expected to pull from the book examples of grapho-phonetic relationships, patterns of word structure, examples of the grammatical structure of the language, examples of defining unknown words from context, examples of making inferences or identifying themes.

A major concern for many of our undergraduates is that they have little understanding of the cuing systems of the language. Knowledge of the relationship of sounds and symbols, the relationship of parts of speech to the structure of a sentence, and the relationship of supporting details to main idea is as foreign to many undergraduates as the relationship of key signatures and chord progressions has been to me. Novice teachers, deficient in understanding the cuing systems of the language are not prepared to help young children, much less older ones, unravel the mysteries of language. Many have expressed these very real fears to me — fears

tinged with frustration that their education has been inadequate.

My contention is that in order to teach young children effectively, especially young children like Ryan, novice teachers need greater depth in several related areas. First, they need intensive instruction in the cuing systems of their language so that they will be able to articulate and explain clearly to young children those dimensions of the language for which the child is developmentally ready. When a child is reading the pattern book about the old woman who swallowed a fly (Bonne, 1985) but persists in reading that she swallowed a bug, the child needs instruction in the significance of initial consonant clusters. A follow-up lesson should be based on a book which accentuates this same *fl*-consonant cluster. As they read independently, children could be asked to write in their notebooks other words they encounter which contain this consonant cluster (Routman, 1992). If children in the classroom persist in saying and writing "he done," even after the teacher has modeled "he did" repeatedly, the teacher first needs to understand irregular verbs and past participles and the correct use of *do*, *did*, *done*. Then the teacher needs to comment to students that there is another way to say the same thing (he did) and that in a school setting, it is better to say "he did."

In higher grades, the teacher may explain the difference in the past tense and past participles. Meanwhile, the teacher should continue to model the correct use of this verb though never embarrassing a student for using the vernacular form. When a child fails to recognize the word *unhappy*, the teacher needs to talk about the prefix *un-* in relation to not only the word *happy* but in relation to words like *untied* and *unclear*. When a child reading *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) fails to understand that Max's mother really loves him,

the teacher needs to model making this appropriate inference and then to talk about other examples of inferences.

Novice teachers, in order to help children who are struggling, need to be able to analyze the reading process. What are the elements of word recognition? What are the elements of comprehension? Simply knowing that children don't understand what they are reading doesn't enable the teacher to prepare an appropriate lesson to address the deficiency. Is a lack of background knowledge interfering with the child's ability to understand the story? Is a lack of automaticity in word recognition interfering with comprehension (Adams, 1990)? Is some particular dimension of comprehension interfering with a child's ability to understand the story, e.g., inferences, main ideas? What specific lesson can a teacher design to enable the child to meet with more success?

Conclusion

A beginning teacher, including one totally committed to whole language, needs to weave into the structure of the classroom, eclectic approaches to beginning instruction in reading and writing. It is well and good to begin each day with a big book, to give students ample opportunities to interact with books independently, to encourage the use of invented spelling in authentic kinds of writing. However, the teacher should present the sound symbol (phonological-orthographic [Adams, 1990]) relationships as one tool for approaching unknown words. Considering syntax, the teacher should discuss inflectional endings on words and explain how these endings clarify communication. The teacher should talk about compound words, contractions, prefixes and suffixes. In the realm of semantics, children should be taught to use context as one source of information in identifying unknown words and to practice new words both in isolation and in context. The teacher should model making predictions,

making inferences, and identifying main ideas and give children practice with specific examples from real literature. The teacher should point out how the cuing systems of the language interact and reinforce one another. Always the teacher should emphasize that reading and writing should make sense. Teacher and children should be excited about print.

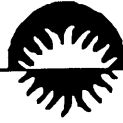
Teacher education programs need to be intentional about adequately preparing preservice teachers to go beyond the selection of good children's books. Novice teachers should know how to enable children to make the connection between oral and written language. Novice teachers should know how to build the complex scaffolding necessary for children to break the code through the use of the graphophonic, the syntactic, and the semantic cuing systems of the language. Teacher education programs need to emphasize that not all children learn in the same way. Teacher education programs need to emphasize the importance of early and continuing experiences of success in building children's self-esteem and children's positive attitudes about literacy and about schooling. Teacher education programs are responsible to their preservice teachers and to the children whose lives these preservice teachers will one day touch.

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A Portrait of a Reading Teacher

Barbara J. Griffin

Teacher knowledge is dynamic and experiential. It is both constructed and reconstructed daily as teachers live out their lives in and out of school (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991). Therefore, listening to teachers' stories can be a valuable avenue to gaining insights into the methods other teachers use to teach children to read. My goal is to share one teacher's story in such a way that readers will reflect on their own stories and examine their practices of reading instruction, their knowledge and beliefs, and how all these elements of teaching are interrelated. It is up to readers to take from this qualitative research those parts which fit their individual professional development needs.

Following Seidman's (1991) research method that uses three, ninety-minute in-depth interviews, my purpose was to discover: 1) the events that had led to the teacher's present teaching position (both personal and professional); 2) the description of a typical day's reading instruction; and 3) the teacher's reconstruction of and reflection on the meaning of teaching reading.

The following profile is constructed from four and one-half hours of audio-taped interviews and over 60 pages of verbatim transcript. This portrait of a reading teacher is

verbally painted by a kindergarten teacher who has taught for twenty years.

A reading teacher's story

I've learned over the long run that kids learn to read because people that they love and care about read to them. It's that emotional connection. When you have an emotional connection you want to emulate somebody ... [it's] the same thing about reading. Put a kid in your lap and you read to them and it becomes important to them. That reading, that love of reading, or being able to take the words and do different things with them, and translate them into something. Kids are fascinated with that. [The purpose is] to convey enthusiasm for reading. I like to read. And I like to teach the kids that, "You can do this with words. They're there to be used." That's what I think reading is about — getting them to like it and exposing them to it.

Everything that I do in teaching reading has to do with things that I have picked up from other teachers, workshops, or the kids. Try new things; change it for something else that works with the children. Trends change over the years but still those early childhood principles, of course, are true: see, say, do. You've got to give them all the cues that you can possibly give so they can pick that up: tactile, auditory, and visual experience. You have to teach a base for all those things. So it still is the basic tenets you're teaching. Over the years I've picked up different things: audio-visual, phonics, ways to teach sounds with signs. I incorporate the best parts of everything I've done. You pick the best of what works and what really works with your children. And that varies from year to year too. But over the years I've collected a bunch of tricks to put up my sleeve. I pull out what's needed. You wouldn't even plan to use a lot of these ideas, they come out as needed. That's the essence of teaching after many years.

The combination I've found is that the best reading programs offer a combination; an integration approach to teaching reading. All day long with the kids we use the term *reading*. "This is sustained silent reading and this is shared reading." We call the period reading/writing, because we are emphasizing that whatever you have written can be read back, whatever you say can be written, that whole cycle. And we use those terms. The kids come to school with preconceived notions and you have to do what you can to help them understand that the same term can mean different things. Everything is reading. It's when you see something and you say something to go with it. The concept of reading is much more global than print on the page.

Everything we do teaches some concept of reading. It used to be language. That's the way I was trained. Language they said should be the base for your whole program. Well as I've gotten to know kids better and their learning styles, I know that you're going to have a better chance of learning language if you see it, and do it, and hear it. Well, it just so happens, that's "reading." So in the end, everything we do is language based and we write as much as we can. What we're providing for is that language and that gets back to the need for reading. It has to come from having need. We've got to have a need. You have to establish this with these kids. These kids don't need to read. They hear it on T.V. or someone will tell them. They don't have to think for themselves. To me if we're going to teach reading we have to show them that there's a need to be able to read.

I've adapted over the years and that's why even though in the beginning I was trained in early childhood techniques — and that turns out to be developmentally appropriate activities — and those turn out to be whole language, and all those

kinds of things. So I think that I'm making a profession out of adapting to the needs of kids and so the reason I teach reading the way I do is because of the observations that I've made of children over the years. Teaching kids to read has everything to do with development. Bridging that gap for them. Facilitating is what you're doing and the kids do it themselves. Most of it's out of my control. It has a lot to do with previous knowledge, with what they're getting at home, what their experiences are, et cetera. And it's an unfolding process. It's an upward spiral. Everything starts to build and it becomes a structure. That's how kids build knowledge. But it's just building on what you have. Being able to store stuff that you can use later.

The first thing that you do [with children], is an assessment. I'm not talking a paper and pencil assessment. I mean you get to know the child, literally. And you get to understand what all their little parts are about: their motor skills, their language development, their home life, their social skills, where they fit into the class. All those kinds of things. And then you look at them. Are they risk takers? Are they comfortable? And then you set the classroom up to make them comfortable. You let them be all that they can be in the classroom. Then you start providing the things that you know are important: the inundation with the written word, then going into spoken words and making that connection for them, or modeling that connection. And then modeling the written language, explaining every little thing as you're doing it: capital letters, periods, all those kinds of things. So I think first, you want to get to know the child, then you take it from where they are, and in that context, what's missing to help them build. What rungs of the ladder are missing in this child's background and how can we build in those rungs to provide a good foundation? You get to know children well enough to know which little piece is missing so you can help

them gain that and then get to the next step. Assessing the kids starting from a level of independence and success and moving to a level of instruction.

Reading can be the key to life. It can be the money for the bank account of life. It can be so many things; it's such a powerful tool. The more you can read, the more you do read, the more you open yourself up. Reading forces you to conjure up images and that's where creativity comes from. You teach kids that pictures can come from my words, or book words, or from their own words and that's a powerful thing. Reading and writing are some things you can always do for yourself. That's what I try to convey to the kids too. "Once you get these words, you can open up any of these books."

So my philosophy is basically that the children can be responsible for themselves. They have the right to be treated well and my job is to provide an environment that will nurture their personality and their abilities and their self-esteem. It should be clear to people when they walk in [to my class] that this is a place where we care about kids, and adults are welcome but they're not the focus.

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Teacher-Mediated Learning for Young Readers: Successful Strategies with Predictable Book Reading

Janice Porterfield Stewart

Young children's emergent literacy development can be enhanced by storybook reading, discussing the books, paying attention to the print and illustrations, and by involving parents (Heath, 1983; Snow and Ninio, 1986; Mason, Peterman, Dunning, and Stewart, 1992; Keer and Mason, 1993). Often children from high risk backgrounds have limited experiences handling books, being read to, asking questions and attending to visual stimuli found in books. Consequently, in the beginning of kindergarten many children are not reading and some do not know the letters of the alphabet. However, predictable books provide interactions with prints and pictures which can be a powerful means for enhancing the development of literacy concepts. Big books and predictable storylines allow the children to see the print and encourages them to participate in reading (Strickland, 1990).

The basic premise of a successful early literacy instructional model was to identify excellent instructional practices in which teachers mediate the instruction with a theoretical understanding of young children's development and learning. The Early Literacy Project was developed with the theoretical understanding that there is an optimal zone for

learning, a zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the area between a children's actual development and the potential development (Vygotsky, 1978). It is within this area where adults (parents and teachers) and more capable peers can collaborate and assist the child in solving problems and engaging in otherwise too difficult tasks. In the area of emergent literacy, cognitive constructs are frequently acquired by children prior to formal instruction, as a result of their interactions with supportive adults (parents or early childhood teachers) and more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978; Heath, 1983; Snow and Ninio, 1986; Stewart, 1986, Teale, 1986; Wells, 1986; Martinez and Teale, 1988; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Stewart and Mason, 1989; Stewart, 1993).

The assistance provided by the adults and more knowledgeable peers is often referred to as scaffolding. When scaffolding is provided to learners, they can construct meaning and complete tasks too difficult to accomplish alone. When children are learning to read and becoming independent readers, scaffolding becomes an invaluable teaching strategy. Evidence of effective scaffolding and adult support has been amply documented (Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Keer and Mason, 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). The Early Literacy Project was designed to assist teachers who worked with high risk children ages 4-6 years old (Stewart, Mason and Benjamin, 1990). Components in the project included 1) morning message reading and structural analysis; 2) predictable book reading; 3) tradebook reading; 4) parental involvement; and 5) teacher education.

The most salient feature of the project was modeling of teaching strategies by the researcher. Underlying each component in the project was the idea of working with the children at their individual learning levels. This meant discussing with teachers the concept of scaffolding or the zone of

proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), and how powerful mediated instruction is for both the teacher and the child.

With respect to predictable book reading, portions of the instructional strategies were adapted from Au's Experience-Text-Relationship (ETR) method (1979) with graduated mediation throughout the kindergarten school year. This article presents an example of an effective lesson using the predictable book reading component.

Predictable book reading

Predictable book reading was selected as one of the components in the Early Literacy Project because it was a natural extension from picture book reading and had proven successful in several research studies (McCormick and Mason, 1989a; Mason, Keer, Sinha, and McCormick, 1990; Stewart and Mason, 1989). Predictable book reading had displayed its effectiveness with low-income children, both in terms of fostering phonological awareness and later reading (McCormick and Mason, 1989a, 1989b), and as a means of encouraging peer reading, oral retelling, and book orientation concept development (Stewart, 1993).

Method

Subjects. Data on the predictable book reading sessions for this study were collected through observations, videotapes, teacher journals and pre-post testing of the kindergarten children. Four teachers volunteered to work in the project and were matched with four teachers who continued to use their regular curriculum. The teachers were involved in the project for two years and were all experienced teachers. Of the two hundred children in the study, seventy percent were identified by the teachers to be moderate to high risk. Results from analyses of test results and teacher reporting indicated that the children in the project classes made

substantial gains with respect to early literacy measures such as book orientation, phonological awareness, and early reading behaviors (Stewart, Mason, and Benjamin, 1990).

Materials. In this study the teachers were given big books with corresponding little books (McCormick and Mason, 1989b) that had very simple pictures and large print across the bottom of each page. The story lines were predictable, often matching the pictures, sometimes with funny or surprise endings. The books had been duplicated on a ditto machine so that all children could have individual copies. Ten different books were provided, each of which consisted of six pages with no more than six words per page, and featured a story containing some type of predictability with respect to the story line or ending.

Procedure. The predictable books were usually presented to groups of six to eight children of mixed ability. The order of presentation for the little books was a teacher decision but most teachers selected books that contained familiar concepts to be read first. Additional criteria for book selection were books that coincided with seasonal themes and holidays. In addition, children's requests were considered. The books had been prepared because they ensured immediate success for beginning readers, and served as the vehicle for teachers to mediate instruction by scaffolding (Appendix A). At the beginning of the project, the researcher showed the teachers examples of the little books, and modeled the instructional procedure with groups of six to eight children in the classrooms of the project teachers.

A key feature in the ETR method is to use questions to guide children's understanding. During the experience phase the teacher determines the children's level of understanding of the concept. It is at this point that gaps and misconceptions

are discussed. This may be in the form of the teacher asking questions and providing cues or from other students providing their personal knowledge. During the ETR text phase the students usually read the text silently. However, since the study included young children who did not read and were not early readers they were shown how to read the title and the text by listening and watching as the teacher called attention to various parts of the text. In the relationship phase the teacher helped the children make connections with their background knowledge and the text information.

In order to ensure mediation or scaffolding during the reading sessions the following structure was used: 1) activation of prior knowledge; 2) discussion of what the children already understood about the topic; 3) reading the book aloud to the group; 4) rereading as children followed the print in their own books; 5) group book reading and rereading; 6) structural analysis, where each child took turns reading words or sections of the books, answered questions about the graphics and word construction and commented on other children's responses; and 7) discussion of the story with the teacher. The implementation of this structure is not linear but recursive in that the teacher was expected to ask questions and provide clues to increase the children's understanding either at the global semantic level or at the micro word structure level.

During activation of background knowledge, the teacher introduced the concept or topic of the book orally before holding up the big book or passing out the corresponding little books. During the discussion, the teacher and children discussed what they knew about the topic. The teacher listened carefully to each child's response and provided the essential background knowledge needed to enrich the reading experience. The cover of the big book was shown and questions

related to the topic, picture, and title were asked and answered. When the teacher read the book aloud to the children, she was modeling the behavior, the language and phonemic awareness. In the beginning of the kindergarten year the teacher attended to book orientation concepts such as top and bottom of the page, tracking print from left to right and discussion of the pictures. As the children's knowledge of letters and sounds developed (as a result of the enriched classroom environment, and teacher and peer mediated experiences), the teacher began to focus on the children's phonemic awareness.

Additionally, we felt it was important for the teacher to read the book first in order to allow the children to hear the story language, to enjoy the story without interruptions and to feel comfortable when they were asked to read the book. When children first start using the predictable little books they are not actually reading the words, but they remember what the teacher read, and they read and predict from the pictures. The structural analysis was intertwined throughout the reading. The teacher mediated her questions concerning letters, sounds and words to help children figure out the text. During a session for one child the teacher might focus on questions concerning the picture and for another more mature reader she might ask about the structure of a word. Using structural analysis as a part of the mediated instruction was considered important because calling children's attention to the orthographic features of words helps them move from invented to morphemic spelling (Ehri, 1989). While the children attempted to read the book, the teacher provided assistance at each child's level of phonemic understanding. During this time the teacher asked questions about the print and pictures and provided cues and prompts that assisted the children in decoding words. During the discussions about the book, the children were encouraged to relate what they read to

other experiences they may have had. This was similar to the relationship phase in the ETR method and encouraged children to verbalize their understanding of the text with respect to their own experiences. The lesson culminated with volunteers in the group reading the entire book to the groups with or without peer and teacher assistance.

After the book had been read in the small group session, it was placed in the library center and the children were encouraged to read it individually or with peers during play, center time, or quiet time. Often, children used the books that they had read to find words during their process writing time. This is when children create stories, draw, or label using invented spelling (Stewart, Mason, and Benjamin, 1990).

Little books were presented at the rate of one new one per week, but those read previously were often reviewed. Once a book had been completed, it was duplicated and individual copies were sent home to be read with parents; other copies remained in the class library so that they could be reread individually or with peers. The individual book was sent home and each child was required to read it to someone at home or in the community. Children are instructed to have the person that they read the book to sign it before they returned it to the teacher. This encouraged parent involvement and provided an opportunity for the children to feel successful. Parents reported to the teachers that the children were excited when they brought home a book to read to them and often the children read it to everybody who would listen. When the children returned the signed book, they were allowed to color it and keep it in their personal libraries.

Setting. The session presented in this article took place in April of the kindergarten year and portrays a group of eight African American kindergarten children ranging from 5 years

one month to 5 years eight months as they engage in a predictable book reading session. Mrs. Riley had been using the predictable books with the children for seven months. The indepth examination of one of Mrs. Riley's lessons reveals how she learned how to listen to her children and adjust her questioning to meet each child's developing knowledge about a particular concept. It was 10:00 a.m. and Mrs. Riley's kindergarten children had just finished reading the morning message. As the children moved quickly to their centers, some trying not to run, but nevertheless running, there was an enjoyable chatter of voices. Even a casual observer could sense that these kindergarten children knew what they were about, whether at free play, learning centers, storybook time, writing or reading. It was April of the kindergarten school year and Mrs. Riley had initiated several teaching strategies from the Mediated Early Literacy Project beginning in October.

Analysis

A videotape of the predictable book session was transcribed and analyzed. This was supplemented by nonverbal information taken from the videotape and the observation. Teacher interviews and journal comments added to the interpretation of the session. This session was considered to be representative of Mrs. Riley's instructional approach by both the researcher/observer and by Mrs. Riley.

The session took 32 minutes and comprised 255 statements and questions, 176 teacher made statements/questions and 79 made by the students (see Table 1). The coding of the statements were defined, in the case of the teacher as: 1) elaboration on children's response by providing more information; 2) reading text; 3) presenting topic information; 4) prior knowledge; 5) restatement of information in children's responses; 6) acknowledgment of children's responses (e.g., *o.k.*, *good*); and 7) providing a structure or management for the

lesson (e.g., *We are going to take turns reading*). The teachers' questions were coded as 1) prior knowledge; 2) asking for information by providing clues; and 3) requesting text related information. The students' responses were coded as 1) relating to prior knowledge; 2) extension of information provided by the teacher; 3) text information (e.g., visual discrimination, text, phonemic awareness); 4) reading text or attempting to read; and 5) bidding for a chance to respond. The reliability in coding teacher and student statements according to this system was 92% based on the number of agreements over total number of statements with two unbiased coders.

Table 1
*Teacher and Student
Statements and Questions During Reading*

Teacher statements n = 108	
Elaboration	5.1% (13)
Reading	6.7% (17)
Topic information	3.5% (9)
Prior knowledge	.4% (1)
Restatement	5.1% (13)
Acknowledgment	9.1% (19)
Structure	12.6% (32)
Teacher questions n = 68	
Prior knowledge	5.1% (13)
Clues	3.9% (10)
Text related	16.9% (43)
Student statements n = 79	
Prior knowledge	9.7% (25)
Extension	1.5% (4)
Text information	10.6% (27)
Read	1.2% (3)
Bidding	1.2% (3)

Table 1 — The percentages reflect modeling, mediation and reading questions and statements for the teacher and students from a lesson consisting of 255 verbal statements and questions.

Results

Table 2 provides a profile of Mrs. Riley's mediation with respect to her statements and questions. The greatest number of teacher interchanges were related to text information, 43 questions (16.9%) and structure/management, 32 statements (12.6%). Mrs. Riley constantly focused the children's attention on information to be obtained from the text:

- T: Six eggs. Do you notice something about these eggs?
S (All): Yes, I know... (no response).
T: Are they all the same size?
S (All): No.
T: Which looks different?

Table 2
*Teacher and Student Profile
of Modeling, Mediation and Reading*

MODELING Teacher Reading Structure	MEDIATION Teacher Prior Knowledge	Teacher Elaboration Clues	Teacher Attention to Text
12.6%	5.1%	9.8%	16.9%
Children Reading	Children Prior Knowledge		Children Attention to Text
7.8%	11.2%		18.4%

During these teacher-student interchanges the teacher was requesting information that could be obtained from the text. It was information the children could find in the pictures. She also called their attention to the graphics:

- T: Did you see that 's' there? Why is it there?
S (All): Because there's many.
T: Do we have an 's' here?
S (All): No. It's only one.

In these exchanges the teacher reminded the children of some information about plurals that they had discussed during the morning message. She was emphasizing information from the structural analysis phase where the children learned that adding an 's' indicates plural nouns.

Structure/management statements comprised 12.6% (n=32) of the session. Examples were, "Now we will take turns reading," and "I will read and you listen." Mrs. Riley provided positive reinforcement 9.1%, but most of her immediate responses to children's answers took the form of re-statements. Mrs. Riley's statements concerning structure involved extensive modeling of the appropriate framework for reading.

Mrs. Riley modeled turning the pages, attending to the graphics and pictures, tracking the text and taking turns reading. In the beginning of the lesson, Mrs. Riley activated the children's prior knowledge about chicken and hatching by asking them to remember something that occurred in the classroom. The children readily used their prior knowledge information to help them understand the meaning of the text and to read. The children used prior knowledge for meaning, and to add information to what the teacher stated about the text. Additionally, they used prior knowledge from their home experiences and classroom experiences. The following is an example of Mrs. Riley activating the children's prior knowledge:

T: Remember about two or three weeks ago the rabbit came and hid some of the eggs. What did we do with them?

C: We went to find them.

T: We went to find them, right! Now, who lays those eggs?

C: Chickens.

T: The chicken lays them. What do we do with them?

C: Paint them.

T: We can paint them. After the painting, we can crack them and open them.

C: Eat them.

C: Boil them.

C: Boil them first.

These exchanges continued until the teacher moved the discussion closer to the text which was about chickens and ducks hatching eggs. The teacher mediated with questions and statements that provided the children with additional knowledge or helped them make connections. When the children talked about alligators and dinosaurs laying eggs, the teacher confirmed their answers but then gave a clue.

T: There are other animals that lay eggs.

C: I know.

C: A dinosaur.

T: Yes, they swim and the mother lays eggs. Could you tell me another?

C: Alligator.

T: That's the alligator, too. But they look like chickens.

C: A duck.

T: A duck. Very good. A mother duck lays eggs too.

The children's answers were always acknowledged with a positive comment.

The manner in which Mrs. Riley extended the children's language encouraged more attempts at reading the text. Whenever a child gave one word for an answer, the teacher repeated the responses making it into a sentence. Often additional information was stated and left open ended so that children could respond.

Discussion

Mediation and modeling were a constant part of this lesson. The dialogue focused on what the children knew or what they could do with a little assistance. Children's bidding for a chance to respond was seen only three times in the verbal coding. The non-verbal gestures which were recognized were not coded because the children constantly raised their hands excitedly. The participation structure of this lesson reflected Mrs. Riley's understanding of two factors. First, during the school day the children frequently engaged in peer dialogue that consisted of overlapping talk, quite similar to the Talk Story exhibited by Hawaiian children (Au, 1979, 1980). Children spoke at the same time and built on each others' responses without waiting for a formal bid. In this lesson, Mrs. Riley allowed the children to respond as a group 68% of the time. Second, by using a voluntary response framework, Mrs. Riley created opportunities for peers who were more knowledgeable with respect to their phonological awareness of experiences to provide some scaffolding for their classmates. This framework was apparent during other literacy activities in Mrs. Riley's classroom as in the reading of the morning message.

Classroom applications

In the Early Literacy Project, predictable book reading was done in conjunction with three other very effective components, the morning message, repeated tradebook reading and process writing (Stewart, Mason, and Benjamin, 1990). Therefore, the children engaged in early literacy activities that provided many oral and written language experiences which led to language and vocabulary enrichment.

It is known that these types of experiences ultimately lead to later reading achievement (Elley, 1989; Mason, Keer,

Sinha and McCormick, 1990; Dunning, Mason, and Stewart, 1994). The classrooms in the project were structured in such a way so that the tradebooks and predictable books were accessible to the children. It was not uncommon to see children sitting together reading or talking about a predictable little book that they had read with their teacher. Introducing early literacy materials and guiding their use promotes voluntary literacy behaviors (Morrow and Rand, 1991).

Teachers can influence emergent literacy development even for children from low-income urban, minority families. Mediating the learning environment is the key. Until the child has internalized the dimensions inherent in a concept, the teacher serves as interpreter of the understandings. The teacher provides the necessary scaffolds to move the child from dependent action to independent action. This scaffolding serves as the link from the external knowledge which will eventually become internalized by the child. If a teacher can properly mediate literacy concepts, nearly all children can learn and apply the concepts to school reading and writing tasks.

Predictable book reading was one of the components in the Mediated Early Project which enhanced teacher instruction and children's development of concepts for oral and written language. The teachers in this project realized that dynamic verbal interactions assisted them in determining the appropriate level for instruction. Often the instruction was fluid. As the teacher engaged in scaffolding and mediation of children's attempts through modeling and talking, increments of understanding were achieved by the children and transferred from one task to the other.

The primary factor to address here is the nature of the mediation that occurred during this reading session and in

other activities in this classroom. Often children are expected to assimilate information about concepts by listening and repeating what has been said or by carrying out a specific task to indicate understanding. When children are unable to accomplish the level of the demand, they are presumed to be immature, not ready, or in need of more practice.

This dialogue, representative of many predictable book reading sessions, demonstrates that learning involves dynamic interactions between the novice and expert and that the expert (teacher) must recognize the child's independent level and determine through careful observations (modeling and verbal) what type of support to provide. Additionally, the expert (teacher) must be able to alter the scaffolding as the child's conceptual understanding changes, realize that emergent literacy development is constantly changing, and that children's miscues often signal an awareness about a construct, although incomplete. To guarantee the effectiveness of the paradigm, the implementation of instructional models must include modeling for the teachers, and feedback on their performance. The most salient feature for effective teaching is for the teacher to be a mediator of instruction in order to individualize instructional interactions even within whole class activities.

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Call for Manuscripts for the 1996 Themed Issue: Integrating Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum

The 1996 themed issue of *Reading Horizons* will be devoted to articles linking reading and writing with all areas of the school curriculum. Articles relating excellent practice, theory, and research, to integrating reading, writing, speaking and listening across the curriculum should be sent to Dr. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Editor, *Reading Horizons*, WMU, Kalamazoo, MI 49008. Manuscripts should be submitted following Reading Horizons guidelines: send four copies and two stamped, self-addressed business size envelopes; include a cover sheet with author name and affiliation; using a running head (without author identity) on subsequent pages; follow APA guidelines for references and use of gender-free language. Manuscripts intended for the themed issue should be postmarked by March 1, 1996.

APPENDIX A

Example of little books

Eggs

One baby chick, peep.
Two baby chicks, peep.
Three baby chicks, peep.
Four baby chicks, peep.
Five baby chicks, peep.
Here's the big egg.
One baby duck, quack.

Apples

Red apples.
Yellow apples.
Green apples.
Blue apples.
Red apples, mmmm.
Yellow apples, mmmm.
Green apples, mmm.
Blue apples, yuk.

Pick up Toys

Pick up the bus.
Pick up the bear.
Pick up the boat.
Pick up the ball.
Pick up the bunny.
Pick up the blocks.
Oh, Oh, Boom!

Time for School

Wash your face.
Eat breakfast.
Get dressed.
Find your coat.
Get on the bus.
Bye.

APPENDIX B

Guidelines for reading predictable books

1) Background knowledge activation — The teacher introduced the concept or topic of the book orally before giving out the books. The children discussed what they knew about the topic. This was the time when the teacher cleared up any misconceptions and provided the essential background knowledge needed to enrich the reading experience. The teacher then showed the cover of the big book and asked the children questions to elicit more discussion.

2) Modeling reading — The teacher modeled the reading of the predictable book and the children followed along. Sometimes the teacher interjected questions about the picture or print information.

3) Individual reading — The teacher requested each child read one page of the book. In the beginning the children were memorizing or reading pictures.

4) Mediated Instruction — While the child attempted to read a portion of the book the teacher provided assistance at the child's level of phonemic awareness. During this time the teacher asked each child some questions about the print and picture. Often the teacher gave cues and prompts to assist the child in decoding the words.

5) Rereading — The teacher read the book again without any interruptions. Then children and teacher read the book straight through.

6) Discussion — The teacher and children engaged in a discussion about the book. The teacher asked several types of questions including comprehension and prediction questions.

7) Additional reading — The teacher allowed individual children to read the entire book aloud to the group. Usually the children volunteered to read. The books were then placed in the library area so children could engage in individual or peer readings.

8) Home support — The children were encouraged to take the books home and read them to a member of their family or a friend in their neighborhood.



A Comparison of Young Children's Writing Products in Skills-Based and Whole Language Classrooms

**Penny A. Freppon
Ellen McIntyre
Karin L. Dahl**

Whole language instruction and an emphasis on the writing process have had a significant impact on the teaching of writing. Many whole language teachers are already in practice, and more educators are moving toward this kind of teaching. However, comparative research on the value of whole language curriculum is limited. It is important to study children's interpretations (Erickson and Shultz, 1992) as they are reflected in the written products they generate in different kinds of classrooms. We need to know more about the sense children make of their instruction, what they are learning about written language, and the kinds of writing they produce. The purpose of this article is to report on a two-year, descriptive study of eight, low-income children's writing in skills-based and whole language instruction during kindergarten and first grade. Our focus was on the development of emergent writers in these two different kinds of instruction.

The eight focal children came from a larger group of randomly selected children in four kindergarten skills-based classrooms and four kindergarten whole language classrooms.

In each classroom, using researchers' judgment, actual writing artifacts, and pre- and post test information, we studied a more proficient learner and a less proficient learner. Thus, across a range of writing knowledge and skills, we analyzed the ways these children structured their texts and the topics they wrote about in these two instruction settings.

Following a brief review of the literature on children's writing development and studies comparing skills-based and whole language instruction, we provide a summary description of the classrooms and the research procedures. We conclude this article with the results and a discussion of instructional implications.

As children emerge as writers, they construct knowledge about print, the language of various texts, and the forms and functions texts take. Well-read-to children also acquire a schema that differentiates written language from oral language (Purcell-Gates, 1988) and learners gradually discover the conventions that guide and organize texts (Clay, 1979). Children's early drawings, scribbles, letter strings, invented spellings, copying and labeling are natural and important aspects of becoming conventionally literate (Clay, 1979; Daiute, 1990; Read, 1971; Sulzby, 1985, 1992). Indeed, Dyson (1989, 1991) holds that writing development involves more than the move toward decontextualized conventional forms. Her work suggests that audience, text, genre, and the sociocultural context in which the writing takes place all influence what and how children write. It is unclear, however, if children with similar socioeconomic background and written language knowledge write differently in contrasting writing programs during the first two years in school. This investigation addresses that issue.

Newkirk (1989) found that children's writing differed in form and complexity according to context. For example, children in his research were able to write beginning persuasive and analytic texts when provided with holistic support and rich literate environments. While Newkirk's study involved middle-class children's writing in and out of school, and his own daughter at home, the present study focuses on low-income children's text structures and topics as they wrote in urban classrooms.

Skills-based and whole language research

Thus far comparative research shows somewhat mixed results. One study with children from skills-based and whole language classrooms indicates that learners with similar academic proficiencies acquired alphabetic knowledge equally well in both settings (McIntyre and Freppon, 1994). Dahl and Freppon (1995) found that children who experienced the first two years of school in whole language classrooms showed more literate behaviors than a skills-based comparative group. In addition, Freppon's (1991) study of children's concepts of the nature and purpose of reading in these two different kinds of instruction show that the children from literature-based first grades held more of a meaning-based view and used their phonic skills with greater success. Some research has found little difference, however, in writing achievement of young children in contrasting curricula (Haggerty, Hiebert, and Owens, 1989; Stahl, Suttles, and Pagnucco, 1992). For example, based on single sample data, Stahl et al. (1992) indicated that children's reading ability, rather than instruction, correlated with their writing achievement. In contrast, Varble (1990) found that second-graders with one year of whole language instruction wrote better (in both quality of content and writing mechanics) than second graders in traditional instruction. However, this same study also compared sixth graders with one year of whole

language instruction to sixth graders in traditional curriculum. Those sixth grade results showed no statistically greater ratings for either group.

The current study provides additional comparative research information on children's writing. Results are based on long-term study and are of interest not only to researchers, but also to teachers, administrators, and parents. The study's questions were: 1) What text structures do low-income, emergent writers produce in kindergarten and first grade? 2) On what topics do these children write? and 3) What if any effects do these contrasting kinds of instruction have on their writing products?

Research sites and procedures

This research, which builds on two larger studies, Purcell-Gates and Dahl (1991) and Dahl and Freppon (1995) was conducted in three midwestern cities. According to the community and demographic records, each school had a majority of low-income children. Participating teachers' instructional perspectives and practices were identified as skills-based or whole language through consistent results on several data sources.

The skills-based writing programs met the descriptions detailed in other studies of similar classrooms (DeFord, 1984; Durkin, 1978-1979; Knapp and Shields, 1990). This instruction emphasized accuracy, writing mechanics, and neatness. Desired learning outcomes were to take place through writing practice which was to be completed regularly. Typical kindergarten writing involved worksheet activities such as writing an F for a picture fox and identifying whole words that corresponded to pictures. On a typical day in the skills-based first grades, the children's writing included copying and/or completing sentences and adding illustrations. In essence, the

most critical instructional components were: 1) teacher prescribed writing activities, 2) children's independent completion of these writing activities, and 3) children's progression through a scope and sequence of writing skills.

The whole language writing programs in this study met the descriptions detailed in other studies (Allen and Mason, 1989; Edelsky, Altwerger, and Flores, 1991; Graves, 1983). Desired learning outcomes were to take place through meaningful and functional writing interactions. Instruction emphasized the writing process and skills such as syntax. Writing mechanics were often discussed and demonstrated. Typical kindergarten writing included journal writing in which children either responded to a prompt, or generated writings on self-selected topics. On a typical day in the whole language first grades, the children's writing involved self-selected topics. In essence the most critical instructional components were: 1) blocks of time for writing activities, 2) children writing collaboratively and independently, and 3) implementation of writing workshop routines with extensive use of children's literature.

In spite of the differences in the skills-based and whole language writing programs, children in both settings engaged in comparable writing episodes. In kindergarten, and especially in first grade, all these focal learners actually composed. That is, they attempted to generate some meaning that was original and represented that meaning (at least in part) with written language. To study their writing in these composing episodes we relied on data gathered during twice-weekly classroom observations using remote microphones (which captured talk surrounding writing) and field notes. The point was to analyze the writing these eight focal learners produced in the act of composition.

Table 1
Text Structures by Category and Description

<u>Category Name</u>	<u>Description</u>
Letter Strings	Letters and letter-like forms grouped together, other marks may be included.
Drawings	Drawing carries primary meaning, writing included. Drawing adds to or elaborates meaning.
Labels	Labels written or drawn using writing in any form.
Lists	Writing is organized in list fashion.
Narrative-like List	Writing has both narrative and list qualities, e.g., <i>I like pizza, I like tacos, ...</i>
Genre	Writing is organized in letter, card or other formalized structure, e.g., <i>Dear Santa ...</i>
Declarative Statement	Writing is structured in a statement, e.g., <i>You are a good baseball player.</i>
Spin-off Stories	Writing directly tied to a known story and includes book text and some original text by child.
Narrative Prose/ Initial Paragraph	Writing is focused on a category or topic and consists of an assertion and related sentence, e.g., <i>My brother is fun. He always plays with me.</i> Clusters of sentences or clauses are related.
Story-like/Story	Writing is organized in story form, e.g., it has episodic structure, conflict. It may be also transitional and combine story features such as formulaic title/ending with elaborated narrative-like lists and a sequence of events.

In this analysis, Newkirk's (1989) work on children's writing development was of great value and many of his terms were used to label text structures. Table One describes these structures. The categories are listed in order of complexity as suggested by Newkirk (1989) and others (Clay, 1979; Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982) and by the order in which the data emerged over the course of the study.

To conduct the analysis and reflect the non-linearity of writing development, we identified the ways these children organized their writing (text structures) and what they wrote about (topics) through repeated review (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984). After establishing tentative categories we constructed grids that tracked and described the children's writing over time, wrote summaries of our findings, organized data into the first half and second half of both school years, and refined the categories. Finally, we compared across focal learners in skills-based and whole language classrooms.

Results

Results showed both similarities and differences between these two groups of focal learners with the whole language children writing more and having greater breadth in the kinds of writing they produced.

Similarities. The groups were similar in that seven text structures, letter strings, drawing and writing, labeling, lists, narrative prose/initial paragraphs, genre writing, and declarative statements were found in the writings of all the focal children. Another similarity between groups was in the general developmental changes over the two year period with most letter strings, drawing and writing, labeling, and lists occurring in kindergarten.

Examples of the predominant, similar first-grade findings are presented below. Samples represent the kind of declarative statements, narrative prose/initial paragraphs, and genre writing produced in both curricula. In these and all other samples, nearly all invented spellings and punctuation are original, however, some standard spellings have been added for clarity.

Skills-based instruction

My name is Mark.

I lik my mom.

I won't just stand tehe.

*I wod run awae. With who ever
windmill.*

is with me.

Dear Chris

I like your songs

Will you come to my house

Whole language instruction

I lik basbal.

I lov Jon.

*Chucky cheese is fun. I like to play
in the balls. I got a chucky cheese*

Dear Angela

I love my roses published book.

I am proud of myslef. So is mom.

Differences across instruction. As noted above, focal children from skills-based and whole language classrooms were similar in some of the ways they structured their texts. However, the majority of skills-based, focal children continued to produce only declarative sentences throughout first

grade. There was one first-grade exception with a proficient learner producing narrative prose/initial paragraph writing. In contrast, spin-off story, and story-like/story writing were found only in the whole language group. These children also wrote fewer declarative statements in first grade. Regardless of proficiency, all first-grade, focal learners from the whole language classrooms produced narrative prose/initial paragraphs. Two of these samples are show below.

*We all went to Mrs. W class and we got on a RasB
It wes fun. My tentheer said I am going to fall of then...*

*Mrs. S. I want to see Simon I like the name. I theet
my mom you hed a bab.*

Examples of the spin-off story, and story-like/story writing found only in the whole language group follow.

*I played house all by mysaif. I was alone becaus my
coin (cousin) would not play with me. I told her
mommy and daddy. I haded (hated) my coin because
anytime I go over her house I play withe her. But any-
time she come over my house she do not like to play
with me. (Story-like/story)*

*When Willie hed a her kete (When Willie had a
hair cut) When I hed a her Kete... (When I had a hair
cut) Dad sam "No" to me Mom sam "No" to me
Antie said "YES" (spin-off story)*

The whole language learners produced relatively complex writing across the range of 10 text structures. These children also wrote more than the skills-based group. However, there were whole language within-group differences which varied according to individual development in learning to write. For example, more proficient learners moved into

more complex writing sooner. Two of these children produced some narrative prose and genre writing even before first grade as these examples shown.

i kc on to m s R P
(I can't wait until my slumber party)
T Gt PK G
(We get to play games)
DeaR Helen Jane
Ut Ukt M BR PE
(you come to my birthday party)

In the whole language kindergartens the less proficient children primarily organized their writings through drawing, letters, and combinations of these structures. However, in contrast to less proficient, skills-based learners their writing had more breadth.

Table Two summarizes the findings on text structures produced during kindergarten and first grade in the two different kinds of instruction. Text structures are shown in general patterns of developmental order (Clay, 1979).

In summary, results indicated that both classroom instruction and individual development in learning affected these children's writing products. For example, focal children from the whole language classrooms wrote more texts and produced structures not evident in the skills-based classrooms. Generally, however, the more proficient learners in both kinds of instruction produced more writings and more complex texts than their less proficient peers.

Interestingly, the category of spin-off stories emerged only in one whole language first grade. This kind of writing first occurred after a storybook reading session when the teacher suggested that children might write a story similar to

the one they had just heard. In this classroom, spin-off stories seemed to become an option that children often chose. In the other whole language first grade, which had more structured workshop routines (e.g., students produced ideas sheets, wrote a series of several drafts, and chose one piece to be published), learners produced more initial paragraphs and narrative prose, genre writing, and story-like pieces. Thus, it appeared that differences between whole language classroom programs also influenced some kinds of writing.

Table 2
*Text Structures and Number of Writing
Products Produced in Kindergarten and First Grade*

Instruction	Skills-Based	Whole Language
Composing Events	20	44
Text Characteristics	Number of Texts	Number of Texts
Letter Strings	2	5
Drawing and Writing	2	6
Labels	2	3
Lists	3	4
Narrative-like Lists	0	5
Narrative Prose/ Initial Paragraphs	3	5
Genre	2	4
Declarative		
Statements	9	3
Spin-off Story	0	3
Story-like/Story	0	8

* In both curricula, discrepancies in the total number of texts and total number of composing events result from children's production of more than one text in a given composing event.

As noted earlier, we examined the topics on which these eight focal children wrote. Interestingly, these findings showed similarities and differences also. Identified topics

showed that children in both curricula wrote about things such as family, friends, and personal experiences. Names of parents and other family members were listed and used to label drawings. Mom played a focal role in many texts. However, children from whole language classrooms differed in that they wrote about a wider range of topics. For example, these children also wrote about their school experiences, teachers, and things for which they wished and hoped.

Discussion and instructional implications

Across the two year period children of varying proficiency exhibited emergent to conventional forms of writing described by other researchers (Sulzby, 1992). This indicated that, regardless of instruction, learning development has a strong influence on young children's writing. However, differences between children in the contrasting curricula also help confirm Newkirk's (1989) and Dyson's (1989, 1991) research. Classroom writing programs, their contexts, and the complexities related to audience, social structure, and texts read, strongly affect children's writing. All focal learners participating in this investigation were similar in age, socioeconomic status, and in beginning writing knowledge. Both focal groups consisted of the same number of more and less proficient learners. Yet, the focal children receiving whole language instruction produced more writing of greater complexity. This finding is important since it is through such early writing experiences that children are believed to learn to write the persuasive and analytical texts needed in the upper grades (Newkirk, 1989). Moreover, children interpret their instruction personally, and rich writing experiences help children learn to see themselves as writers (Dahl and Freppon, 1995; Freppon in press).

Evidence in the study suggests that students at the "top" do well in whole language instruction in the early grades, and

for the less proficient learners, the whole language curriculum appeared to provide more support. It also suggests that some children are able to make sense of what it takes to write even when the focus of instruction is not on the writing process.

The findings reported here indicate that whole language or literature-based writing programs that explicitly teach the writing process and writing skills can make a difference for low-income children with a range of proficiencies including those "we worry most about" (Allen and Mason, 1989). For teachers interested in implementing the kind of whole language, first-grade writing programs involved in this study, the classic work of Donald Graves (1983) is recommended. In addition, there is detailed information on how to begin and sustain such writing instruction with low-income, first graders in a recent article by Headings and Freppon (1994). Simply, reading high quality children's literature aloud, discussing it, and inviting children to respond by writing about the stories (formulating a new ending or describing their favorite part) or characters provides an excellent way to begin. However, grading or assessing young children's writing must be handled with care (See Goodman, Goodman, and Hood, 1989; Harp, 1991). In addition, explicit instruction on how to write is often needed and should occur along with a positive focus which builds on what the child is trying to accomplish (Carroll, Wilson, and Au in press, Dudley-Marling, in press, Purcell-Gates, in press). Individual, peer group, and whole group instruction is supported through writing demonstration (in which teachers talk about their thinking as they write), and reading good writing (from both professional and student authors) and pointing out its qualities.

Limitations

This study is limited in several ways. Although rich in data collected over a two year period during focal children's composing events, this investigation lacks a study of writing mechanics, spelling, and other literary skills such as audience awareness. Findings are restricted to kindergarteners and first graders of similar socioeconomic backgrounds general reading and writing abilities, and curricular experiences. The study was conducted with full knowledge that every instructional setting imposes limits on children's responses and that these classrooms exemplified skills-based and whole language instruction. This report documented what occurred in particular instances, not what the children might have written under other circumstances.

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Transactional Criticism and Aesthetic Literary Experiences: Examining Complex Responses in Light of the Teacher's Purpose

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In classroom literature discussions, teachers orchestrate situations in which readers and texts come together. Approaches teachers use may differ in terms of the stance or purpose for reading encouraged. Rosenblatt (1978, 1985) describes two stances readers can take while reading literary works. An efferent stance indicates a reader's attention is focused on information to be retained after reading and can result in a study of the text. An aesthetic stance, on the other hand, occurs when the reader's attention is on the lived-through experience of the story and the experiences, thoughts, feelings, images, and associations which are evoked. Rosenblatt (1978, 1983, 1986) contends that although the appropriate stance when reading literature is the aesthetic stance, most literature in schools is taught from an efferent approach. Research describing teaching approaches used in schools seems to support this contention (Sacks, 1987; Walmsley and Walp, 1989; Zarillo and Cox, 1992).

Recent research focusing on aesthetic approaches to literature also supports Rosenblatt's emphasis on the value of an aesthetic lived-through experience. Studies (Anzul, 1988; Farnan and Kelly, 1993) indicate literary approaches guided by an aesthetic focus affect group dynamics in that discussions become more involved. In a series of studies, Many and Wiseman (Many and Wiseman, 1992; Wiseman, Many, and Altieri, 1992) found that discussions centered on literary analysis or in which students controlled the focus of discussion encouraged more efferent responses. Students from these discussion groups who did respond aesthetically tended to do so in superficial ways (e.g., I like the story. It was funny). The researchers did note, however, that consistent with the findings from previous research (Cox and Many, 1992), some efferent responses consisted of literary analysis based on the student's aesthetic evocation of the story. In such responses students reflected on the impact of the artistic or literary technique which involved them in the story experience.

The importance of not losing sight of the experience of the story when analyzing literary works, has been stressed by others interested in reader-response approaches (Probst, 1988; Purves, Rogers, and Soter, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt describes this as *transactive criticism* and underscores that in this type of response the object of analysis is not the isolated text, but the lived-through experience. In research focusing on third-grade students' responses to literature (Many, Wiseman, and Altieri, 1992; Wiseman, Many, and Altieri, 1992), story readers introduced literature aesthetically and then had students analyze what made the story experience possible. Findings indicated the discussion approaches which incorporated literary analysis based on students' initial aesthetic experiences resulted in aesthetic responses of similarly high levels of complexity as an aesthetic discussion approach which focused solely on the story experience. However, none

of the approaches in their study affected the level of complexity of responses in which the students' purpose in writing was to analyze the literary work. Given that this research focused on elementary age students, studies examining such approaches with older readers might reveal additional information on how students' responses are influenced by diverse discussion focuses. Also, although Wiseman et al. assert that their instruments to measure complexity may be of use for educators and researchers wishing to describe responses written by students at all levels, these coding systems have not as yet been applied to adult responses. This study was designed therefore to examine the effectiveness of the complexity instruments designed by Wiseman and her colleagues when used to describe the responses of older readers. Specifically, the purposes of this study were: 1) to examine the effects of literature discussion approaches on students' purpose in writing; 2) to explore the viability of the instruments developed in Wiseman et al. using responses from older students.

Method

Participants and Procedures. Participants consisted of undergraduate elementary education majors enrolled in two intact sections of a children's literature course. One section was randomly designated the transactional criticism approach (N=25) and the other an aesthetic literary experience approach (N=31). Students in each section shared a common syllabus and were introduced to the concepts of aesthetic approaches to literature and transactional criticism. The only difference between the two sections was the manner in which eight works of multicultural literature by award-winning authors were approached as the books were shared across the course of the semester. As shown in Appendix A, parallel types of activities were used for each book and each approach, but the purpose of the approaches differed according to the focus of the

students' attention. In the aesthetic literary experience group, students were encouraged to reflect on how the emotions, associations, and images evoked added to the personal significance of their story experience. For example, in response to *Mirandy and Brother Wind* (McKissack, 1988), the aesthetic experience group discussed the following question: "How would you feel at different points in the story if you were Blanche?" In contrast, the transactive criticism approach group, first experienced the works aesthetically and then critically analyzed the artistic or literary techniques which affected their own aesthetic experience. In responding to the same book, these students discussed the section of *Mirandy and Brother Wind* which drew their attention, and then they went back and analyzed what the author or illustrator did to stimulate that reaction.

Data Collection and Analysis. At the end of the semester, students read *Momma at the Pearly Gates* (Konigsburg, 1971), a story about racial prejudice exhibited by one school girl to a classmate Momma when Momma attended an all-white school. After reading the story, students completed a written free response.

Response Categories. Responses or response portions were classified according to three categories: literary analysis, aesthetic, or unable to be determined. These categories are described below. Two independent raters scored all responses. Interrater reliability was established with 98% agreement and consensus was reached on the coding of any responses upon which there was disagreement. Responses were then divided into thought units and the percentage of the response which fell into each of the categories was computed.

Focus on literary analysis. Responses classified as literary analysis indicated the students had stepped back and

objectified the story experience in order to contemplate the artistic or literary techniques involved in creating the text. Such responses might also incorporate attention to how this aspect affected the individual's unique reaction to the story. For example, in this literary analysis response, one student worked both an analysis of the literary technique (italicized in the response which follows) and her childhood memories into her response. *"I liked the story's format.* The little girl was so interested in her mother's life that she just asked question after question. That reminded me of myself when I was young ... always wanting to know everything."

Focus on the aesthetic experience. The intent of the responses coded as aesthetic was to focus on the students' engagement in the story world and reactions to the events within it. Aesthetic responses could have one or more of the following: visualizing scenes or characters, making associations between the story and literary or life experiences, relating emotions evoked, putting self in character's shoes, passing judgments on character's behavior, discussing preferences, citing metacognitive awareness of living through the story, hypothesizing alternative outcomes, and discussing personal relevance of story experience (Corcoran, 1987; Cox and Many, 1992; Many and Wiseman, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978, 1985).

An example of an aesthetic response is seen in the following excerpt, "I can't imagine what the time must have been like when people were so cruel to black people. It's hard to believe people could be so heartless and uncaring about the feelings of others." This aesthetic response revealed the student's emotional involvement in the story world. Other aesthetic elements were evident in the way in which the writer judged character's actions and related characters' actions to real-life experiences.

Focus unable to be determined. A small number of responses or response portions were unable to be categorized as having either a literary analysis or aesthetic focus. These responses were too vague to allow the students' purpose in writing to be identified.

Response complexity

Aesthetic response complexity. Aesthetic response portions were analyzed by two raters according to the highest level of complexity reached using the following scale: 1) little or no evidence of story experience; 2) slight evidence of story experience; 3) evidence of story experience with little aesthetic elements; 4) evidence of story elements which directly relate to the story experience; 5) detailed evidence of aesthetic elements which give evidence of personal involvement within the story experience; 6) in-depth and highly inventive use of aesthetic elements which add to the personal significance of the story experience (Many, Wiseman and Altieri, 1992). These levels were used as guides as responses were read, reread, and sorted according to complexity. As groupings emerged based on these undergraduates' responses to literature, descriptors were added to the levels established by Many et al. A separate researcher coded one-half of the data using the levels with the data-driven descriptors. Interrater reliability of the aesthetic complexity rating was established at 74% agreement.

Literary analysis complexity. The literary analysis response portions were coded according to highest level of complexity using the following scale: 1) little or no evidence of literary analysis; 2) evidence of conceptualization of literary artistic elements; 3) identification of literary or artistic elements with direct reference to the text; 4) detailed analysis of literary elements with reference to the text; 5) detailed analysis of literary or artistic elements with reference to the reader's

personal story experience; 6) complex analysis of how the literary or artistic elements contributed to the reader's unique aesthetic experience (Many, Wiseman and Altieri, 1992). The highest levels of this scale are consistent with the constructs of transactive criticism in that the most complex responses focus on an analysis of literary elements or artistic elements in light of the contribution of these factors on the reader's aesthetic experience of the work. Two raters independently applied these levels with no adaptations to the descriptors as used in Many, Wiseman and Altieri's (1992) earlier research with a 91% agreement.

Results and discussion

Purpose in Writing. The approach modeled with the eight multicultural works significantly affected the students' purpose in writing the free response to the subsequent work at the end of the semester. The students who experienced the transactional criticism focus included a higher percentage of statements focusing on literary analysis (52%) than did the students who experienced the aesthetic literary experience approach (29%), $F(1,55)=4.95$, $p<.03$. Conversely, the students in the aesthetic literary experience approach group wrote responses with a higher percentage of statements focusing solely on their aesthetic literary experience (68%) than did the transactional criticism approach students (44%), $F(1,55)=5.65$, $p=.02$.

All but one of the 25 responses written by students in the transactional criticism group contained a combination of both aesthetic and literary criticism elements. That finding was consistent with the approaches demonstrated throughout the semester in that transactional criticism focuses not only on the analysis of authors' techniques, but also on the lived-through experience.

An example of a response that combined an aesthetic focus and literary criticism is evident in the following response.

"I liked this story, although it was over some pretty heavy issues. It was well-written. The story definitely got its point across, and there were even some humorous things going on. I liked how the author says the first time she thought black was beautiful was on the large blackboard. This is a neat way to think about prejudice. I've never thought about it in that light.

I also liked how Momma overcame Roseann. I especially liked it when Momma told her she was 'imitating a nigger.' It was unexpected by me, but it definitely made a long-lasting impact."

In this example, the first paragraph focuses on literary analysis while the second judges characters' actions and expresses emotional response. Responses, such as this one containing a combination of elements, had distinct sections which were focuses on literary analysis and the aesthetic experience.

In the aesthetic experience group, only three of the 31 students wrote responses which combined aesthetic elements with literary analysis. The rest of the responses were comprised totally of aesthetic elements. The following example exemplifies the type of focus found in responses written by students experiencing the aesthetic approach.

"This was a good story. It reminded me of growing up. Many minorities lived in my hometown, and some people truly had problems with this. They competed, ridiculed, and looked down upon them. This always made me sad to be around or hear it going on. Just like Momma, many of my friends felt like they had to prove to people that they were good enough. On the other hand, my friends couldn't accept themselves as

they were. I think we are all guilty of this sometimes. We get too busy with trying to impress others or to imitate them instead of being ourselves."

In this response the student made a personal connection and then compared that connection to the story of Momma. The exclusion of literary analysis as seen in this example, was typically found in the responses written by the students experiencing the aesthetic approach. Thus, although these students did write literary analysis across the course of the semester, their response to the multicultural short story directly reflected the modeling which occurred with the eight multicultural works.

Complexity of responses

Complexity in Literary Analysis. The complexity of the responses focusing on literary analysis was measured using an instrument developed by Many, Wiseman and Altieri (1992). On this instrument, responses were rated along a continuum ranging from a score one to six (See Appendix B). On the lower end of the continuum, students wrote responses which demonstrated little or no efferent literary analysis, such as: "This story does make me curious to know if it's based on the author's true mother." In contrast, on the upper end of the continuum, responses combined complex analysis of the literary or artistic elements along with attention to the impact such elements had on their aesthetic experience. For example, one student wrote:

This was a very colorful story. I liked how it added the "mom talk" while it told the story. It also reminds me of the book by dePaola called The Art Lesson. Both stories tell how illustrators got started and I like it. Mom though is a much more realistic story, and more valuable to readers because it touches on racism.

Analysis of the variances on the complexity of the responses focusing on literary analysis also indicated no significant differences as a result of the approach experienced. Few of the responses written by students from either group went beyond identification of literary elements in reference to the text. The response below (given a three in literary analysis complexity) is typical of the analytical responses written by students in both teaching approaches.

I liked how it was told from the daughter's point of view and how it combined the past with the present. It deals with a lot of issues in such a way that children can understand. I feel that students reading this story can relate with the narrator of the story in the ways that they are both learning about the past and that the thoughts she shares with the readers are realistic.

In many of the free responses, students did not mention specific literary techniques but instead focused on how the author achieved a positive tone about such a discouraging issue. For example, one student wrote,

I thought this story was wonderful. One of the reasons is because I feel like busing and integration was looked upon so negatively and this story seemed to show a positive aspect of it ... It was a great approach to the black culture, too. Very positive.

In such responses, although the literary analysis was present, the complexity was not evident. The responses explained why the reader liked the story, evaluated the story on personal taste, but did not give literary reasons or analyze the literary techniques in relation to the reader's personal judgment of the story. These results were surprising in that the students in the transactional criticism approach had opportunities to analyze literary works in reference to their story experience throughout the semester. With each of the eight works of multicultural literature, these students critically

reflected on the artistic and literary elements which affected their involvement in the stories and yet they were no more likely to draw on their aesthetic experience in a meaningful way when writing an analysis in the final free response.

Aesthetic Response Complexity. Analysis of the variances on the complexity of the free responses focusing on the students' aesthetic literary experiences indicated no significant differences as a result of the approach experienced. Thus the aesthetic responses of students who were continually exposed to transactional criticism through the literary discussions reached similar levels of complexity as did the students from the literary experience approach group.

The aesthetic complexity instrument as developed in previous research (Many, Wiseman and Altieri, 1992; Wiseman, Many, and Altieri, 1992) listed levels of complexity along with descriptors to help identify the types of responses representative of each level. Because the specific descriptors were developed from third-grade students responses, these descriptors were found to be inadequate in describing the types of responses which might represent levels of complexity in our undergraduate students' responses. This was most evident in Level 2 of the instrument which is titled, "Slight evidence of story experience." In Many and Wiseman's studies, Level 2 responses were described as identifying isolated objects, pictures, and/or characters. Such responses did not show a connectedness across events occurring in the story world. Because the earlier descriptors were not applicable to the undergraduate students' responses, new descriptors were developed through analysis of the present data. By working in a recursive-generative process, from the undergraduate aesthetic responses to the Level titles and previous research, appropriate descriptors for each level emerged. For example, Level 2 responses in terms of our students' responses were

either vague in their description of the aesthetic experience or focused on an aesthetic element in such a way that their response led them away from the experience of the story. For instance in the following response, this undergraduate student's attention to her own life led her away from a contemplation of the text:

Momma at the Pearly Gates reminded me of when I was young and I used to ask my mom what it was like to grow up in the era she did. She told me that she never watched t.v. because there wasn't one, she had to share a room with three of her other sisters (she had a family of eight in a three bedroom home) and she didn't have all the luxuries that I have today. She taught me to be proud of what I have and be thankful that I have a supportive and loving family to take care of me which can no way be replaced by material things. I cherish everything my mother has told me and I have finally realized that she knows best because I always thought (for some reason) that I knew more than she which always got me into more and more trouble. Now that I've matured and realize the facts of life that my mother's taught me, we are closer than ever and I'm so much happier. (Wiseman and Many, 1992, pp. 77-78)

While this reader's initial connection to her experience of listening to her mother's stories of another era was directly related to the story to which she was responding, this student's writing led her away from consideration of the story itself. Thus at Level 2, students may include aesthetic elements, but their attention to such aspects leads them away from the text in the manner of a free association exercise.

The range of aesthetic response complexity evident in students' responses is demonstrated through the responses shown for each level of complexity as listed in Appendix C.

The majority of the aesthetic responses were representative of Level 4 (Some evidence of aesthetic elements which related directly to the individual reader's story experience) or Level 5 (Detailed evidence of aesthetic elements which give evidence of personal involvement with the story experience).

Summary

This study adds to the body of research documenting the strong effect teaching approaches can have on students' stance when responding to literary works (Farnan and Kelly, 1993; Many and Wiseman, 1992; Wiseman et al., 1992). When works are consistently approached in a manner which focuses attention aesthetically or analytically, students are likely to use the same type of approach when responding to subsequent works.

The present study also supports contentions that a transactive criticism approach can be a valuable way of incorporating literary analysis without negating the reader's experience of the story (Rosenblatt, 1978; Probst, 1988; Many and Wiseman, 1992). Students in this study who experienced the transactive criticism approach wrote aesthetic responses of the same levels of aesthetic complexity as students in the purely aesthetic approach group. However, they also were more likely to include literary analysis in their responses. Thus the transactive criticism students actually demonstrated a wider repertoire of response strategies as a result of the approach they experienced.

The aesthetic complexity instrument developed in previous research (Many, Wiseman and Altieri, 1992; Wiseman, Many and Altieri, 1992) proved difficult to apply to adult responses. The specific descriptors originally provided for each level, which were drawn from the third grade responses, were not useful in coding the more detailed and elaborate adult

responses. However, using the level titles as a guiding conceptual scaffold and specific descriptors which emerged from the data, we were able to perceive a transactional relationship between the present data and the previous research instrument. Thus we were able to capitalize on previous research and on the benefits of using a data-driven analysis, using a recursive-generative process.

As in Many et al.'s third-grade study, the discussion approaches did not result in analytical responses which reflected complexity in terms of the notion of transactional criticism. One hypothesis for these findings might be that when students write free responses, they may not perceive the need to strive for complexity in terms of literary analysis. They may not see that free response is a time to demonstrate their knowledge. In both of these classes during the semester, when students wrote critiques of other literary works, they were capable of demonstrating complex analyses based on their aesthetic experiences. Such complexity, however, was rare in the free responses to the short story collected at the end of the study. Examination of response complexity in terms of transactional criticism might be more appropriate for focused activities rather than free responses. In other words, when examining for complexity in literary analyses, teachers may choose to focus on writing in which students have had the opportunity to take a piece of writing through the entire writing process. The resulting product could then be analyzed in light of the degree to which the analysis reflects the original aesthetic experiences.

In light of the strong links found in this study between approaches modeled in class and students' subsequent responses to literature, this research yields important information for teachers wishing to facilitate either aesthetic and/or analytical elements in students' responses.

The levels provided on both instruments could also serve as a useful tool in describing students' abilities to respond in complex ways and as a guide for teachers wishing to encourage sophistication in responses to literature. Through continued research and classroom application of reader-response approaches to literature we can continue to grow in our understanding of how to involve students in experiences and appreciation of the worlds found in literature.

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APPENDIX A

Differences in approaches with multicultural works

Transactional Criticism Approach

Flossie and the Fox: Read orally to whole class; partner share. What did you think about as the story was read? On what did you focus? What did the author/illustrator do that led you to consider that aspect? How did the author's or illustrator's style affect your experience?

Black Snowman: Read orally to whole class; written free response; whole-class discussion focusing on analysis based on aesthetic experience (character development and growth and personal reaction to that character and the issue of pride in cultural heritage).

Mirandy: Read in parts, narrator, characters. Discuss section which draws students' attention in small groups then go back and analyze what the author or illustrator did to affect that reaction.

Grey Lady: Shared reading in small groups; written responses to, "What artistic or literary elements contributed to or hindered your aesthetic reaction to this book?" Whole-class discussion.

Aesthetic Approach

Flossie and the Fox: Read orally to whole class; partner share. What did you think about as the story was read? On what did you focus? Whole-class discussion on questions.

Black Snowman: Read orally to whole class; written free response; whole-class discussion.

Mirandy: Small groups; students take turns reading each page; share in small groups. How would you feel at different points in the story if you were Blanche? Whole-class discussion.

Grey Lady: Shared reading in small groups; written free responses; whole-class discussion.

Transactional Criticism Approach

Gold Cadillac: Silent reading in small groups. Be aware of emotions evoked as reading the story. Share the criteria for evaluating historical fiction. Small-group share; whole-class share.

Talking Eggs: Read page by page taking turns. Write aesthetic response. Trade responses. Critique elements which affected reactions.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: Write about image one sees while reading. Web emotions and associations. Choose literary element or artistic element which was most striking. Web out emotions and associations.

The Boy and the Ghost: Whole-class discussion. Discuss placement as fable, myth, legend. Analyze for specific aspects. Include reactions. Discuss related literature (other works with the same elements).

Momma at the Pearly Gates: Write free response.

Aesthetic Approach

Gold Cadillac: Silent reading in small groups. Write about emotions evoked. Trade papers two times and respond to both.

Talking Eggs: Small groups. One or two persons read narration. Others read dialogue of certain characters. Small groups discuss the section of the story which drew their attention and then groups share with class.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: Read the text orally to the students but students follow along looking at the pictures in small groups. Focused journal entries; whole-class discussion.

The Boy and the Ghost: Read orally; whole-class discussion of associations evoked. Encourage students to weave their associations back into their story experience.

Momma at the Pearly Gates: Write free response.

APPENDIX B

Complexity of literary analysis

<u>Score</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>Example</u>
One	Little or no evidence of literary analysis.	It seemed a little bit slow at first, but by the middle I was wanting to read on.
Two	Evidence of conceptualization of literary artistic elements.	It was well-written and it got its point across.
Three	Identification of literary or artistic elements with direct reference to the text.	The author really shows how brave the children had to be in order to make it back then. I just couldn't imagine going to school with someone who didn't like you because of your race.
Four	Detailed analysis of literary elements with reference to the text.	I liked how it added the "mom talk" while it told the story. It also reminds me of the book by dePaola called <i>The Art Lesson</i> . Both stories tell how illustrators got started and I like it. Mom though is a much more realistic story and more valuable to readers because it touches on racism.
Five	Detailed analysis of literary or artistic elements with reference to the reader's personal story experience.	This story reminds me of a project I did in one of my INST classes. We had to tape record our parents talking about things they did when they were growing up. It was a way to preserve history. The author wrote the story down and it will never be forgotten. I often think about my 90 year old grandmother and think about all the stories she has to tell.
Six	Complex analysis of how the literary or artistic elements contributed to the readers' unique aesthetic experience.	(No example from the research).

APPENDIX C

Aesthetic complexity

<u>Score</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>Example</u>
One	Little or no evidence of story experience.	I couldn't really get into this story because it didn't spark my interest.
Two	Slight evidence of story experience.	I thought this story was really funny. I really enjoyed how the story was written. It was very descriptive and made me feel like I was really there with the two girls.
Three	Elements of story experience with few aesthetic elements.	The story was very touching. It is hard to imagine how cruel kids were back then, considering how they are now. I really do admire those who have been criticized as a child and those who have had families that were slaves yet they have learned to forgive — or at least move on.
Four	Evidence of story elements which directly relate to the story experience.	I thought the story was good. I think what really attracted me was that it was real. Momma really lived through the time period when Blacks were called "niggers" and were totally looked down upon. I liked Momma's personality. She always seemed to keep her composure when Roseann started giving her a hard time. She seemed to make the best out of everything.
Five	Detailed evidence of story elements which give evidence of personal involvement within the story experience.	Neither child seemed to show any change of prejudice. It must have been difficult to be bused to another part of town for the first time. Busing began in my town in the early '70's, so it was already established when I started school. I was not bused until 6th grade. I could not relate to the feelings of "change or different environment" because busing that one year seemed more like an adventure than turmoil.

<u>Score</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>Example</u>
Six	In-depth and highly inventive use of aesthetic elements which add to the personal significance of the story experience.	I understand what Momma meant in the closing paragraph: she was now an artist, and one of her very good friends is Roseann. It always seems that the best of friends started off either by hating each other or quarreling. In this story, I could see the curiosity and even a twinge of jealousy in the actions of Roseann. I believe that had this happened 50-75 years later, these little girls would have had a better chance at being immediate friends. Obviously, Roseann's dislike of Momma came from her parents' views of Blacks. She wasn't born knowing the word "nigger." It was taught to her. How many times do we influence young children, not knowing that we may be hurting other people's feelings through our own child's actions. Luckily, Roseann overcame this.

*International Reading Association
Book Release*

The International Reading Association presents a new publication related to reading diagnosis. Michael W. Kibby's *Practical Steps for Informing Literacy Instruction: A Diagnostic Decision-Making Model* is a useful guide for teachers who assume full responsibility for designing reading instruction for each individual in their class. Because many teachers have adopted holistic, child-centered, or literature-based instructional rationales, author Michael W. Kibby has created a cognitive organizer of the components and strategies important to successful reading and a schema for evaluating each student's reading proficiency in a rational and efficient manner. Contact Kim Principe, 800-336-READ, extension 283.



Professional Materials

Looking at Picture Books. Written by John Warren Stewig. Highsmith Press, Fort Atkinson, WI 53538. 1995. 269 pp. US\$49.00.

Mary E. Jellema
Hope College at Holland, MI

Looking at Picture Books may not create instant art critics, but it does give essential, basic information for people who stammer or grope for words when asked to evaluate picture storybooks. The presentation is orderly and comprehensive; it assumes little critical expertise on the part of the reader. Helpful marginal notes give definitions, further references, and background information. There are also several appendices and an index.

The first four chapters provide predictable information: the variety of books within the picture book category; pictorial elements such as line, shape, and color; compositional principles such as visual unity, variety, balance, and rhythm; and a fine chapter on a wide variety of media.

In addition to these basics, Stewig includes a valuable chapter on book design, a topic often overlooked by beginning picture book critics. This section shows the complexity of the total book-making project, a project that requires many collaborative decisions by illustrators and editors: What size and shape will the book be? Weight and texture of the paper?

Material for the binding? Design of the endpages and book jacket? Typefaces? Layout of text and pictures? Amount of white space? These questions cover most conventionally formatted books, but when one considers more innovative works, Stewig points out that one may encounter paper engineering wizardry as well as partial pages and die-cut features.

Picture book fanciers who think some illustrations belong in an art gallery can find justification for their views in Stewig's last chapter, "The Influence of Art Movements." This section takes us beyond the obvious: it supplies a short, accessible history of modern art and demonstrates how such movements as expressionism, pointillism, abstraction, and surrealism influence illustrators of children's picture books. For example, Stewig notes the similarity between the heavy outlines that define figures in John Steptoe's early works like *Stevie* and the bold linear qualities of Georges Rouault, a painter in the French group called *les fauves*. With this information, the alert reader may immediately consider David Diaz's thick lines in his illustrations for the 1995 Caldecott award winner, *Smoky Night*, and be enriched by understanding the historical context.

Looking at Picture Books would be a valuable resource for teachers, children's librarians, students of children's literature, children's booksellers, as well as aspiring illustrators. Several sections at the end of chapters, however, are aimed particularly at teachers and librarians. Some of the suggestions sounded wise and manageable for most elementary schools. For instance, at the end of the chapter on pictorial elements, Stewig suggests using several illustrated versions of a single folktale to compare and contrast styles and techniques. He also wonders if studying art in picture books could teach children ways to solve their own art problems.

An effective program for either teachers or librarians is presented in the final chapter: an "illustrator-of-the-month" program in which as many books as possible of one illustrator are read, discussed, and displayed for a month. I know of a kindergarten teacher who does this, and by the end of the year, the five-year-olds in her class are astonishingly perceptive about the visual quality of the books they view. Stewig also wisely includes a short section discussing the pros and cons of using film and video versions of picture books. He also touches on adaptations of picture books to computer programs.

As a whole, the book is inviting, although the presence of only twelve colored plates (amid numerous black-and-white prints) seems rather few for a book entitled *Looking at Picture Books*. Some reference gaps exist, for instance, Steptoe's *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter* is discussed in Chapter 6, but it is not listed with his other books at the end of the chapter. The text also needs more careful proofreading. In spite of these flaws, I would recommend this book enthusiastically to my college children's literature classes, knowing that their visual literacy quotient would rise significantly by reading it.

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Children's Reviews

Magical City

The Wonderful Towers of Watts. Written by Patricia Zelver. Illustrated by Frane Lessac. Tambourine Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. 1994. ISBN: 0-688-12649-9. 32 pp. US\$15.00.

Lou Ann Homan
Hamilton Elementary School, Hamilton, IN

"One day, to the neighbors' amazement, something strange and beautiful rose up over the fence in Sam's backyard. It was a lacy web of steel, covered with a skin of concrete in which Old Sam had stuck glittering bits of tile, glass, mirrors, pottery, and seashells." Thus begins the fantastic, but true, story of Simon Rodia. As a young Italian immigrant, Rodia lived in a poor neighborhood of Los Angeles. Each day he rode the streetcar to the tiler's where he worked, and returned each evening with large burlap bags of broken colored tiles. He spent his weekends combing vacant lots by the railroad tracks for broken glass and pottery and mirrors and seashells. Daily the neighborhood watched Old Sam as he journeyed — wearing his ragged overalls and tattered hat. Many thought Rodia was mentally unbalanced until the towers began to appear over the fence — towers that represented thirty-three years of work as Sam built his own magical city with streets, squares, and fountains. Sometimes he let the neighborhood children in to walk through the decorated maze and sit on starfish walls, but most of the time he worked

alone on into the night singing along with his beloved Italian opera music.

When Sam Rodia was eighty years old, he handed the key to his house to a neighbor, left, and never came back. The Towers of Watts remain to this very day, still astonishing visitors. The illustrations of this book capture the mood and wit of Old Sam with such cleverness and such detail that children can retell without being able to read the text. Be prepared to offer city maps of L.A. and stories of your own. Your students will not let this wonderful story be forgotten.

Adoption of a Leopard

Horace. Written by Holly Keller. Mulberry Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019. 1995. ISBN: 0-688-11844-5. 32 pp. US\$4.95.

Horace is a heart-warming story about a little leopard who is adopted by tiger parents. He gradually becomes upset because he doesn't look like his relatives, having spots, instead of stripes. After searching for a new family who look like him, he finds one and spends the day happily playing with them. At the end of the day he goes home and decides he is happy with his parents. This is an excellent book for 4, 5, and 6-year-olds starting to explore the idea of adoption and how it can be a beautiful experience. (SAS)

Toy Tales

The Tale of Pig, Bear, Frog, Duck. Written by Helen Cooper.

Four delightful, small books comprise a set. There is the same cast of characters, but in each book one of the four

protagonists — frog, bear, duck, pig — takes center stage. All of the main characters are toys, and it is characteristic of toys, in a household with all the dangers of vigorous love, stairs to fall down, washing machines, and pawings by an omnipresent cat, that they don't remain whole, shiny and new.

For a corduroy and cotton frog, stuffed with rice, a tiny rip becomes disastrous when the cat's shaking scatters the rice for mice to scurry away with. Help comes in the form of rags, and a needle and thread in skillful hands; then the frog is securely stuffed and thriving. When the cat hides the bear in the washbasket, the result is a soggy bear hung out to dry with clothespins on its ears, then dried and brushed — but will the child want the clean bear when the grubby one was so well loved? Yes, the ending is happy: "Dirty paws or clean golden hair, he loved his squashy old, saggy old Bear." The wheeled, wooden duck is the fastest of the toys, so its fall downstairs — was that a paw, pushing? — is a rapid descent to catastrophe. With wheels gone and tail off, at the end it has the honor to wave the winner's flag for the toys that continue to race. In the story of the ceramic pig, whose contents are spent for glue to reassemble its pieces after it's tipped off a shelf by the cat, the final illustration shows a parade of toys: frog riding a firetruck, bear perched on a tractor, patched pig riding in a truck, flagwaving duck.

In each of the four books, endpapers patterned like colorful parquet have insets picturing the four toys, with a central diamond showing the toy-hero of the particular book. Helen Cooper has planned her stories lovingly, and they are sturdy enough to survive young readers' vigorous attention. (JMJ)

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