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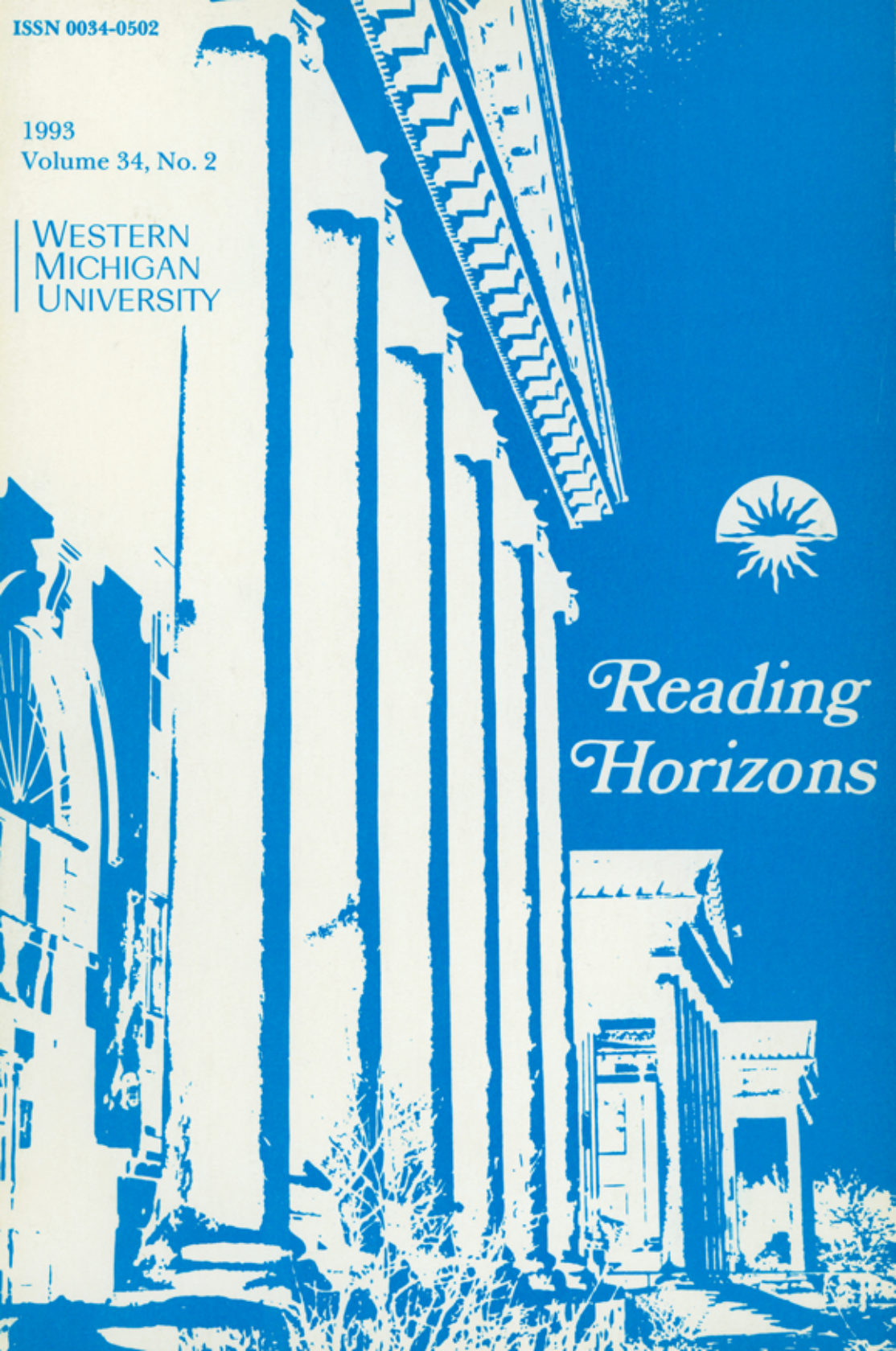
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READING HORIZONS

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READING HORIZONS has been published since 1960, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo Michigan. As a journal devoted to teaching reading at all levels it seeks to bring together, through articles and reports of research findings, those concerned and interested professionals working in the ever widening horizons of reading and related areas of language. READING HORIZONS (ISSN 0034-0502) is published by the College of Education at Western Michigan University. Second class postage is paid at Kalamazoo. Postmaster: Send address changes to READING HORIZONS, WMU, Kalamazoo MI 49008.

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**READING HORIZONS
VOLUME 34 NUMBER 2**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Differences in Schema Gap: A Case Study <i>Deanna M. Lamb</i> <i>Lorraine M. Leidholdt</i>	95
Poetry in the Primary Classroom: Collaboration and Response <i>Stanley B. Straw</i> <i>Linda Craven</i> <i>Pat Sadowy</i> <i>S.P. Baardman</i>	104
Decoding Skill and Successful Beginning Reading in Different Instructional Settings <i>Ellen McIntyre</i>	122
Do Study Guides Improve Text Comprehension? <i>Andrea Giese Maxworthy</i>	137
Theory Into Practice: Issues to Consider When Selecting Reading Software to Meet Different Readers' Needs <i>Kay M. Kincade</i> <i>Terrence V. Stange</i>	151
Protecting the Future of the Whole Language Literacy Movement: Past Lessons and Present Concerns <i>Amy R. Hoffman</i> <i>Susan J. Daniels</i>	170
REVIEWS	
Professional Materials <i>Patrick M. Jenlink</i>	184
Children's Books	188

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Differences in Schema Gap: A Case Study

Deanna M. Lamb
Lorraine M. Leidholdt

As Deanna described her son's latest interest in reading and his responses to what he read, we marveled at how far he had come as a reader in the past few years. That morning, Deanna had watched 11 year old McKenzie as he searched in total absorption for clues to decode the alphabetic runes in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1974). Already, she noted, his compiled dictionary of runes was so complete that he could write decipherable messages to family and friends.

As Deanna continued to reflect on McKenzie's interaction with the works of Tolkien, she shared how he had written diary entries for two characters, Thorin and Bilbo in *The Hobbit* (1938). McKenzie first cited the passage describing the incident to which Thorin and Bilbo would react. Then he wrote several entries about the incident from Thorin's point of view and several from Bilbo's. The entries clearly reflected the distinctions between the two characters as well as their unique reactions to the same incident.

To those who know Deanna, McKenzie's accomplishments would not seem remarkable. In fact, this is what would be expected of a child who had been weaned on the works of Robert McCloskey, Maurice Sendak and Rudyard Kipling and whose mother taught children's literature at a

college. Yet, to us, McKenzie's present whole-hearted engagement with the sophisticated writings of Tolkien was indeed noteworthy for it was just a short time ago that his parents were concerned about him as a reader. A few years ago, as McKenzie approached second grade, his parents noticed that as much as he loved to be read to, he avoided reading. When asked to read, his oral performance indicated that he could decode and pronounce individual words but could not weave them together to make sentences that had the rhythm and rate of spoken language. McKenzie was not using his intuitive knowledge of spoken language when he read, nor was he using the semantic and syntactic cues embedded in the text. He was mainly relying on graphophonic clues. When he read aloud, the reading was incomprehensible to the listener. When asked to tell about what he had just read, McKenzie was unable to do so. Yet, when his parents read to him, McKenzie had always enjoyed commenting on fascinating characters, unique word choices of authors, conflict sustained by action, and style of the illustrations.

McKenzie's parents were worried about him, for they knew of children who at McKenzie's age began a downward spiral in reading accompanied by a loss of self esteem as a learner. This can happen in a classroom during round robin reading, for example, because no matter how basal readers may be disguised in terms of levels, all children know who is a good reader and who is not. Those who read slowly and in a word by word pattern are considered poor readers by their peers. This perception, in turn, may cause the readers to think of themselves as less able, which in turn may cause them to avoid reading, thus compounding the problem. To us, it seemed that McKenzie was at risk as a reader because our concept of reading included not only fast and accurate word recognition which is necessary for fluency, but also meaningful interaction with the text. McKenzie was neither

exhibiting fluency nor gaining meaning. We know that proficient readers, even at first and second grade levels, use all the language cue systems in an integrative manner and do not rely on just one as McKenzie was doing with his exclusive use of graphophonics. Therefore, we turned to the literature on at risk students expecting it to offer some insights into children such as McKenzie. We were surprised at what we found.

We first discovered that there is no consensus in the literature on what the term *at risk student* means. Some writers refer to the general characteristics of schools while others focus on student characteristics. Cuban (1989) simply describes at risk schools as urban. Similarly, Firestone (1989) describes at risk high schools as those which have students with poor attendance, a high drop out and teen pregnancy rate, and poor relationships among students of different ethnic groups. In contrast, Gersten and Dimino (1989) describe at risk students as those who are low achieving, learning disabled or below grade level readers. Slavin and Madden (1989), likewise, define at risk students as those who are in danger of failing to complete their education with an adequate level of skills. They list risk factors that include low achievement, retention in grade, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status and attendance at schools with large numbers of poor students.

None of these descriptions of at risk students fits McKenzie. Here was a child who regularly attended a suburban school that did not have large numbers of poor or ethnically different students, who was not a low achiever, who had never been retained in a grade, and who was not a behavior problem. McKenzie came from a professional family, had been read to since birth, lived in a house overflowing with reading materials and had a command of spoken language far

beyond his chronological age. Here was a child who, given all of his advantages, should have easily become a reader. Yet this was not the case.

Why was it, then, that we thought that McKenzie, at age eight, was at risk as a reader? What was the explanation for his failure to become a reader in the true sense of the word? In our search for an answer, we found direction in an article by Pogrow (1990). Pogrow labeled students in Chapter 1 programs as those who are at risk, but rather than listing risk factors such as attendance and retention, he attributed their difficulties to the skills-based instruction they were receiving. Pogrow believed that these students were at risk due to inadequate and improper instruction based on a knowledge deficit theory. Pogrow contended that these students did not have a knowledge deficit and did not need a program based on such a theory. Instead, Pogrow believed that they needed a program which developed their thinking skills and learning strategies. These students, he found, were unable to transfer and generalize their basic skills to contexts different from the ones in which the skills were learned. This inability interfered with information acquisition and caused the students to look as though they had a knowledge deficit. Pogrow therefore developed a higher order thinking skills program (HOTS) to train students in learning strategies that has been successful with an entire population of students.

What we decided, based on information in Pogrow's article, was to look at McKenzie's understanding of the reading process. Like the students Pogrow described, McKenzie did not really have a knowledge deficit; he learned the skills he was taught in his skills based linguistic reading program. He could decode and pronounce words just as he was taught to do. Moreover, he did not have the risk factors previously discussed. Guided by Pogrow's notion that some students

cannot generalize information and concepts from the context in which they are learned to other contexts, we compared McKenzie's home-learned concept of reading to the way he was instructed in his classroom reading program. Could McKenzie's understanding of the reading process be contributing to his at risk behavior? We suspected that it was.

At home, McKenzie had listened to stories from birth. In doing so, he had been well prepared for the acquisition of literacy. He had begun to understand what Wells (1986) describes as

the "symbolic potential of language": its power to create possible or imaginary worlds through words — by representing experience in symbols that are independent of the objects, events, and relationships symbolized and that can be interpreted in contexts other than those in which the experience originally occurred (p. 156).

Furthermore, through discussion of stories with his parents, McKenzie had extended his view of the world and increased his vocabulary. In addition, through talking about the story with his parents, he was provided with a "validation for his own inner storying" which Wells defines as "that internal mode of meaning making which is probably as deeply rooted in human nature as in language itself" (p. 152). McKenzie listened to stories containing characters who interacted in interesting ways and who resolved problems and conflicts. At home he experienced literature filled with language rich in description which evoked vivid mental images and which contained a variety of sentence and plot structures. Therefore, when he entered school, McKenzie had a well developed schema about stories and the way stories sound and work.

However, at school McKenzie was put in an instructional reading program based on the belief that before children could read stories such as those to which he was accustomed, they had to know the graphophonic system of the English language and have the ability to blend sounds into words which fit specific patterns. Although the children in his class were read to fairly frequently, their instruction for independent reading consisted mainly of letter-sound drills using packets of similarly spelled words in a list format. McKenzie's first contextual reading materials encountered at school had sentences constructed of monosyllabic words all of which represented the same sound-spelling principle, which used stilted language structures such as *Mat is a cat. Mat sat. Mat is a fat cat.* Such materials did not contain the story structure, the language or literary elements familiar to McKenzie. They also did not provide a basis for discussion to extend vicariously his view of the world because they did not contain characters involved in resolving conflicts interesting to him. In essence, the program in which McKenzie was instructed was so different in philosophy, form and materials from what he experienced at home, he was unable to use his previously learned concept of reading and story. Therefore, like the students Pogrow described, McKenzie was unable to connect and transfer his home learned view of reading to that which was presented in his classroom. This, we hypothesized, along with the school's inability to provide appropriate instruction, put him at risk as a reader.

McKenzie, unfortunately, is not the only child to encounter such an experience. Manning and Manning (1989) published a similar account of their daughter's kindergarten reading instruction experience. In this case, the child had entered kindergarten already reading fluently but actually lost this ability when subjected to a phonics based program similar to the one McKenzie was in. Again, there seemed to be a

mismatch between the child's internalized concept of reading and that on which the school's reading program was predicated and which resulted in confusion for her.

But McKenzie's story has a happy ending for, as the reader can tell from the opening scenario, McKenzie has become a voracious reader. This phenomenon began the summer before McKenzie entered second grade when Lorraine gave him her set of *Bill Martin's Instant Readers* (1972) and the accompanying audio tapes. She had successfully used these materials in her classroom to develop children's reading fluency and confidence when she was an elementary teacher, and thought perhaps they would work with McKenzie. The stories in these materials contain predictable story and sentence structures as well as repetitive phrases which encourage and allow the reader to use intuitive knowledge of the syntactic and semantic systems of spoken language in conjunction with graphophonic knowledge. In addition, each story is accompanied by a tape to which the child can listen while following along visually in a book. Guitar music on the tape which matches the rhythm and intonation of the textual phrases further aids the listener in understanding of the music of language.

McKenzie and Deanna listened to these tapes daily for 20-30 minutes for a two week period in August of the summer preceding McKenzie's entrance to second grade. McKenzie readily accepted the Bill Martin materials with the same enthusiasm he exhibited for all the other literature his parents presented to him. At the conclusion of that two week period, McKenzie was not only reading the Bill Martin books fluently, but he was also voluntarily reading other books in his home library with equal fluency and understanding. When asked to tell how the Bill Martin materials helped him to learn to read, McKenzie said:

They inspired my reading. After mom and I spent time with them, I blossomed in my reading. Before we did the Bill Martin books, I could read easy, single words, but I couldn't read hard literature because I hadn't read enough easy literature. I wasn't fluent enough at sounding words out.

We were surprised at this response since the Bill Martin tapes and books contain no graphophonic lessons. Yet, as we thought about his response, we realized that McKenzie was using terminology that he had learned about reading in his school instructional program. When asked to explain, McKenzie further stated:

Bill Martin just motivated me to want to read more because it was so much fun learning to read. He helped me understand books more. When you're fluent at sounding out words, you get meaning. And I also realized that I was smart. So now look at me! Generally I'm bored if I don't have a book to read after school.

The Bill Martin books and tapes are a better match for McKenzie's schema of the reading process, for they use entire texts and stories and, because of Mr. Martin's proficiency with the guitar, they provide the rhythm of language that was missing in the school's instructional program. In effect, these materials — as similar materials with predictable patterns, repetitive phrases, colorful language and wholistic texts would do — helped this child bridge the gap between his personal reading schema and the schema on which his school instruction was based. With an appropriate instructional program, McKenzie went from being an efficient but disinterested caller of words to a child with an avid love of reading for meaning and beauty. With the confidence gained through using such materials, McKenzie continued to read independently on a daily basis. His reading interests rapidly grew

from exclusive reading of picture books to reading chapter books from several genres. Today, he savors the language in his favorite books and at times, he patterns some of his decisions on the heroic characters encountered within. He often rereads books as many as five times, each time discovering new depths of meaning and sharing this with his parents and friends. It is not the intent of these writers to advocate a particular philosophy of literacy instruction. Rather, our intent with this case study is to enhance classroom teachers' awareness of potential problems that can result when discrepancies exist between children's entry schema and the schema which undergirds the school's instructional program. Our hope is that teachers will become aware of the importance of the prior literary experiences that children bring to the classroom and consider this when introducing them to literacy tasks.

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Poetry in the Primary Classroom: Collaboration and Response

Stanley B. Straw
Linda Craven
Pat Sadowy
S.P. Baardman

It was twenty minutes after nine on an October Tuesday morning in Patti Derksen's grade three classroom. Youngsters were seated in the carpeted teaching area facing the chartstands. They were focusing on the new poem of the week to which they'd been introduced the day before. "Remember how we tried this yesterday?" Patti asked. "Ready, and —"

"Some-thing Told the Wi-uld Geese by Ra-chel Fie-uld," the children chorused, then paused, eyes on their teacher.

"Okay, girls," Patti cued softly.

The girls began reciting the poem, their quiet, high voices wavering only slightly: "Something told the wi-uld geese/It was time to go."

Patti smiled and nodded, and the boys took up the next lines:

"Though the fields lay gol-den/Something whis-pered, 'Snow.'"

Alex Argyle teaches grade three in the same school. He loves to read poetry himself and wants to engender this love in his students, but he also wants to help students understand and make sense of the poetry they encounter. He decided to try to work poetry reading, both aloud on his part and on the part of his students, into the language arts units he planned for the school year. Because he and Patti do a lot of their planning together, Alex was also using the Rachel Field poem. He liked choral reading but he wanted to do something more so he had decided to present it as a Directed Reading/Thinking Activity. He placed a transparency of the poem on his projector, covering everything but the title. "Something Told The Wild Geese," he read. "Now, put up your hand if you can tell me something about geese." He fielded a few responses until someone mentioned that she'd seen a vee of geese in flight on the weekend. "Something told the wild geese/It was time to go. Where do you think geese would go?"

"South."

"Where it's warm."

"Somewhere warmer than here."

Alex nodded then asked, "What time of year do you think it is in this poem?"

"Winter."

"Almost winter."

"The autumn."

"Okay, let's take a look: Though the field lay golden. What time of year is it when fields are golden?..."

Patti and Alex both value the poetry they share with students and both were dissatisfied with the limited number of teaching activities they knew of. They were disappointed

with the limited way in which their students seemed to care about the poems: although the students enjoyed the poems, their engagement with them often seemed trivial and superficial. Both teachers wanted something more. They both examined the basal program they used to see how much poetry actually was integrated into the reading material and to see how poetry was handled by the series. They found very little poetry in the series and very little emphasis on children understanding the poetry they were asked to read (Durkin, 1981). When they did find poetry, they found that it was handled in much the same way as other selections or that children did not focus on the meaning of the poetry they were asked to read.

Finding little help for the teaching of poetry in the basals, they searched the language arts methods texts they had used in university courses on teaching methodology. Both felt that the suggestions laid out in the textbooks gave them very little direction in how to present and teach poetry, particularly the meaning of poetry, to their classes.

Background for the study

The most recent learning and literary theories are challenging the ways in which practitioners are teaching reading and understanding. In the past, the focus in teaching reading has been on the acquisition of a hierarchy of subskills and the mastery of a controlled vocabulary. Comprehension was separable from and dependent on the development of the lower level word identification skills. Much of reading time was spent on isolated skills that were intended to improve, but did not include, the act of reading, particularly the reading of poetry. These skills were considered to be important steps in the process of enabling the reader to extract the correct and determinable meaning from text.

In more recent conceptualizations of reading, what readers bring to the act of reading strongly affects what they get out of the act of reading. Rosenblatt's transactional theory of aesthetic reading (1978) supports this view, as does Goodman's recent conceptualization of the reading process (1985). The transactional theory states that meaning is what is negotiated between the reader and the text; each response to the text is a process in which reading and text condition each other. It is a constructive process and the characteristics of the reader and the reading situation are as important as the characteristics of the text. Instructional theorists (Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984; Straw, 1989; 1990) suggest that reading, because of its social and constructive nature, requires a supportive and collaborative environment, as children learn to deal with text and reading situations. Through interaction with peers and teachers children can develop the abilities to reflect upon their unique personal constructs and responses and thereby become active negotiators of meaning.

One aspect of reading that has received little attention in elementary schools is the teaching of poetry. In a review of the literature on teaching poetry in the elementary school, Amann (1986) found that there was a severe lack of experimental research in the field. In addition, Amann found no coherent theory in the literature on how to develop poetic intuition in children. She found little more than Mr. Argyle and Miss Derksen.

There have been no systematic studies that we know of that address how teachers approach the introduction and study of poetry at the elementary level. In an attempt to gain insight into how poetry is generally handled with students, we began by reviewing a number of popular language arts programs. Here we found that two fairly predictable patterns of dealing with poetry were presented. The first was to treat

poetry in the same way as any other selection, using an expanded Directed Reading Activity or Directed Reading/Thinking Activity format. This included the introduction of a poem through the pictures and title; some exercises around predicting what the poem will be about; a reading of the poem, either silently or aloud by the teacher; a group reading of the poem (chorally or individually by students); and some comprehension questions about the poem.

The other pattern was to deal with the poem by reading it and doing a set of activities that were designed to help students experience the poem. For example, students were asked to read the poem chorally, to identify the words and phrases they liked best, and to discuss the feeling represented in the poems. We also reviewed a number of language arts methods texts to find how the authors suggested that teachers deal with poetry in their classrooms. Our first observation was how few suggestions there were for the teaching of poetry. A number of texts did not even have the term poetry in their indexes, while others centered the discussion of reading poetry around the issue of what poetry to choose for elementary students.

Hoskisson and Tompkins (1987) are typical in their approach. Under "Response Activities," they suggest that a teacher have students do choral reading, have students compile a collection of favorite poems, and use activities such as "informal drama, art, and music activities" (p. 349). Similar activities are outlined in Burns and Broman (1983), Petty, Petty, and Salzer (1989), and Cox (1988). Ellis, Standal, Pennau, and Rummel (1989) spend one paragraph (eight lines) on "Guiding Children's Responses to Poetry." The typical dealing with poetry instruction in the elementary school is demonstrated in Temple and Gillet (1984): "We can help students enjoy and profit from poetry without necessarily analyzing a poem's meaning or structure. It is not necessary or even

desirable to study most of the poetry we share with children" (p. 166). These approaches assume three things. First, they assume that studying a poem's meaning or structure would be detrimental to students' enjoyment. Second, they assume that the possible meanings of poems are obvious to students. Third, they assume that the development of poetic intuition can emerge from the experience of poetry alone. Our own assumption is that when the study of a poem's structure and meaning is teacher-centered it can very well be detrimental, but if structure and meaning are considered by the students themselves, such consideration can enrich the experience of the poem.

In light of the emerging literacy theories and the dearth of theory and research on teaching poetic intuition in children, the following study was undertaken to investigate if strategies from reader response and transactional theories could be implemented with grade three children while they were encountering poetry. The findings of such a study could provide elementary teachers with some alternatives for exploring instruction in poetry.

Drawn from the theoretical bases of transactional models of reading and the notions around the social context of learning to read, this study involved students engaged in responding to poetry in small collaborative groups, through what Hannsen, Harste, and Short (1990) call "interpretive communities" (p. 264). Through dialogue with their peers, groups of students attempted to make sense of a series of poems. Dias (1979), in working with general stream high school students, compared the effects of a collaborative learning model to those of a teacher-centered approach in teaching students to read and interpret poetry. His results indicated that students involved in collaborative exercises scored significantly higher on the quality of their responses to sight poetry than students

who engaged in teacher-led activities. Dias concluded that the teacher-centered approaches short-circuited students' initial responses and prevented them from developing a "sure sense of their own response" (p. 206). Collaborative learning, on the other hand, facilitated the students' abilities to respond to a poem openly and confidently.

Similar studies with high school students were carried out by Bryant (1984) and Straw (1989). In the Straw study, for example, grade 12 students were given pre- and post-test sight poems and were judged on their maturity of response. The two groups in the investigation studied the same poetry under two different conditions: a collaborative exploration condition and a teacher-led discussion condition. The data from the study indicated that two-thirds of the students in the collaborative group responded in the upper range of the response assessment, whereas only 18 percent of the teacher-led group responded in the same range.

Implementation of the present study

The purpose of the study reported here was to compare traditional instruction in poetry with collaborative learning in poetry with grade three students. Based on the results of other studies in response to poetry at the high school level, we hypothesized that student-directed small-group collaborative discussion would result in significantly better interpretations of poetry than a traditional teacher-led method. The research question generated for the study was: What is the relative effectiveness of independent small-group discussion compared to traditional instruction on the performance of grade three students when they are asked to respond to poetry.

Subjects and conditions. The subjects in this study were eight- and nine-year-old children in a third grade classroom

in a predominantly white middle class area of Winnipeg. Twenty-one students took part in the study — ten girls and eleven boys. Only those students in the class who wrote three sentences or more successfully were included in the analysis, though all students in the class were included in the instruction. This resulted in two students being excluded from the analysis. This particular class was selected because the teacher, like Patti and Alex in the scenarios at the beginning of this paper, was searching for a way to help students respond to poetry in a more sophisticated fashion.

The study was carried out in the school library under the direction of the teacher-librarian. The children were all relaxed and at ease with the teacher-librarian since she had worked with them on implementing a writing workshop in their classroom earlier in the year. The children participated in four trials for the purposes of the study: two teacher-directed experiences and two collaborative experiences. The teacher-directed experiences were modeled on the suggestions made by current language arts methods texts for the teaching and experiencing of poetry. The collaborative experiences were modeled loosely on the suggestions made by Dias (1987). The treatments were repeated to attempt to control for the effect of any one poem on the results of the study.

Four poems were chosen, all of similar length and complexity. A pilot study established that students at this level wrote the same length of responses to the four poems. After the four poems were chosen by the teacher-librarian, they were drawn randomly and assigned to trials to be used in the study. Each trial was carried out between 11:00 a.m. and noon over a period of two weeks. In all four trials, the children spent 25 to 30 minutes engaged in activities focusing on the poem and 15 minutes writing a response to the poem.

The teacher-led activities were generated from activities suggested in language arts textbooks and attempted to parallel the most commonly suggested activities for dealing with poetry. In the first trial (A), the students were introduced to the poem "The Waves of the Sea," written on an experience chart in the library. The whole group was instructed using a teacher-led format with the following procedures: 1) the teacher read the poem aloud; 2) the children read the poem aloud with the teacher; 3) the teacher drew attention to patterns in the poem (rhythm, rhyme, repeated words or phrases); 4) the teacher explained any difficult words and asked students to explain what was taking place in the poem; 5) the teacher and the class clapped the rhythm of the poem; 6) the teacher and the class discussed organization of the poem for choral reading; 7) the group practiced suggestions and did a final choral reading of the poem.

This lesson was followed by asking the children to complete an evaluation sheet on which they were asked to write what the poem meant to them. This pattern was followed again in the second trial (B) with the poem "Don't Eat Spiders." The instructional pattern was identical to the first trial. In the third trial (C), students were introduced to the poem "The Kitchen Witch" in student-centered small-group discussions. Children were assigned to heterogeneous groups of four or five. Each group was given multiple copies of the poem and was instructed to choose a reporter and then talk about the poem with the other members of the group. After fifteen minutes, the small groups were called together into a single group and each reporter shared the group's ideas about the poem. During the group discussion, the classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian monitored the students' activities, but did not take part in any of the discussions. During the reporting back session, the teacher acted as facilitator, but did not comment on any of the groups' responses except to

assure them that everyone's ideas were valid. This was followed by each child again responding in writing to the poem's meaning. This procedure was repeated in the fourth trial (D), using the poem "The Ants at the Olympics." The children remained in the same groups as in the third trial, but chose a different reporter.

Evaluation of the responses

The children's responses to each poem were evaluated using the following criteria: 3 = interpretive response, 2 = inferential response, 1 = retelling, 0 = no response or nonsense. The following definitions were used for each of these levels, and each is accompanied by a response which would be typical for that definition.

Interpretive. Responses were considered to be interpretive if they showed insights into a theme for the poem as a whole: *The poem says children should listen to their parents or else they could be in danger; this poem shows how the ocean got the kid because he didn't listen to his mother's advice; so kids should listen or else they could drown.*

Inferential. Responses were considered to be inferential if they drew some conclusions based on parts of the poem, but did not make an interpretive statement about an overall meaning of the poem: *It's about how the little girl didn't listen to her mom so she drowned; the biggest wave got her; because she went too close.*

Retelling. Responses were considered to be retelling if they related the events of the poem: *The boy can play at the beach; play in the waves; they are big and green.*

Nonsense. Responses that indicated little or no understanding of the content or the events of the poem were considered to be nonsense.

Four markers were involved in the evaluation task. Responses were distributed among the markers randomly; each response was evaluated independently by two markers. If there was a disagreement between these two markers, a third marker was asked to arbitrate; all three markers had to agree on the final score awarded the paper. Scores for the two trials under each condition were summed in order to arrive at a total score for each student (Trial A + Trial B = Teacher-led score; Trial C + Trial D = Collaborative score). The largest score possible was, therefore, a score of 6; the lowest possible score was 0.

Results

The data from the study were analyzed employing a Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test, a repeated measures non-parametric statistic that tests the hypothesis that scores under one condition (the teacher-led condition) will not be significantly different from the scores under the other condition (the collaborative condition). The results are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

In examining the frequency of scores under each condition, we found that a majority of the students (13 of the 21, or more than 60 percent) scored between 1 and 3 under the teacher-led condition, while only 5 students (or less than 25 percent) scored in that range under the collaborative condition. On the other hand, only 8 students (less than 40 percent) scored between 4 and 6 in the teacher-led condition, while 16 students (more than 74 percent) scored in that range under the collaborative condition.

TABLE 1
*Wilcoxon Analysis of the Change Under Two Conditions:
Teacher-led vs. Collaborative*

<u>Comparison</u>	<u>Frequency of students</u>
Teacher-led higher than collaborative	2
Teacher-led lower than collaborative	14
Teacher-led equal to collaborative	5
Total students	21

$z = 2.7923$, $p = .0052$ (two-tailed)

TABLE 2
*Frequency of Scores Under the Two Conditions:
Teacher-led and Collaborative*

<u>Score-Explanation</u>	<u>Frequency Teacher-led</u>		<u>Frequency Collaborative</u>	
0 - both responses nonsense	0	(00.0%)	0	(00.0%)
1 - 1 response nonsense/ 1 retelling	2	(09.5%)	0	(00.0%)
2 - both responses retellings	9	(42.9%)	3	(14.3%)
3 - 1 response retelling/ 1 inference	2	(09.5%)	2	(09.5%)
4 - both responses inferences	3	(14.3%)	6	(28.6%)
5 - 1 response inference/ 1 interpretation	0	(00.0%)	6	(28.6%)
6 - both responses interpretations	5	(23.8%)	4	(19.0%)
TOTAL	21	(100%)	21	(100%)

In general, the results of this research warrant the conclusion that the collaborative learning strategy led students to more mature responses to poetry than the teacher-directed strategy. This finding is consistent with the previous findings

of Dias (1979), Bryant (1984), and Straw (1989). The collaborative learning strategy in which children were encouraged to talk to their peers about their ideas seemed to be an effective way to foster students' interpretive skills.

From the poem "Ants at the Olympics" come these examples of interpretive responses under the collaborative condition: *I think it was about, no matter how small you are you should never give up because eventually you will win; the moral of the poem is never be a poor sport, just keep trying; you should always be prepared and always keep trying; there's always a next time.*

One of the things we found interesting as we observed the students interacting in their groups was the amount of time spent relating things in the poems to events in their own lives. This would certainly support the reading response theorists who state that a reader's interpretation of a text depends on what the text evoked within that reader. Students can learn a great deal through small-group interactions with peers and this type of instruction can be a valuable strategy to employ in the classroom, especially when higher-level thinking skills such as inferencing and interpretation are desired. Teachers will need to re-evaluate their role in the classroom, especially when presenting literature. From this and the related research in cooperative learning, it is apparent that teachers need to step aside from the role of information-giver to that of process-facilitator. Classrooms need to be set up to provide more student talk time, more student interaction around literature, and less teacher talk.

The students in this study interacted for 25 to 30 minutes in their groups before the whole-class sharing sessions. Varying the time limit might prove illuminating for teachers. Although specific times and sequences of activity will vary for

different students and for different poems, it is possible that longer periods of time would result in richer interactions. A sufficient period of time is essential for the children to 1) reread/review the poem after the teacher has read it, or to read it and reread it if the teacher has not read it; 2) discuss surface details of the poem and to clarify vocabulary; 3) connect the poet's ideas to their own knowledge and experience; 4) question whatever does not 'fit' their initial understanding.

The above activities happen recursively within the group activity. For example, after making a tentative connection a student will reread a line to double check a word. When a classmate wants verification of the connection, both may reread an entire stanza. The entire group may check the connection against the group's first interpretation. In spite of this recursiveness, the major questioning of meanings, looking at the whole poem in a different light, does not usually happen until after some preliminary decisions are made, and questioned, and discarded. In early grades, re-evaluation of this nature might be a teacher's goal for only a few of the more able readers in the room. Nonetheless, the heterogeneity of cooperative learning groups is a critical feature: though at times a teacher may want to encourage the more able readers/responders to work together, the teacher must not lose sight of the fact that these students' contributions are essential to the entire group. Not only do they provide catalytic ideas, but they also provide models of higher-level thinking. As students gain increased practice at unstructured response and gain security with the activity, the time periods for discussion may be sustained somewhat beyond 25 to 30 minutes, the writing time may be sustained beyond 15 minutes, and longer or more complex poems may be attempted. Of course, as with any other activity, the time allocated must take students' interests into account.

It is important for teachers to realize that they must also gain security with the activity: teachers accustomed to being in full control may, at first, feel awkward not orchestrating events or having even a small degree of input into the discussions. Similarly, they may need time to trust the students to engage seriously in response to poetry. With young students or those unaccustomed to working in groups, some basic group skills (e.g., turn taking, attending to the speaker) should be introduced before expecting the type of engagement evidenced in this study. The results reported here provide limited but continuing support for the effectiveness of collaborative learning, the power of dialoging, and the role of interpretive communities in developing students' ability and maturity in responding to poetry at an intuitive level.

What advice should teachers like Patti and Alex draw from this? Should they give up ever asking students to experience poetry and substitute at all times small-group explorations of poetry? Should they focus on the meaning of poetry and forget the other aspects of poetry such as rhythm, rhyme, and meter that make poetry a unique form of language? Of course not! On the other hand, it seems that small-group explorations of poetry can have a powerful effect on students' ability to focus on the meanings derived from poetry. We advise that teachers spend more time reading poetry to and with students. We also advise that such activities as choral reading be continued in an attempt to make students sensitive to the language aspects of poetry. We also suggest, however, that small-group explorations of poetry be systematically included in the poetry activities planned for children. Children bring an immense amount of experience to the act of reading; they should be given the opportunity to employ that knowledge and experience in making sense of the literature they read. They should also be encouraged to see the understanding of poetry as a collaborative activity. By sharing

their experiences, they can become better readers and responders to poetry. Perhaps next autumn a group of Miss Derksen's or Mr. Argyle's students might sound like this:

Ryan: *So what is this poem anyways?*

Jesse: *It's a question.*

Melissa: *A question?*

Jesse: *Yeah, like who told them to go. Who said it's time to go?*

Melissa: *Oh, I see.*

Ryan: *Well, like their mother, I think. I think it would be their mother, for the little ones anyways.*

Jesse: *And their father. Your father can tell you to do something.*

Melissa: *But geese don't talk so it's not that.*

Ryan: *They can sort of talk. It's called 'communication.' Animals communicate with each other.*

Melissa: *But it says here, "something whispered." Well, geese don't whisper, now do they?*

Jesse: *Maybe real geese don't but poem geese could.*

Ryan: *I think it's something else.*

Melissa: *Like what?*

Ryan: *I don't know. Like something inside you that tells you what to do.*

Jesse: *Yeah, it's your conscience.*

Melissa: *Or your unconscience.*

Ryan: *No, that means you're nearly dead.*

Jesse: *I know! Maybe it's Jesus! Jesus and God telling the geese the right thing what to do.*

Ryan: *You mean like it's a commandment?*

Jesse: *Yes.*

Melissa: *No, geese don't have commandments. They just know what to do.*

Ryan: *Like I know if it's cold I should put my sweater on.*

Melissa: *But sometimes your mom has to tell you.*

Jesse: *Or your dad!*

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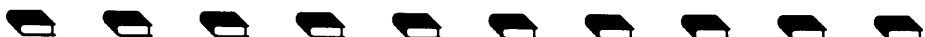
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Decoding Skill and Successful Beginning Reading in Different Instructional Settings

Ellen McIntyre

The debate over whether to include phonics in early literacy instruction has been one of the hottest topics in the field of reading. Researchers and teachers agree that children must be able to use graphophonic knowledge in order to learn to read. That is, children must understand that written symbols correspond to sounds which make up written words, and they must be able to decode new words. Yet there is still debate over whether phonics instruction is necessary for children to learn these concepts and skills.

On one side of the debate, researchers with a traditional, or conventional, view of reading acquisition argue that children first learn phonemic awareness, after which they are able to decode words, and finally they can read text. These educators argue that phonemic awareness and sound/symbol relations are *prerequisites* to reading (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967). Studies have shown children who have had training in phonemic awareness outperform those who have not on a number of early literacy tasks, including reading (Adams, 1990; Juel, Griffith and Gough, 1986). These studies lead to the conclusion that children who are taught to segment phonemes will be better able to read. Many educators agree

that there is little harm and much value in explicit phonics instruction (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985).

Researchers from an emergent literacy or whole language perspective usually do not argue the importance of graphophonic understanding and skill for beginning readers. They do, however, often argue that the focus of beginning reading ought to be on meaning rather than sounds and symbols. After all, reading is comprehending (Smith, 1986). Clearly, some educators suggest that decoding instruction gets in the way of children's sense-making as they read and write, because children's focus turns from meaning to individual letters and sounds (Goodman, Smith, Meredith and Goodman, 1987; Smith, 1988). Further, when meaning is at the forefront of their reading and writing, some researchers have found that children can and do learn how to decode through reading literature (Freppon, 1991; Freppon and Dahl, 1991; McIntyre, 1990) or while writing meaningful texts (Gunderson and Shapiro, 1988). Indeed, some children appear to learn how to decode print in environments where phonics is never explicitly taught.

The conventional view and the whole language view are extremely different stances "which do not take into account differences in children — which are enormous" (Beck, 1990). Some children do not observe patterns or clues which allow them to discover the graphophonic system without direct, explicit intervention (Barr, 1991; Beck, 1990). In both traditional and whole language classrooms, there is likely to be a subset of children who do not learn the graphophonic system and who fail to learn to decode (Beck, 1990; McIntyre, 1992b; Winsor, 1990). It seems some children can benefit from instructional contexts that others find difficult or confusing. To understand these individual differences in children, it is necessary to examine carefully the nature of the instruction

received by children who succeed in learning to read. In this article, I will discuss three children who successfully learned phonics in three very different instructional settings, and then I will draw conclusions about appropriate instruction for such children.

Early reading success in a conventional first grade

Audrey came from a working class family of Appalachian descent. I observed her twice weekly in school from the beginning of kindergarten through the end of her first grade year (McIntyre, 1992a). I tape-recorded all she and her teacher said with a remote, wireless microphone. I visited her home twice to talk to her parents and observe her literacy environment, and I administered several written language tasks in early kindergarten and late first grade to assess written language knowledge. I also interviewed Audrey and her teacher regularly during the first grade year.

Audrey was rarely read to at home, but often liked to play school with her sister, and she attended her sister's home tutoring sessions prior to kindergarten. Audrey attended a poor urban school characterized by traditional instruction. Literacy instruction was basal-driven with an emphasis on the sequential mastery of discrete skills and it had a high degree of teacher directed instruction. Upon entering first grade, Audrey had learned the alphabet, a set of sight words, and most of Clay's (1979) Concepts of Print, such as intentionality, directionality, and wordness. Audrey had also "caught on" to the alphabetic principle, though she did not know many sound/symbol correspondences nor was she able to decode words. She could not yet read conventionally, but was reading pictures or short basal sentences comprised of known sight words.

Audrey's first-grade teacher used the Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich basal reading series. She conducted whole-class and ability-grouped reading lessons daily. Children read one or two stories a week after vocabulary and word attack skills were introduced through the teacher's guide. Phonics instruction was an integral part of this program. Audrey's teacher believed in the importance of understanding the phonemic nature of language, learning the letters and their sounds, and decoding as a strategy for ascertaining unknown words. She often worked with one child at a time when reading aloud, helping that child to decode words as the rest of the class observed. She spent considerable time teaching sound/symbol relations in isolation from reading and she implicitly taught about the phonemic nature of language by slowly sounding out words for children such as when she would say *m/an* for *man*. The teacher read aloud one storybook daily and the children were provided 5-15 minutes each day for sustained reading of books of their choice.

Audrey was a successful learner within this conventional first grade. She was clearly good at "doing school" (Dyson, 1984) as she usually did exactly what the teacher expected — no more and no less. Audrey came to first grade understanding many concepts of print. When instruction focused on the graphophonic aspects of print, Audrey easily memorized sounds and symbols and eventually could use sound/symbol relations to decode words. But mid-first grade Audrey's teacher began allowing her to write. Although the teacher insisted on accuracy, the few invented spellings which Audrey did use showed evidence of her graphophonic knowledge. For example, in January, she wrote "I eight nathing for brafis (breakfast). I eight tos (toast) for lunch." At this time, Audrey began reading *I Can Read* books fairly fluently, using decoding as a strategy for figuring out unknown words. Audrey also chose to read during her free time and

she appeared to enjoy it, showing promise that she will continue to grow as a literate individual.

Early reading success in a whole language classroom

Maria is a middle-class child who often took books home from school to read. She attended a "progressive" public school, viewed as one of the best in the area. Her first grade teacher was considered a whole language teacher and was a leader in the TAWL (Teachers Applying Whole Language) movement in her city. Maria's first-grade literacy instruction included book demonstrations (Holdaway, 1979), specific teaching of comprehension and writing strategies, extended time to read, write, and share, and collaborative reading and writing activities. The children were given approximately 60 minutes daily to either read or write texts of their choice. There was almost no phonics instruction, except when it took place incidentally, such as when the teacher mentioned "Do you notice how 'cheese' and 'chili' begin the same way? They both begin with the 'ch' sound."

I began to follow Maria from the first day of the first grade through February. I observed and tape recorded her reading twice a week. Maria started school interested and motivated to read. She seemed to love stories and enthusiastically read and wrote every day for the 60 minute work time. She often sat alone in a rocking chair and chanted the words to *Brown Bear* or *Mrs. Wishy Washy* as she flipped through the pages or studied the illustrations.

In November of first grade Maria was reading the highly predictable books from memory. Maria's teacher regularly taught children in heterogeneous groups and read with the children one-on-one. When she sat with Maria, she read to her, pointing to the words. She led Maria in echo reading, one sentence at a time. She listened as Maria read aloud to

her, encouraging her to ascertain words from the contexts of the sentences.

By December Maria became more focused on the print. She was observed for a few weeks in December and January reading "aspectually" (Sulzby, 1985) by focusing only on words she knew automatically or focusing on the sounds that she knew, even though the classroom instruction remained meaning-focused. For example, when reading the poem "His head will have to have a hat, his hat is on, just look at that" Maria read, "He... head... wi- have to have a hat, he hat is on, just like at that." Also at that time she began to use invented spelling in her writing, showing some graphophonic knowledge, such as when she wrote "The book aubout storese by (name). To her hol famey and Amy." By spring Maria read most of the books she chose conventionally. Maria followed developmental patterns described in emergent literacy literature (Dyson, 1991; Ferriero and Teberosky, 1982; Sulzby, 1985) without having had phonics instruction.

Early reading success in a tutoring setting

I met Tamara while serving as her tutor in a university literacy center which serves children who have reading and writing problems. Instruction at the center was based on whole language theory. Most children were assigned to work one-on-one with a teacher twice weekly for an hour. Teachers were graduate students in the reading specialist program. As students, we studied whole language theory, research, and practice, specifically that espoused by Goodman, Smith, Meredith and Goodman (1987), Goodman, Watson and Burke (1987), and Clay (1979). The components of the one-to-one literacy program followed those outlined by Reading Recovery (Pinnell, Fried and Estice, 1990; Clay, 1979), except that we met with students only twice a week for an hour rather than daily for 30 minutes.

Tamara came to the university's literacy center because her parents were concerned about her progress in reading, noting that "reading just hadn't clicked for Tamara." Tamara came from a middle class family and was read to approximately twice a week and enjoyed it. Tamara attended a "conventional" school, much like Audrey's, where she was largely unsuccessful.

Tamara was a premature baby who had a history of seizures of unknown causes. She did not talk until she was four. Tamara had obvious motor problems and was frequently called clumsy and uncoordinated. She often fell asleep in school, and although she attempted to fall asleep in the literacy center, we usually did not let her. The center's director and Tamara's teachers suggested that Tamara probably had some neurological problems which would make learning to read and write a lengthier process than for other children, but that it should not block learning.

Tamara entered the center in the spring of her first year of first grade. I took over teaching Tamara the following fall when she was repeating first grade. Although she was a happy, lovable child while in the Center, she was simply not interested in reading or writing. Thus, teaching and learning were difficult and painstaking.

One of the instructional goals of her tutorial program was to spend half the hour reading and half the hour writing. During the reading time, I read to Tamara and attempted to get her to discuss the readings. I read many highly predictable books as well as award-winning children's literature. Tamara also listened to stories on tape (while I encouraged her to follow along with the print), but she often lost her place and became confused. I spent time listening to Tamara. As she

"read," I tried to get her to focus on print, predict words from the contexts of sentences and pictures, and to notice grapho-phonetic patterns in words. She often looked up, wiggled, dropped the book, and generally moved in and out of reading and physically rearranging herself. Tamara primarily read from memory by glancing at the pictures. I felt as though I had to push her to focus on the print. She seemed to be making little progress and she very naturally and simply chose to focus on pictures and chant words from memory. Although I knew this was part of reading development, I wanted her to move in her development, so I continued to coax her to point to words and decode those she could while reading. I began explicitly teaching sound-symbol relations in the context of storybook reading. For example, as we read the short, predictable book *Mrs. Wishy Washy*, I pointed out that wishy and washy sounded alike (exaggerating the sounds) and they both began with a *w*. I also told her to use this new knowledge when she came across other words which began with *w*.

Yet, most often when I insisted Tamara focus on print, she moved away from the text and read "globally" by glancing at a few words and reading only for the gist of what was printed. When told to point to words, the reading became so slow that Tamara seemed to forget about the meaning of what she had read. For the entire year, Tamara could not seem to focus on print and read for meaning simultaneously. It was either/or. She could not quite "orchestrate" (Dyson, 1991) both meaning and grapho-phonetic cueing systems. I felt frustrated and anxious about her progress.

During the writing period, I tried to get Tamara to write from her experiences. I wanted her to achieve fluency as well as to use sound/symbol relations to spell. I felt as though I had to force her to focus on print. In fact, on every occasion when Tamara was permitted to choose materials and

activities within the print-rich literacy environment, she always chose non-print activities (such as looking at pictures in books), and often chose non-literacy activities, such as chatting with me, playing on the rug, or taking a walk through the university. Thus, I did not often permit her to choose. I had to constantly nudge (Freppon and Dahl, 1991) her toward a focus on print with friendly but persistent one-on-one instruction.

On the occasions when Tamara did write, the task was slow and laborious (1-3 sentences in about 20 minutes) and she needed constant assistance. The sessions were highly scaffolded. I supported her every move, elaborately sounding out words for her and pointing out patterns. Her products often contained only key words rather than full sentences, as in the following story: "I lik kinIn (Kings Island). The br krs (bumper cars). I lik to rd knclrb (ride the King Cobra)." Tamara read her piece as "I like to go to Kings Island. I like the bumper cars. I like to ride the King Cobra." Clearly, Tamara was still unable to completely "orchestrate" both meaning and the code as she wrote. That is, she experienced the tension between her intended meaning and the symbols she used to convey that meaning (Dyson, 1991).

Tamara entered second grade in her public school the following fall and was placed in the same multi-grade classroom with the same teacher. Her teacher reported that she was "hanging on by her fingernails," that her inattentiveness and difficulty in completing independent work were factors hindering her progress.

Tamara also remained a student at the literacy center. Another graduate student resumed the teaching, but I remained keenly aware of her development. Through talks with her tutor, one observation of Tamara, and examination

of her progress reports, I learned Tamara spent the fall of that year in virtually the same kind of instruction and activities. Her tutor, Barb, wrote that Tamara preferred to read the predictable books, avoiding books she felt were too long. She continued to read from memory or by focusing solely on decoding rather than orchestrating meaning and graphophonic systems simultaneously. By December, Tamara more consistently focused on the print rather than the pictures. Her tutor wrote, "although Tamara attends to the print rather than the pictures when she reads, she often demonstrates difficulty maintaining her place in the text, and will skip words and even lines."

By spring, Tamara consistently focused on graphophonics. Her Reading Miscue Inventory (Goodman, Watson and Burke, 1987) revealed that Tamara corrected miscues 11 percent of the time. When miscues occurred, loss in meaning construction frequently resulted, but graphophonic relationships were maintained. Her retelling of what she read also indicated that, although she was now regularly focusing on print, she clearly was not reading for meaning. Other reports during that period indicated that Tamara did not avoid literacy activities and seemed to enjoy reading and writing. A spelling test given in February showed evidence of extensive knowledge of sound/symbol relations. Tamara was slowly progressing.

By April efforts were made to encourage Tamara to read more of the *I Can Read* books in addition to the highly patterned predictable books. Tamara was also encouraged to read slightly longer texts in order to improve her ability to attend to tasks for a longer period of time. Tamara responded well to these efforts. With support, she was able to read many of the *I Can Read* books. Her tutor wrote "at present, alternate reading of pages by Tamara and the tutor seem to work best.

Using a finger to point helps Tamara attend to the print and reduces her tendency to skip lines of text. While reading, Tamara is able to make appropriate predictions about the story and overall seems to be developing a sense of story structure." Tamara had gradually begun to read; she was more and more able to use decoding as a skill while maintaining a sense of purpose in order to comprehend print.

By June of her second full year at the Center, Tamara had begun to read fluently in the Center, using both meaning (as shown by comprehension measures and her tendency to self-correct) and decoding as strategies for figuring out unknown words. She had moved from reading strictly from memory to reading books like *Corduroy* and *Clifford, the Big Red Dog* as well as many *I Can Read* books. Although she still had difficulty with attention and physical organization, she had come to comprehend text better, both her own and others.

Tamara also made a good deal of progress as she wrote. She revised and kept her audience in mind. Importantly, she had begun to perceive herself as a reader and writer. Although she still said reading and writing were not her favorite activities, she had moved to successful (functional and fluent) reading and writing. At the end of her second year we "graduated" her from the Center.

Individuals and successful reading

What can we learn from these three children in these three different instructional settings? First, all three children learned to read and all three learned the graphophonic system (as shown by their invented spellings). Although they came from different instructional settings, they all developed in similar ways, yet at different rates. All three generally moved through the stages and principles of beginning reading and writing which is repeatedly documented in the literature

(Dyson, 1991; Ferriero and Teberosky, 1982; Sulzby, 1985; Sulzby and Teale, 1991). That is, they generally moved from unconventional, yet functional, uses of print to read and write, to a specific focus on graphophonics, and finally to an orchestration of both meaning and other cueing systems.

Second, all three teachers provided the individual instruction which nudged the learner toward literacy development, providing the necessary scaffold. Audrey's traditional instruction was appropriate, considering her incoming knowledge of print, her ability to make sense of the instruction, and her opportunities (albeit brief) for independent reading and writing. The explicit teaching of phonics, even in isolation, seemed to serve Audrey well as she was developmentally ready to understand and, to some extent, transfer these skills and knowledge to her independent reading and writing contexts. Maria came to school knowing many concepts about print and having a love of books. She progressed in her meaning-centered classroom and became graphophonically aware quite naturally through reading and writing. During the year I taught Tamara at the literacy center, she seemed to be stuck in a stage of development in which she could not bring her cueing systems together as she read or wrote. My hunch at the time was to keep pressing her to focus on the graphophonic system while reading familiar texts, rather than back off. I felt much as her classroom teacher probably felt — worried about Tamara and frustrated with my teaching. In retrospect, I think teaching her sounds and symbols in this context was the right move for her as shown by her later leaps in growth in both reading and writing.

Finally, for all three children, writing was part of their curriculum. The importance of writing in the early grades for the development of graphophonic knowledge is well documented (Bissex, 1980; Clay, 1975; Gunderson and Shapiro,

1988). It is often not until children are encouraged or need to write do they learn the functional uses of sound/symbol relations.

It appears that some children may need more guidance, hand holding, forcing almost, as in the case of Tamara, in order to learn graphophonic relations necessary for decoding that leads to independent reading. Other children, such as Maria, need only to be put in a literate environment where they can ask questions of their teacher and fellow students and view others' ways of reading and writing in order to continue their literacy development. The art in teaching is knowing when to push and when to back off and with whom. If the teacher is unsure, I advocate erring on the side of pushing a little, within an environment which is risk-free for the child.

Implications and conclusion

Each teacher had a commitment to one specific approach to literacy instruction and they taught *all* children the same curriculum in the same way. It is important to first note that what was appropriate for Audrey, Maria and Tamara may not be especially appropriate for their classmates. Regardless of the label given to the instructional settings, we must look at the details of what happens under these labels to be able to make informed decisions about what is needed for individual children. The role of the teacher is to become informed about literacy development, carefully observe children, and to take time to meet with individual learners who need more nudging.

Teachers can set up environments in which all kinds of learners can succeed. Some teachers may choose to set places and times aside for more structured activities within a setting where children choose their own literacy activity. Teachers

may hold phonics lessons for small groups of children who appear to need it. They may find ways to work one-on-one with the children like Tamara. Most teachers recognize that some children require more help than others and that all beginning readers need to focus on the print as they emerge as readers and writers. Teachers must be careful not to assume children will focus on print on their own. Teachers cannot assume the children will learn graphophonics or that they *want* to. It is often the passive learners who slip through the cracks because no one noticed that they were not actively participating (Purcell-Gates and Dahl, 1991). Teachers can attempt to recognize these learners and to personally help them achieve success. Good teachers recognize that phonics and meaning-centered instruction are both necessary in vital ways, not as alternatives, but as complements in a deep and sensitive relation with one another.

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Do Study Guides Improve Text Comprehension?

Andrea Giese Maxworthy

Although there are many types of study guides, the theoretical assumptions underlying them are the same. They are structures designed to improve reading comprehension (Armstrong, Patberg and Dewitz, 1988).

Study guides provide the guidance that students need to understand content area text materials. This type of adjunct aid has been defined by Richardson (1986) as:

...a group of activities; prepared in advance, designed to help the student organize information from the chapter and to suggest the use of applicable skills to the task (p. 9).

More specifically, Tutolo (1977) defines a study guide as:

...a teaching aid written by the teacher to be used...to assist the student in developing reading skills for the purpose of enhancing comprehension of textual material. A guide is usually a typewritten copy keyed to the textbook that can be placed beside the text while the student is reading. The student refers to the guide, then the text, or vice versa. Or the student may refer back and forth to guide and text while reading the associated text. The guide represents a plan or strategy to be

followed by the learner to enhance comprehension (p. 501).

Study guides have been advocated in the professional literature for several decades. Herber's extensive work has been crucial in establishing the importance of study guides as an instructional tool (Wood, Lapp and Flood, 1992). Herber (1978) cites two purposes for a study guide: to help students discover the important text ideas and to guide students through the reading and thinking ideas necessary for that discovery. According to Herber (1978) the purpose of a reading guide is to serve as a simulation of the comprehension process. In effect, the study guide provides a model of the teacher's thinking process during reading to use as a comprehension model for students. Wood, Lapp and Flood (1992) describe study guides as a "tutor in print."

According to Tutolo (1977) the "purpose of a study guide is to prepare a plan for reading the text..." In addition to serving as aids for students' comprehension of current text, they also provide a model of the process students need to develop to become mature and independent readers (Vacca and Vacca, 1989). Typically, study guides are designed with a specific purpose. The purpose varies to suit the text, content, and curriculum objectives. Study guides may be designed to familiarize students with the structure of the text or different levels of comprehension needed to master the text. Among other things, guides may highlight difficult vocabulary or foster higher level thinking.

Interlocking study guide

Study guides may be divided into two types: the interlocking study guide and the noninterlocking study guide (Tutolo, 1977; Vacca and Vacca, 1989). The interlocking study guide (Herber, 1978) centers on the hierarchical relationship

between levels of comprehension — literal, interpretive and applicative. Each of these three levels of comprehension is grouped separately with the sequence moving from literal to interpretive to applicative.

The most frequently cited example of an interlocking study guide is the three level guide based on Herber's (1978) definition of reading:

...reading is defined as a thinking process which includes decoding of symbols, interpreting the meanings of the symbols, and applying the ideas derived from the symbols (p. 9).

Besides the hierarchical arrangement of the interlocking study guide there is another distinguishing feature. Statements, rather than questions, are used to guide students through the comprehension process. Although questions are a common teaching tool, Herber (1978) believes that the use of questions assumes students already possess the necessary skills to answer the questions. Questions test rather than model comprehension (see Appendix A).

Noninterlocking study guide

One example of a noninterlocking study guide is the interactive study guide developed by Smith (1987) to foster higher-level thinking. This study guide was founded on the interactive definition and philosophy of reading. Study guide questions were designed to promote students' active dialogue with and about text by beginning with students' personal knowledge and experience. "The student is asked to 'interact' with the author at a personal level" (Smith, 1987, p. 86).

Smith (1985) further characterizes his interactive study guide in the following way: 1) it allows for student choices; 2)

it elicits responses to reading that cannot be judged as correct or incorrect; 3) it requests personal feelings; 4) it encourages speculation; and 5) it solicits evaluation. This study guide reflects the interactive definition of reading:

Reading is comprehension. Reading comprehension is a dynamic interactive process of constructing meaning by combining the reader's existing knowledge with the text information within the context of the reading situation. The key elements are reader, text, and context (Cook, 1986, p. 6).

This definition stresses the active communication between the writer and reader. Simply put, reading comprehension is a dialogue between an author and a reader (Smith and Johnson, 1980). Reading is accomplished through interactive rather than sequential processes (Rumelhart, 1977). In this perspective on comprehension, the reader's active engagement within the text is required. In the interactive viewpoint, text is no longer viewed as a static entity with only one possible meaning, but as a blueprint or guide to enable the reader to construct meaning through ongoing negotiations with the author (Flood, 1986). The noninterlocking study guide (Smith, 1987) is based on this interactive definition and philosophy of reading. It exemplifies the interactive nature of comprehension by actively engaging the reader's participation in an ongoing dialogue with text through the use of personal experience and judgment. This study guide models the interactive process of reading, and, in this way, is intended to improve text comprehension (see Appendix B).

Description of the study

Although extensive research on the effects of questions on textbook reading comprehension has been conducted, the majority of this research is not specifically relevant to the use

of study guides as a means of improving text comprehension. In a discussion defining the uses and types of study guides, Tutolo (1977) suggests that classroom research be conducted to provide teachers with information on the most effective type of study guide so that they might construct better study guides for their students. In the same discussion which contrasts interlocking and noninterlocking study guides Tutolo (1977) states that the research is not yet clear on which of these two approaches is more effective in improving students' text comprehension.

To provide classroom teachers with valuable information on the potential importance and use of study guides an investigation of the effects of study guides on students' comprehension was conducted. Three different types of study guides, interlocking, noninterlocking, and teacher-constructed were compared.

Two questions formed the basis for the investigation: Will the use of a study guide facilitate improved text comprehension and if so, which type of study guide better facilitates text comprehension? Specifically, the purpose of the study was to investigate the comparative effects of three different types of study guides — interlocking, noninterlocking and teacher-constructed — on comprehension and post-reading oral discussion. In addition, teacher's and student's satisfaction with the study guide was compared.

Since the purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of study guides in existing classroom conditions, the study was conducted in an intact social studies classroom with the current textbook. Three social studies classes of heterogeneously grouped seventh graders were chosen from a middle school population of 500 sixth, seventh and eighth graders to serve as subjects for the study. According to recent

test scores, the range of reading abilities was similar in the three social studies classes. Each class had an equal distribution of male and female students. The students were judged to be alike in any variables that might affect the study. Assigning a teacher-constructed study guide designed especially for each reading passage was the usual procedure in these social studies classrooms. The teacher-constructed study guides varied in question format and number of questions; however, the questions on all three study guides were literal level. Since study guides vary in quality from teacher to teacher, the term *teacher-constructed study guide* is applicable only to the specific study guides used in the classroom in this study. This typical or teacher-constructed study guide served as a comparison to the interlocking and noninterlocking study guides.

The three heterogeneously grouped seventh grade social studies classes were assigned to one of the following treatment groups: 1) interlocking study guide; 2) noninterlocking study guide; or 3) teacher-constructed study guide. Students used their assigned study guides to accompany their text selections during the nine days of the investigation. For each of the three phases of the study students 1) read a brief social studies passage (2-5 pages); 2) completed the study guide appropriate to their treatment group; 3) participated in a post-reading discussion; 4) took a comprehension test (Herber Format Test); and 5) completed a Student Satisfaction Survey. In addition, the teacher completed a Teacher Satisfaction Survey. For each of the three passages used in the study four measures were obtained: 1) comprehension test scores (Herber Format Test); 2) Student Satisfaction Survey scores; 3) oral discussion ratings; and 4) a Teacher Satisfaction Survey score.

Students' comprehension of the text passages was assessed by the Herber Format Test. This paper and pencil test

covered the content of the text selections. The test format developed by Herber (1978) requires students to state their opinions of the text passage as well as to provide reasons for their opinions. The question can be raised as to whether a paper and pencil test can accurately assess all aspects of text comprehension. It is for this reason that this study sought to go beyond the previous research on study guides (Estes, 1970; Berget, 1974; Hash, 1974; Walker, 1976; Baker, 1977; Dolan, 1978; Armstrong, Patberg and Dewitz, 1988) by examining comprehension in an additional way, through post-reading oral discussion.

Each oral discussion was rated by two independent observers using the Observational Scales for Assessing Higher Order Thinking in High School Social Studies (Newman, 1988), a seventeen-item rating scale, which was adapted to suit the purposes and setting of this study. The Scales rate the quantity and quality of classroom activities which characterize higher level thinking. Interrater reliability for the oral discussions was determined to be .991.

Students' comprehension of text can be assessed through oral discussion in which students are required to use the information from the text in the discussion. Discussion can provide an opportunity for students to examine out loud their understanding of what they have read. Discussion requires students to translate text information into their own language. In order to participate in discussion, students must analyze, synthesize, and evaluate their text content orally. Therefore, an examination of students' post-reading oral discussion can be used to reveal students' text comprehension.

Student evaluation of the interlocking and noninterlocking study guides was assessed by the completion of a Student Satisfaction Survey. This instrument was modeled

after a scale developed by Montague and Tanner (1987) to assess content area reading strategies.

Teacher evaluation of the study guides was examined in several ways. First, the teacher was interviewed prior to the beginning of the study and then again after the completion of the study. In addition, the teacher completed a Teacher Satisfaction Survey. Like the Student Satisfaction Survey, this instrument was modeled after a scale to assess content area reading strategies developed by Montague and Tanner (1987).

Findings

In the present study, the type of study guide was found to have an effect on the quality of discussion and the comprehension test scores of seventh grade social studies students. The noninterlocking study guide proved superior to both the interlocking and teacher-constructed study guides in regard to classroom discussion. The quality of discussion was significantly higher in classes that used a noninterlocking study guide than in classes that used an interlocking study guide or classes that used a teacher-constructed study guide. No significant differences in the quality of discussion were found between classes who used an interlocking study guide and classes who used a teacher-constructed study guide. It can be concluded that the use of a noninterlocking study guide produced a better quality discussion.

The study also found the type of study guide had an effect on comprehension test scores. The comprehension test scores of students who used both interlocking and noninterlocking study guides were superior to the comprehension test scores of students who used a teacher-constructed study guide.

There was no significant difference in the satisfaction expressed among students who used an interlocking study

guide, a noninterlocking study guide, or a teacher-constructed study guide. There was no difference in the satisfaction expressed by the teacher whether students used an interlocking study guide or a noninterlocking study guide. The conclusion must be drawn that the different guides investigated in the present study had no effect on the students' or the teachers' degree of satisfaction with using them.

Study guides are worthwhile instructional aids. Specific types of study guides, noninterlocking and interlocking, produce higher comprehension test scores. The noninterlocking study guide also improves the quality of discussion.

Research into practice

Successful implementation of any study guide is dependent on the decisions and direction of the teacher. A study guide is only as effective as the teacher who chooses it, for it is the individual teacher who decides when and how to use a particular study guide. In addition to the study guides described in this article, there are a wide variety of other study guides available for classroom use (Wood, Lapp and Flood, 1992). Teachers should select the most suitable guide for the objectives of the lesson. Karen Wood and her colleagues recommend the judicious use of study guides. Study guides are meant to assist students with difficult text. It is not necessary for each chapter or selection students read to be accompanied by a study guide.

Teacher direction is required for a study guide to be effective. Study guides should be explained and modeled for students. Guides are not meant to be independent seatwork. Modeling and guided practice were provided for both study guides in the present study. Initially, Smith's Study Guide proved difficult for students who were unaccustomed to open-ended questions. After teacher modeling and practice

with Smith's Study Guide, students' confidence and performance improved.

Follow-up discussion is another element critical to the successful use of interlocking and noninterlocking study guides. Informal classroom observation and experience suggest that small group discussions increase the effectiveness of both study guides. In fact, Wood, Lapp and Flood (1992) recommend follow-up discussion with any study guide to increase student recall and interest.

While study guides can be valuable tools for the enhancement of instruction, the effectiveness of any study guide depends in a large part on the decisions and direction of the individual teacher.

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APPENDIX A
Interlocking Study Guide
Reading 4 Language and Culture

I. Directions: Check the items you believe say what the author says. Sometimes the exact words will be used; other times other words may be used.

- ___1. A language is a set of signs and symbols used to communicate thoughts.
- ___2. A language must be written.
- ___3. Anthropologists who study language and its relationship with a culture are called linguists.
- ___4. Often languages have several dialects or different ways of pronouncing words.
- ___5. The more ideas and things a society develops the more words it needs to describe those ideas and things.
- ___6. Eskimos have twenty words to describe the word *snow*.

II. Directions: Put a check on the line beside any of the statements below which you think are reasonable interpretations of the author's meaning.

- ___1. Language is the foundation of culture.
- ___2. Language communicates thought.
- ___3. Languages remain the same over time.
- ___4. All people have language.
- ___5. Dialects keep people apart.
- ___6. Language shows the values of a culture.
- ___7. Cultural diffusion occurs through language.
- ___8. Language and dialect produce unity among people.

III. Directions: To apply what you have read means to take information and ideas from what you have read and connect them to what you know. Place a check in the blank beside any statements below which are supported

by statements in level 2 and by previous experience or study. Be sure you can defend your answers.

- ___1. A linguist is a type of anthropologist.
- ___2. TV would not be possible without language.
- ___3. People can communicate without language.
- ___4. Without language there would be no school.
- ___5. Most of the people in the world speak English.
- ___6. Everything in a culture has a name.

APPENDIX B

Noninterlocking Study Guide

1. Suggest a different title for this selection. Try to capture the essence of the selection in your title, but keep it short.
2. Two key ideas or concepts in this selection are:
 - A.
 - B.
3. Three details or facts you would like to remember from this selection are:
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
4. What, if anything, did you find especially interesting or surprising in this selection?

5. What are one or more words from this selection you think the author probably chose rather carefully?
6. Indicate any words, sentences or paragraphs in the selection you would like to discuss in class or have explained:
7. If the author of this selection were available to you, what questions would you like to ask or what comments would you like to make?
8. What, if any, mental images did you form while you were reading this selection?
9. Overall, did you find this selection to be:

Very

Not very

Interesting

Informative

Easy to read

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Theory Into Practice: Issues To Consider When Selecting Reading Software To Meet Different Readers' Needs

**Kay M. Kincade
Terrence V. Stange**

According to a report from the U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment (1988), over 10,000 computer programs are currently being marketed. With such a large and divergent array of materials to choose from, software consumers need to understand exactly how programs they are considering for purchase function before they can be sure that any particular program will actually fit their specific classroom needs. Similarly, it is important to determine whether or not the programs are compatible with the teacher's philosophy of reading — reader-based, text-based or interactive (Leu and Kinzer, 1991).

The purposes of the present paper are to 1) examine the design of three reading software programs to determine their ease of use, format characteristics, and managerial components and 2) to evaluate their text presentation segmentation to determine how closely they conform with current chunking theory in reading. The first purpose basically addresses the practical issues of software use: Does it have a diagnostic component? Does it mainly provide skills practice, or does it teach and/or diagnose specific reading

skills? Can it be used flexibly by both teacher and student (e.g., branching options) or does the program follow a preset linear design? Important information for teachers about the design characteristics of each program are presented first.

The second purpose addresses how each of the programs segment their passages for flashed presentation on the computer screen. Two premises underlie this question: 1) theory suggests that meaningful information is more easily read and remembered than nonmeaningful information (Irwin, 1991; Smith, 1988), and 2) some research has shown that unskilled readers can use organizational strategies provided by teacher/program manipulated text that result in their reading more closely approximating skilled readers (Casteel, 1988-1989; Casteel, 1990; Jandreau, Muncer and Bever, 1986; Weiss, 1983). In other words, pre-organized computer presented text can facilitate poor readers' speed and comprehension.

Theoretical rationale

Comprehending a text required the reader to go beyond decoding the individual words in the surface structure to organizing groups of words into meaningful segments using the text structure, context, and relational information found in the deep semantic structure. As a reader's background knowledge and cognitive processes interact with the text, meaning is constructed. However, Oaken, Weiner and Cromer (1971) discovered that some readers lack the organizational strategies necessary to go beyond word-by-word reading. Even after training in word identification, their less-skilled fifth grade readers continued to perform below skilled readers. The authors concluded that the students' failure to improve was due to their inability to organize the text into a meaningful representation. Pronouncing the words alone was not enough to improve their comprehension significantly. These

findings that poorer readers tended to read words in isolation rather than integrate groups of words into meaningful units were more recently substantiated by Merrill, Sperber, and McCauley (1981).

Weiss (1983), Radebaugh (1983), and Casteel (1990) all found that externally imposing organization on a text by using text segmentation can facilitate readers' comprehension. Weiss (1983) found that using either a pausal phrase format or a syntactic phrase format improved good, average and poor fourth and seventh grade readers' comprehension performances over the traditional prose format of textbooks. Similarly, Radebaugh (1983) found that pre-organized text improved the comprehension performances of good and poor fourth and fifth grade readers. While Casteel (1990) found that chunking text into meaningful phrases improved low-ability eighth grade readers' comprehension performances, it did not significantly improve the reading of the high-ability group. The latter finding suggests that age and/or expertise of the reader may interact with the robustness of the facilitative effects of pre-chunked text.

While chunking text into meaningful segments has proven useful for some readers, particularly the weaker readers who may be lacking this skill, it is a very time consuming task for the teacher and hardly practical in the classroom setting. However, computers and computer programs that segment text could meet this need very efficiently. Gerrell and Mason (1983) examined the effects of presenting the same two passages from a typical basal reader to fifth graders in a syntactically chunked format and in the traditional text format on a computer screen. Students consistently performed better in the chunked condition than they did in the traditional text presentation. Jandreau, Muncer and Bever (1986) achieved similar results with poor

to average community college students using computer presented text that was segmented at phrase structure boundaries versus traditionally formatted text.

Similar results have also been obtained for a learning disabled population and for young readers. Casteel (1988-89) found that chunking computer text into meaningful groups of three to five words improved the comprehension and retention of learning disabled readers over a similar group receiving nonchunked text. Radebaugh (1983) reached a similar conclusion on samples of good and poor fourth and fifth grade readers.

Both meaningfully chunked text presentation segments and randomly parsed text segments were easier for these young readers to comprehend than the longer, traditional text display. Radebaugh (1983) concluded that any pre-organized text presentation that reduced the load on memory for novice readers improved their comprehension, a conclusion similar to Casteel's (1988-89) for the LD population.

According to Clay and Imlach (1975) and Isakson and Miller (1976), all poor readers typically do not make good use of syntactic and semantic structures to understand what is read. On the other hand, good readers are sensitive to meaningful propositional units in text in a manner similar to the way they comprehend speech. They use their knowledge of syntactic and semantic strategies to facilitate their construction of meaning in both listening comprehension and reading comprehension (Muncer and Bever, 1983). Evidence suggests that poorer readers, as well as developing readers, may not have acquired these strategies essential to chunking, or may not know when it is appropriate to apply them.

Building upon the research findings of the facilitative effects of chunking as a strategy to improve reading performance, three commercially available software programs were assessed to first determine how the programs divided their passages for presentation on the computer screen. Secondly, each program was examined to identify the design characteristics of practical concern to classroom or lab instructors by asking these questions: What teacher/student controls exist? What skills/strategies are addressed? What diagnostic information is provided? What length passages are used and how are they presented? What comprehension questions are provided and where are they placed in relation to text?

Methods

Program selection. The three commercially available software programs selected for this study, Milliken's Comprehension Power (1981), Davidson's Speed Reader (1985), and Milliken's Comprehension Connection (1987), were designed for use in a variety of educational settings, from elementary and secondary classrooms to college developmental reading laboratories and adult vocational learning centers. An informal survey of local reading settings showed that the programs selected were considered popular by both teachers and students (J. Smith, personal communication, 1992). In fact, two of the programs were cited by a survey of two-year college reading programs as being among the most frequently used nationally (Swartz, 1985). The third program, The Comprehension Connection, was marketed after that survey was completed. All three programs are currently available in both the Apple and DOS versions.

Procedures

While the programs selected are available on multiple levels, for comparison purposes only one level of reading passages was evaluated for each program. Four passages from

comparable levels of each software program were selected for examination based on the potential appeal of the topics for both genders. To address the question of program design characteristics, each level selected was assessed both from the teacher's manual and from engaging in the computer program itself.

To assess the type of textual segmentation employed in each program, four stories from one level of each of the three programs were randomly selected for review. One exception to this procedure involved the speed Reader II program. Since its stories varied greatly in length, two sets of four stories were reviewed, one set for the short story length and one set for the long. All stories selected were on the same level of difficulty across programs.

To implement an assessment of text segmentation, a pencil slash was made on a printed copy of each passage as the segmentations flashed on the computer screen. From this descriptive data, percentages were calculated for the classifications of text presentation segments. For the purposes of this research, two categories of text segmentation were used: meaningful text segmentation and nonmeaningful text segmentation. Meaningful text division was a combination of pausal phrase formats and syntactic phrase formats, as in the Weiss (1983) study. This category included all naturally occurring breaks in oral reading, word structure division, punctuation cues and grammatical phraseology and function. By contrast, nonmeaningful segmentation referred to divisions in text that do not contain any of the aforementioned characteristics, but appear at random, as a matter of convenience or without a discernible rationale.

The major findings for each of the three software programs are outlined below. Descriptive information on the

programs' design characteristics is presented first, followed by the analysis of the programs' text segmentation presentation.

Design characteristics

All three selected programs are comprised of passages and questions to assess comprehension; however, from there on there are more differences than similarities. Speed Reader II is primarily concerned with increasing students' reading rate. Comprehension Power diagnostically assesses 25 comprehension skills and allows students to work on their reading rate. While comprehension is the main focus of Comprehension Connection, it stresses the use of reading strategies (e.g., main idea, text supportive graphics and vocabulary defined in context) rather than diagnosis or reading speed. In addition, the programs also vary in the length of the passages they present (see Table 1), with Speed Reader having the shortest passages and Comprehension Power the longest.

TABLE 1
Passage lengths for computer reading programs

	<u>Speed Reader</u> <u>II, Short</u>	<u>Speed Reader</u> <u>II, Long</u>	<u>Comprehension</u> <u>Power</u>	<u>Comprehension</u> <u>Connection</u>
A	152 words	409 words	1423 words	213 words
B	493 words	1523 words	1523 words	260 words
C	437 words	1456 words	1456 words	233 words
D	325 words	1404 words	1404 words	160 words

Milliken Comprehension Power. *Presentation format.* Twelve typically expository stories stored on four floppy disks are provided for each level of this program. The organizational format of the passages breaks each text into nine segments with two to four questions following each segment. Text segments are flashed on the computer screen line by line

at speeds varying from 50 to 650 words per minute, depending on the preset selection of the student or teacher.

The questions, reflecting 25 different comprehension skills identified by the program, are broadly categorized as either literal understanding, interpretation, analysis, evaluation and appreciation. By definition, literal understanding is composed of recalling information and details, following sequences of ideas and events and identifying the speaker. In contrast, interpretation centers on identifying main ideas, making inference, predicting outcomes, drawing conclusions, interpreting figurative language, visualizing and paraphrasing. Analysis involves the skills of comparing and contrasting, recognizing cause and effect, classifying, reasoning and identifying analogies. Evaluation includes the skills of detecting the author's purpose, understanding persuasion, recognizing slant and bias, distinguishing between fact and opinion, judging validity and determining relative importance of ideas. Appreciation encompasses the skills of interpreting character, recognizing emotional reactions, identifying mood and tone, as well as identifying the setting.

Managerial component. Both teacher and student have input in the management of the Milliken Comprehension Power Program. Teacher control embodies such factors as adding up to 100 students and/or five classes to a disk, or making individual and group assignments. In addition, teachers can review individual and class progress either on the screen or with a printed record; however, this feature of the program is protected by a security system to maintain confidentiality.

Student management is limited to the selection of available activities preassigned by the instructor. Possible activities included are key word sentences, preview, passage selection

and rate of speed. Key word exercises place each targeted vocabulary word within the context of a sentence. The preview option for each passage is a shortened version of the text. It allows preparation (e.g., schema activation) and confidence building before the longer text passage is read.

Diagnostic information. Diagnostic information for Comprehension Power is provided in a protocol report that displays each story completed and/or the number of segments completed of a partially read story, reading speed, percentage of comprehension questions correct out of the total questions posed, and a reading index. The reading index is the rate of speed in words per minute multiplied by the value obtained for comprehension accuracy. In addition, information on the frequency of rereads for each segment is shown. The rereads allow the student an opportunity to read a portion again before selecting an answer to a question. The number of question attempts for each segment of reading is also disclosed on the screen.

Information on individual student's performance on each comprehension skill addressed in a text passage is automatically recorded for the teacher and student. A total score for all segments read that support a specific comprehension skill is also given. A record reflecting an individual's performance on all 25 comprehension skills described earlier is provided either through an on-screen format or in a printed copy with problem areas highlighted by an asterisk.

Speed Reader II. *Presentation format.* Speed Reader presents both narrative and expository stories in text lengths that vary from short passages of approximately 150-200 words to longer passages between 300-500 words. Passages are presented in segments of print of 1 to 12 lines that appear on the

screen at any one time at a speed preset by the student. Questions are provided at the close of each passage, followed by feedback, encouragement and rewarding messages and/or melodies. However, the Timed Reading Test is one whole page presented on screen. When reading is completed, students press the space bar for a new text passage to appear. The program also includes exercises to encourage the use of more efficient eye movements by the reader.

Managerial component. The Speed Reader II Program appears to be primarily a student controlled program. The student is able to choose from the various options in the menu — warm-up exercises using letters or words, setting the speed from 100 to 200 wpm for the reading passages, choosing a new reading selection, and ending the lesson.

Teacher control exists as well to add or remove items from the data disk file. The instructor may prepare a written version of reading materials as well as corresponding questions. The reading level of the new text can be analyzed via the program; however, the newly created passage must not be more than 200 words in length. Lastly, a printout can be obtained about student progress in terms of created text and the original passages on the disk. Progress is portrayed in terms of the skills emphasized in the program — comprehension, rate of retention, rate of reading and eye efficiency. According to the program, this complement of skills is designed to engender ease and enjoyment of reading.

Comprehension skills addressed by Speed Reader include reading for main ideas and details. By contrast, rate of retention determines how much one can remember after reading. The main objective of this program is to increase a reader's reading speed. The program recommends adjustments of rate in increments of 25 to 50 words per minute

when the student's comprehension per passage is 75 percent or more. Eye efficiency, a related speed factor, is concentrated on broadening the eye span or peripheral vision, while increasing the rate of recognition and eye movement patterns. Eye span involves increasing the number of words seen at a fixation or pause through using peripheral vision. Rate of recognition refers to amount of time spent at a pause or fixation in reading. Decreasing the pause time increases reading speed. The program suggests that efficient eye movement patterns avoid excessive wandering, slowing and undue regressions.

Diagnostic information. Diagnostic information can be obtained from the personal record sheet kept by the student. Such information as date, number of attempts for warm-up exercises and final reading speed are shown on the screen. Other pertinent information includes the title of the exercise or passage and percentage correct of the comprehension questions. A progress chart with a graphic display is provided to demonstrate reading speed. Students manually complete the written chart after each session.

Milliken's Comprehension Connection. *Presentation format.* Comprehension Connection is designed to improve comprehension through the active processing of textual information. In addition, it supports the effective understanding of main idea strategies, vocabulary development and graphic aids to generate meaning. Since the program tends to approach reading in a holistic fashion, text presentation options include presenting a number of sentences at a time, presenting one sentence at a time, or using the arrow key to continuously scroll the text. Speed of reading is not approached directly in this computer program.

Of the 20 passages available on the five disks examined, 19 were expository while only one was narrative. Five multiple-choice comprehension questions follow each passage. While question types are varied in presentation order, they generally include one vocabulary question about a difficult word in the passage, one query for a stated or implied main idea, one literal question relating to information of an explicit nature in one sentence of passage and two inferential items which necessitate the use of information stated explicitly or implicitly in one or more sentences in the passage. Upon completion of the questions, feedback is given.

Managerial component. The teacher and student have input into the management of the Comprehension Connection Program. Teacher control includes the ability to make both individual and group assignments, add up to 100 students to a disk, or modify the criterion for moving to the next program disk. In addition, the instructor can enter the program to modify individual assignments affecting the student's ability to return to a passage and use various program options. For example, unless the program is altered, students can 1) branch to an easier less technical version of the passage; 2) have immediate access to the definition of difficult vocabulary; 3) have the main idea of each paragraph identified; and 4) access graphic aids related to the passage content. This type of information has been shown to aid student's comprehension of expository text (Reinking, 1988; Reinking and Schreiner, 1985).

If the student does not meet the criterion of three out of five correct questions, a reread is optional. The first time through, students are not informed which questions are in error, only that the criterion was not met. After the second reading of the passage and responses to the questions, the student is told which questions were correct and which were

incorrect. This procedure is designed so that students read to understand the whole passage and not just the parts answering a specific question. Student progress can be reviewed either on the screen or in a printout. The total questions correct for each category described earlier are listed. Furthermore, the cumulative total of the number of times an assistance option was used by a student is displayed. From this, a pattern of strengths and weaknesses as well as progress can be viewed by the instructor.

Text segmentation presentation

All three programs had the option of segmenting their stories for on screen presentation. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of segments found in the randomly selected stories from each program that represented meaningful breaks and which were randomly segmented, conforming only to a range of spaces. Approximately 50 percent of the breaks in both Comprehension Power and Comprehension Connection adhered to semantic or syntactic boundaries, while Speed Reader presented 71.3 percent of the passages reviewed as meaningfully segmented. Since the Speed Reader passages varied greatly in length, with shorter passages ranging from 148 to 185 words and longer passages ranging from 325 to 394 words (see Table 1), two sets of four stories were analyzed, one set for the short condition and one set for the long. Table 2 reports the meaningful and nonmeaningful passages divisions for both the short condition and the long condition, along with allowing comparison of segmentation conditions across all three programs. In this table it becomes clear that the longer stories in the Speed Reader program are semantically chunked at approximately the same rate as the other two programs; however, the shorter passages are more consistently presented in meaningful chunks. This information can be used by the teacher when matching learners to the most appropriate program for them.

FIGURE 1
Meaningful & Nonmeaningful
Phrase Divisions
 for Three Reading Software Programs

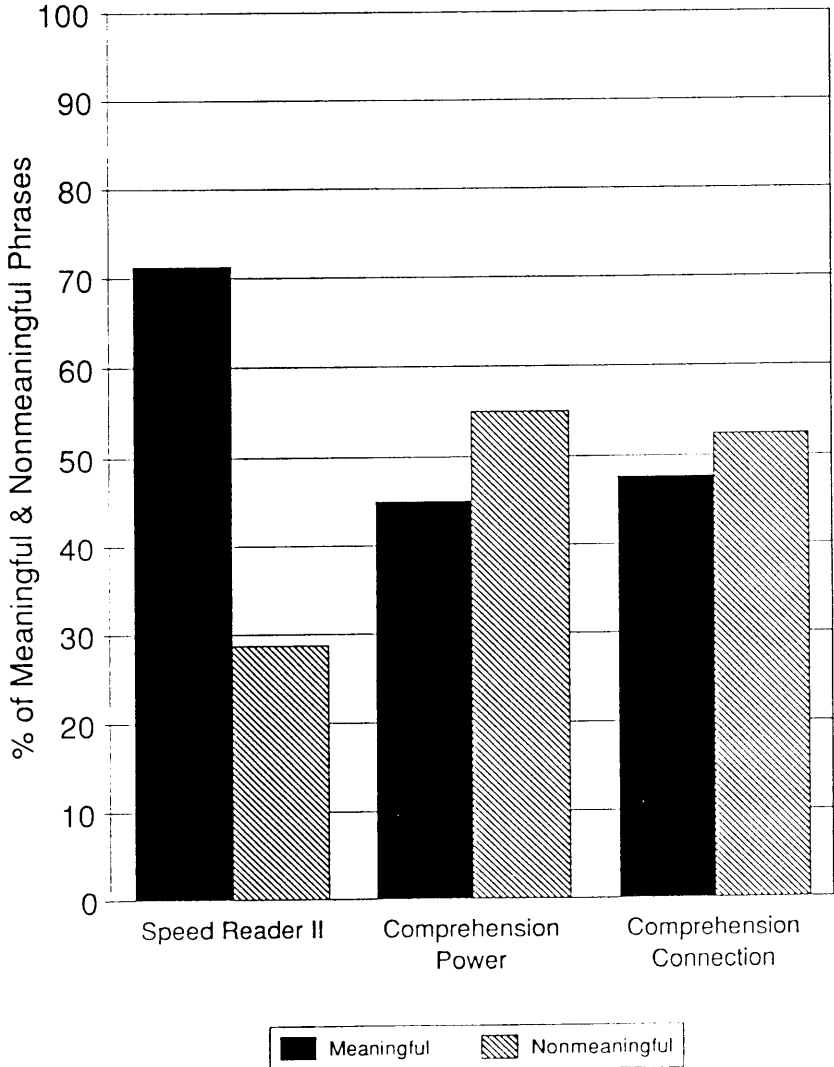


TABLE 2
Text segmentation % for each passage

	<u>Comprehension</u> <u>Connection</u>		<u>Comprehension</u> <u>Power</u>		<u>Speed Reader</u> <u>II, Short</u>		<u>Speed Reader</u> <u>II, Long</u>	
	meaningful	non-meaningful	meaningful	non-meaningful	meaningful	non-meaningful	meaningful	non-meaningful
A	11 50%	11 50%	130 48%	141 52%	54 96.4%	2 3.6%	30 49.2%	31 50.8%
B	15 55.9%	11 44.1%	100 36.1%	177 63.9%	66 85.7%	11 14.3%	43 56.6%	33 43.4%
C	14 46.7%	16 53.3%	114 42.2%	155 57.6%	52 82.5%	11 17.5%	39 57%	30 43%
D	9 52.9%	8 47.1%	150 53.4%	131 46.6%	53 88.3%	7 11.7%	28 56%	22 44%

Discussion and implications

Each of the three software programs contained practical features to assist classroom teachers, such as student/teacher controls, strategy development, processing support, diagnostic information and comprehension questions. However, there was enough variation among the three programs to make them all valuable assets within the same classroom to meet different learners' needs. Recent studies have found computers to be highly motivational for disabled (Keene and Davey, 1987; Kincade, Kleine, Johnson, and Jacob, 1989) and at-risk (Kincade, et al., 1989; Wepner, 1990) learners, increasing their attitudes toward reading and their time on task.

Cohesive organization of text contributes to the meaningful processing and memory of that text by the reader (Irwin, 1991; Marshall and Glock, 1978-79); however, nonsemantic or random breaks in the text's visual display can interfere with an expert reader's textual processing to the point of ultimately confounding comprehension and reducing the

reader to word calling. Kincade and Greene (1992) verified this perception when their expert college readers reported that randomly segmented text interfered with their comprehension of computer-presented text. The implications are that the more semantically consistent segmentation of the short stories on the Speed Reader would be more appropriate for skilled readers seeking to improve speed.

The value of pre-organized text has been reconfirmed in studies with learning disabled readers (Casteel, 1988-89), poor to average adult readers (Jandreau, Muncer and Bever, 1986), elementary-middle school readers (Gerrell and Mason, 1983; Radebaugh, 1983; Weiss, 1983) and high school sophomores (Stevens, 1981). In fact, novice readers and poor readers of any age seem to profit from pre-parsed text that reduces the load on working memory from that normally encountered in a traditional text format. Finding that all of the programs parsed their text presentations into units smaller than a sentence implies that any of them would provide useful practice for these types of readers since they have been found to profit from any segmentation that reduces the visual display to less than a sentence (Casteel, 1988-1989; Radebaugh, 1983; Weiss, 1983). Furthermore, studies such as Gerrell and Mason's (1983) have confirmed the value of computer presented chunked text.

Other assets of the programs for classroom teachers include the valuable diagnostic information from Comprehension Power on 25 different comprehension skills. This type of immediate identification of specific problem areas can facilitate teachers' development of an individualized, prescriptive plan that minimizes repetition of already learned skills. Similarly, Comprehension Connection offers unique branching capabilities that provide the reader with knowledge assistance specific to the text being read. The use of such

information has been shown to improve children's comprehension of expository text (Reinking, 1988; Reinking and Schreiner, 1985). This type of assistance is not available on either of the other two programs.

In conclusion, the issue of matching texts and materials to specific learner needs has long been a concern of educators. When choosing reading software for the classroom, it is important to directly examine the programs and manuals to determine whether the specific goals and format of the program match the needs of the targeted students. In many remedial reading classrooms, multiple reading programs are necessary to adequately accommodate diverse learner needs. The emphasis of the program, length of passages, type of comprehension questions, diagnostic capabilities, and managerial efficacy are all issues to be addressed when evaluating whether a particular program is appropriate for an individual setting.

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Call for Manuscripts for the 1994 Themed Issue: Literacy Through University-School Collaboration

The 1994 themed issue of *Reading Horizons* will be devoted to efforts that promote literacy through university-school collaboration. Guest editors are Janet Dynak and Ronald Crowell of Western Michigan University. Contributions in the form of research reports, commentaries, case studies, and articles discussing the area of literacy relating to university-school collaboration are welcomed. Preference will be given to manuscripts co-authored by classroom teachers and university faculty. Manuscripts should be submitted following *Reading Horizons* guidelines appearing on the inside cover of this journal. Manuscripts intended for the themed issue should be postmarked by **March 1, 1994**. Address all manuscripts to Dr. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Editor, *Reading Horizons*, WMU, Kalamazoo MI 49008.



Predicting the Future of the Whole Language Literacy Movement: Past Lessons and Present Concerns

Amy R. Hoffman
Susan J. Daniels

Progressive Education. The Open Classroom. New Math. Educational innovations have come and gone over the years. The reasons for each one's demise were different, and some innovations probably were not worthy of continued support, but there certainly seems to be a pattern (or pendulum) regarding educational change. What does the future hold for the Whole Language Literacy Movement?

The Whole Language Literacy Movement is sweeping the nation with its promise to help students become better readers and writers. However, there are issues which its supporters must address to improve its chances for long-term survival. What can we learn from studying its current implementation and about the nature of the change process that can help us predict its future? The purpose of this study was to identify and explore some of the factors which could block the movement and to suggest options for addressing these potential problems.

Specific information on potential problems which may confront the Whole Language Literacy Movement was

obtained through a nationwide survey sampling the opinions and practices of those directly involved with elementary education. Questionnaires relating to whole language beliefs and practices were completed by curriculum directors, elementary principals, veteran teachers, new teachers, and parents from randomly-selected school districts across the United States. The opinions obtained from this sampling were viewed as a glimpse at the views of practitioners which can also be compared with the views of researchers. Patterns which emerged focused on the importance of inservice education opportunities, concern for program accountability, and availability of suitable educational materials. These issues, which can be viewed as potential problems for the Whole Language Literacy Movement, can also form the basis for action to support its continuation.

Current viewpoints

The Whole Language Literacy Movement could be characterized as a current hot topic in many educational publications. Most of these books, book chapters, or journal articles detailing both theory and practice portray it in a highly positive light. *Whole Language: Practice and Theory* (Froese, 1991), *Case Studies in Whole Language* (Vacca and Rasinski, 1991), and *Reading as Communication* (May, 1990) are just a few of the books for preservice and inservice teachers which explain and support the Whole Language Literacy Movement.

There is another considerably smaller but very important body of literature which looks critically at the Whole Language Literacy Movement. There it is portrayed as an extremist view of reading instruction which neglects the importance of phonics (MacGinitie, 1991), puts the teacher in an uncomfortable role (Mosenthal, 1989), and causes a school district's scores to decline (Viadero, 1991). Even popular magazines such as *Newsweek* have picked up on the notion that

there is a controversy going on which Kantrowitz (1990) labels "The Reading Wars."

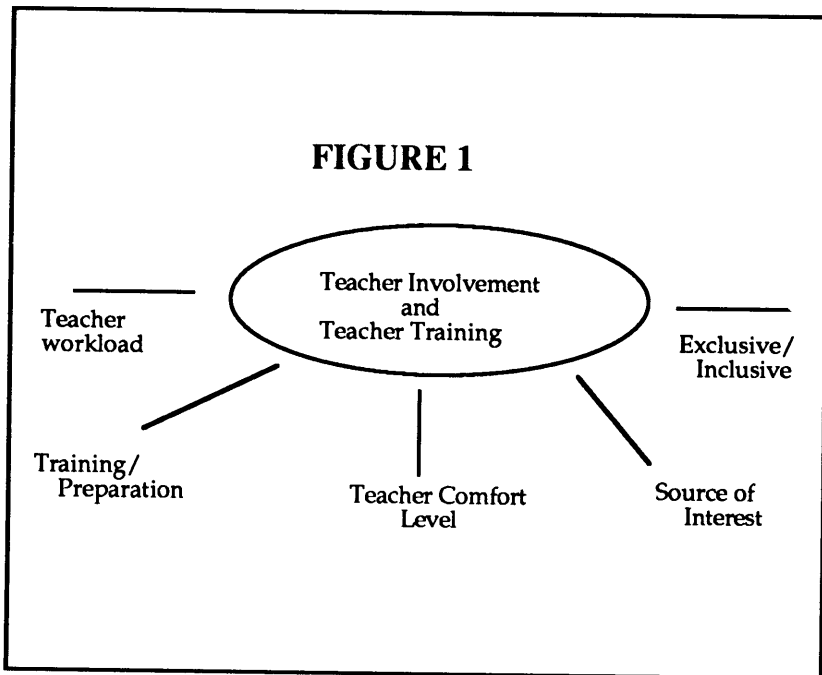
Others support the basic beliefs of the Whole Language Literacy Movement but express concerns or reservations. Harste (1989) believes that for its long-term survival, "...proponents of whole language need to explicate their own theory rather than attempt to build whole language theory on the basis of old philosophers" (p. 247). Incompatible legislated mandates and tests and the lack of a support system for teacher change concerned Pace (1992) as she followed the efforts of teachers trying to implement whole language literacy instruction. Pearson (1989) worries about the possible rift in the educational field which this movement could product and Walmsley and Adams (1993) go one step further, suggesting that due to the demanding nature of whole language instruction it is not for everyone.

Putting the Whole Language Literacy Movement in a context with other educational reforms mentioned earlier yields volumes of literature about these movements, their strengths, and reasons for their eventual demise. A brief sampling, however, reveals some key points relating to the fate of each. Riner (1989), writing about the Progressive Education movement, asserts that "Dewey had great difficulty embodying his ideas into educational practice..." and this difficulty of translating theory into practice caused the failure of true reforms in school curriculum.

Open Education met difficulties, according to Rothenberg's (1989) analysis, for a variety of reasons. Included among these reasons are lack of student achievement data, hasty implementation which emphasized form rather than quality, the perception that it was an extremist

movement, and resistance from teachers who perceived it as too demanding.

The demise of the New Math Movement is attributed by Offner (1978) to mathematicians as, "it is sadly apparent that many professional mathematicians are not only incompetent teachers but have a distorted understanding of their own field." Fey (1979), also looking at the fate of the New Math Movement, cited the importance of agreement of professional judgment with the prevailing political and social attitudes and values. He also noted that teachers generally do not want to change the way they teach as that is perceived as difficult and risky.



The common link between the Whole Language Literacy Movement and the others mentioned earlier is the element of change. Latham (1988) writes of the predictable factors which can lead to the downfall of educational innovations.

Taking those factors, or roadblocks, as well as others gleaned from the journal articles previously cited about the different reform movements, it is possible to try to cluster these roadblocks in broad categories. The diagrams included illustrate these clusters of roadblocks to educational innovations. Figure 1, *Teacher Involvement and Training*, includes items which point to the teacher as a blocking factor. The work load is perceived as too burdensome, appropriate training or preparation is lacking, teachers are uncomfortable with the change, and motivation of the change does not come from the teachers.

Figure 2, *Theoretical Base*, groups together lack of educator involvement in designing the innovation, theory which may not be sound, and unclear connections between theory and practice, as problems stemming from the Theoretical Base.

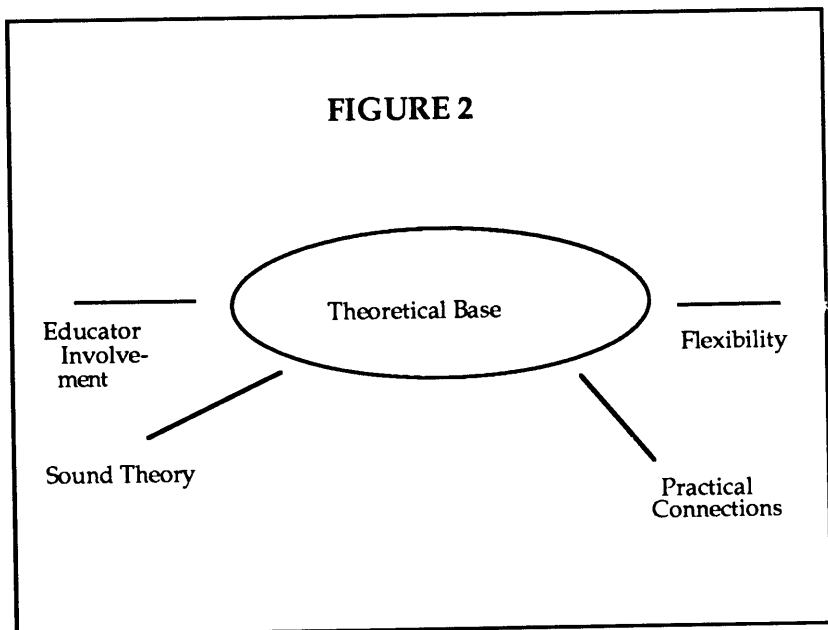
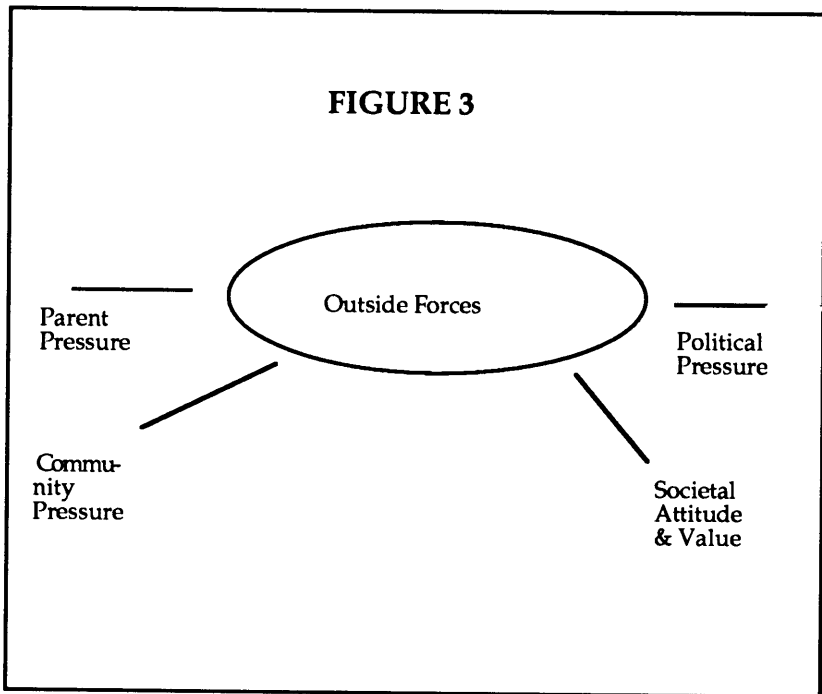
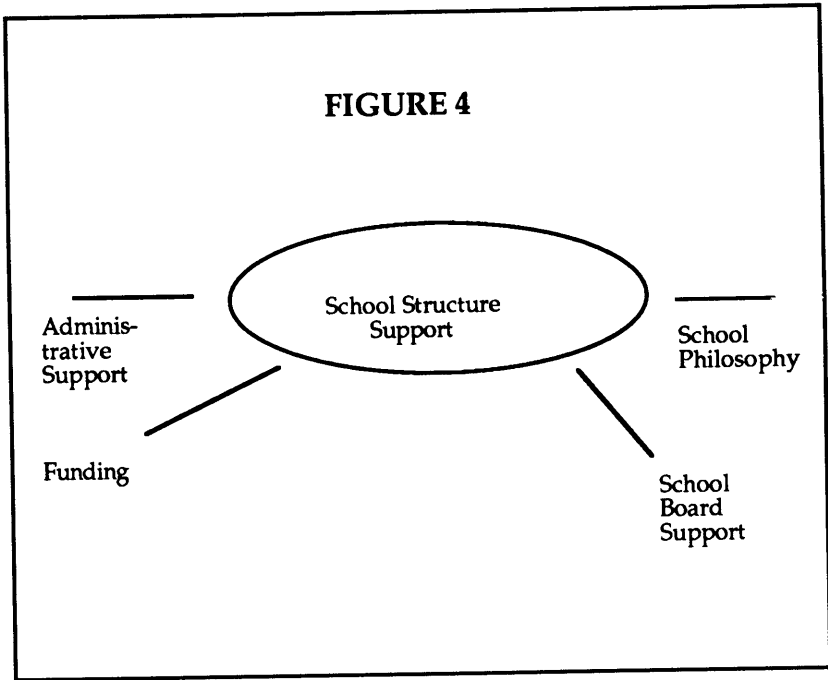


Figure 3, *Outside Forces*, shows how factors such as parent, community, and political pressures, as well as broader societal attitudes and values, come into play.

Figure 4, *The School Structure and Support Roadblocks*, includes lack of administrative and school board support, funding problems, and incompatibilities of the innovation's philosophy with the philosophy of the school.



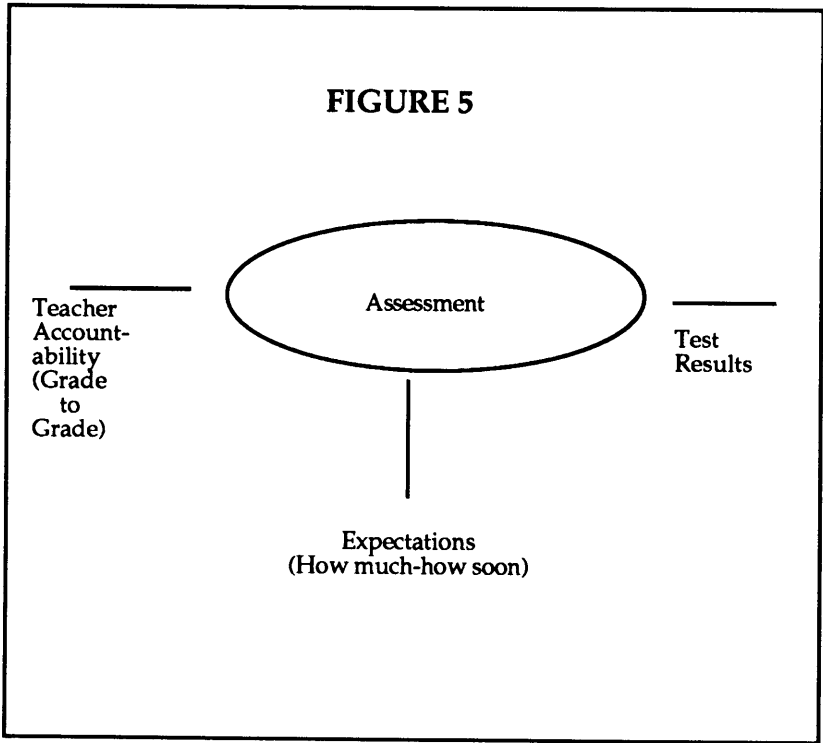
In Figure 5, *Assessment*, the issues are unrealistic expectations for measurable improvement, required assessment instruments which may not reflect the nature of the innovation, and teacher concern about their personal accountability to prepare their students for the next grade or skill level.



These five figures illustrating roadblocks to educational innovation helped frame the research questions to be asked and the suggestions of means for overcoming these problems.

Research procedures

In order to conduct a nationwide survey of the Whole Language Literacy Movement, the researchers contacted the American Association of School Administrators (Note 1). From this directory, through random sampling procedures, 1,250 names and addresses of curriculum directors were drawn. A letter was sent to each curriculum director along with the self-addressed, stamped questionnaire for the following — a primary teacher; an intermediate teacher; an elementary principal; the curriculum director; a parent.



The curriculum director was requested to distribute each questionnaire to an appropriate person. As a token of gratitude, a new one dollar bill was also enclosed with a tag saying "Thank you... Please take a friend to coffee with our compliments." The questionnaire briefly defined whole language accordingly:

A view of the reading process primarily concerned with communication and comprehension more than individual skills, where instruction integrates all language arts and often does not use a basal reading textbook.

The teachers in the survey were then asked their current grade level and years in teaching. Next, the recipient of the

questionnaire was asked to mark an X on a continuum that best described their school's (or classroom's) reading program.

Skill-Based Basal 1/...../2...../3...../4...../5 **Whole Language**

Then the recipient was asked to respond to the following two questions: 1) *What do you perceive as the difficulties in implementing whole language practices?* and 2) *In your opinion, how can these problems be addressed?* Participants were then asked to fold, staple, and mail the stamped, self-addressed questionnaire within one week.

Research results

Return rate. Of the 1,250 questionnaires that were sent, 365 were returned for a 29 percent return rate. One possible reason for the low percentage of return was that curriculum directors did not distribute the questionnaires as requested by the researchers. Principals responded most to the questionnaire with the return rate percentage of 25 percent. Parents participated least with a return rate of only 13 percent. Interestingly, only 21 percent of the curriculum directors responded which means that some of them distributed the questionnaires but did not take the time to complete one themselves.

When studying the range of return percentages, it is important to note that despite having completed questionnaires from over 350 people, the sample was not fully representative of each of the groups surveyed. This may be especially true of the parent group, not only because of the low rate of return, but also there exists a likelihood of bias when a curriculum director selects the parent to be surveyed.

Participant responses. When participants rated their reading programs on a continuum with the basal approach on

one end and whole language on the other, approximately half of the programs were rated basal. About 25 percent ranked their programs as a combination of both; with an average of 25 percent of the participants reporting that their programs followed the whole language philosophy.

When asked the question, *What do you perceive as the difficulties in implementing whole language practices?*, several issues arose. The most frequent response (31.8 percent) cited concern over not teaching reading-related skills. All groups surveyed expressed concern about this issue (including both those teachers who labeled themselves whole language and those who advocated the basal approach). Along with skills instruction, teachers were concerned about assessment, "inadequate instruments for assessing whole language practices."

Another answer repeated often (28.5 percent) was the lack of understanding about the Whole Language Literacy Movement — what the term means to one person does not necessarily mean the same to another — as well as a misunderstanding of how to incorporate the whole language philosophy in the classroom. Another concern about the Movement that was cited in the questionnaire (24 percent) was people being resistant to change (this concern was mentioned particularly among veteran teachers with six or more years of teaching experiences). One teacher stated in the questionnaire, "Whole language — just another phase... this also will pass." The least-mentioned difficulty in implementing whole language practices was lack of administrative support. Only 16 respondents cited *Administrators* as a cause for concern.

When asked the question, *In your opinion, how can these problems be addressed?*, a little more than half of the

participants (52.6 percent) in the survey expressed the need for inservice. Other solutions noted (approximately 12 percent of the responses) were "more money and materials," "parent education," and "combining the whole-language and skill-based philosophies." The emphasis quite clearly was for more inservice in the Whole Language Literacy Movement. This proposed solution is very consistent with the teacher involvement and training concerns which emerged from the first question. Teachers' comments were *not sure how to go about it*, and *explain it in simple terms*.

Studying survey responses just from the teachers, other patterns emerge. There were no percentage differences between the novice primary teachers (with five or less years of teaching experience) and the veteran primary teachers when reporting their advocacy of the Whole Language Literacy Movement. Twenty-six percent of each group responded that their reading programs followed the whole language philosophy. However, there was a difference between the novice intermediate teachers (42 percent) and the veteran intermediate teachers (32 percent). This difference suggests a stronger desire of new intermediate teachers who responded to the survey to incorporate the whole language philosophy.

Discussion of research results

Looking at the many possible roadblocks to educational change, a number of factors seem to favor the long-term success of the Whole Language Literacy Movement. It builds on an established theoretical base, seems to have gained acceptance from the general public, and has received support within the school structure. Key writers about this movement such as Goodman (1992) and Harste (1989) also believe that the movement will persist, though it may evolve somewhat in form and co-exist with other innovations.

The survey respondents identified two potential weak spots — 1) the teacher's role including preparation and support necessary to do it well, and 2) skills and assessment with all its related accountability issues. These concerns also echo those of noted researchers and writers cited earlier (Walmsley and Adams, 1993; Pearson, 1989; Pace, 1992). McCaslin (1989) concludes her commentary on this movement, challenging advocates of whole language to focus on the teacher's role and "... attend to issues of practice from the perspective of teacher learning..." (p. 228). So to foster the continuing growth of the Whole Language Literacy Movement, it seems that several support systems are important.

First, teachers need to have a thorough understanding of the Whole Language Literacy Movement and how to implement whole language strategies in the classroom. As one teacher stated in the survey, there is "insufficient time allotted to inservice on a continuous basis on strategies for instruction based on the whole language philosophy." Thorough, ongoing inservice programs and support groups need to be implemented in school districts, with consistent support from knowledgeable administrators. This plan will assist in the successful continuity and structure of a newly implemented whole language program and will help to alleviate some teachers' fear and resistance to change.

Second, along with added inservice, teachers need to be given more time to plan and monitor the change in their own classroom. Released time needs to be provided for this purpose, along with more funds to purchase more whole language materials.

Third, to help overcome the concern about skills and assessment, new techniques for accountability and evaluation need to be devised. These new assessment procedures need to

be carefully implemented in conjunction with the goals of the school district.

Lastly, an important issue in the Whole Language Literacy Movement is to educate parents. Their concern is that skills will be neglected, their children's learning or grades will suffer, and grades will decline on achievement tests. Carefully prepared parent workshops need to be held to address questions and concerns. Open classroom visitation schedules could also help in easing parental concerns. Parents can be very helpful assistants in a whole language classroom and gain first-hand experience with its theory and practice.

Twenty years from now, articles will probably be written about some new popular educational movement which is causing great excitement. As the educational pendulum swings, will we be looking back, nostalgically, or otherwise, at the Whole Language Literacy Movement as an example of another innovation from our educational past? Or will knowledgeable teachers, supported with adequate time and resources, have integrated the Whole Language Literacy Movement? If it is to survive and thrive, we must listen carefully to the voices of researchers and practitioners and respond to these emerging needs.

Note 1: For a Directory of Curriculum Directors in the United States, contact the American Association of Schools Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington VA 22209 (phone 703 538-0700).

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Professional Materials Review

Patrick M. Jenlink
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At Risk Students: Portraits, Policies, Programs, and Practices. Edited by Robert Donmoyer and Raylene Kos. State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany NY 12246. ISBN: 0-7914-1393-4. 1993. 429 pp. US\$19.95.

Perhaps no one element of our society is reflected more in our schools than at risk students. In our treatment of this pervasive and endemic issue, we have constructed a lens that would have us believe that at risk students might be understood through common-sense stereotypes in our community schools and by the researchers' ideal types. The authors of this book, in two parts, present a convincing argument that at risk students are highly idiosyncratic, creating a widely diverse portraiture of context and lives of at risk children and the educators that share those lives.

Part I. Constructing a metaphorical lens of the verbal portrait, the editors and authors in the first part of the book support their assumption about idiosyncrasy by a series of case studies. Some of the students portrayed fit the common-sense or researcher ideal types. In a hauntingly important way the authors share their stories of students who are clearly at risk but who would not be labeled as such. The authors bring a voice to issues of literacy, rural poverty, gay or lesbian students, the deferring learner, and gender stereotyping, all

contrasting portraits to the common-sense at risk student. The authors also bring the readers' attention to issues of the intellectually at risk — students who are gifted intellectually but at risk to themselves socially. Part I creates the context for understanding the idiosyncratic nature of at risk students in today's schools. The reader is reminded that the risk to the student isn't always literacy, intellectual, or related to school. An important theme of the idiosyncrasy of at risk students is detailed by the verbal portrait metaphor. There is a holistic intent in providing the array of student portraits. Capturing the unique individualism of each student, the authors enable the reader to step back from the canvas and see a larger picture of at risk students today. Each artist's verbal portrait is both a recognition of the student at risk and the author/artist's own particular style, technique, training, and point of view in each.

Part II. Fully immersed in the idiosyncratic context of at risk students, the reader is now focused on the programs, policies, and practices designed to help at risk students. A major theme woven throughout the chapters represented is the importance of a guiding philosophy and the building of programs based on tenets of this philosophy rather than bureaucratic procedures. Another emerging theme is that of creating a school culture, founded on the philosophy, which embraces the idiosyncrasy of at risk students. Finally, the reader is provided the opportunity to learn vicariously from the diversity and rich base of experience provided by the authors of these chapters.

Chapter twelve introduces the chapters in part two and focuses on the metaphors used to conceptualize policy making and program development, as well as teaching and learning in the classroom. Chapters thirteen-fifteen explore current policy and programs, examining primarily the problems with existing programs. The authors present a defensible

argument that well-intentioned policies and programs designed to reduce risk often result in the opposite effect.

In chapters sixteen through eighteen the reader is introduced to the need to balance direction and discretion with respect to policies, programs, and practices for the at risk student. Presented is an example of a success story, a Reading Recovery program where balancing top-down direction and local discretion is required if teachers are to have a sense of how to proceed while accommodating student idiosyncrasy. Examples are provided by the authors with respect to specific programs such as the Reading Recovery Program, the delicate balance entailed in site-based management, and specific classroom issues.

Chapter nineteen contains the reflections of a former teacher at New York's famous Central Park East High School. This chapter presents a cautionary sign, challenging to some degree a major theme in the second half of this book by indicating that building programs around philosophical tenets rather than bureaucratic procedures is no guarantee that the idiosyncratic needs of at risk students will be addressed.

Chapters twenty through twenty-two focus the reader on using the notion of culture to organize and structure life in three teachers' classrooms. A second theme emerging in these chapters is the use of writing as a lens to focus the building of a classroom culture that is a writing culture. Chapter twenty takes the reader into a teacher's classroom where she consciously uses process writing to engage the students in culture building. This chapter focuses on classroom characteristics contributing to the teacher's success. These included: 1) improvisational teaching and modeling; 2) importance of writing; 3) importance of students' writing; 4) deemphasis on grades and emphasis on critiquing; 5) emphasis on the

positive; and 6) individual differences. This chapter presents strong consideration for findings of the study presented to be used heuristically by teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

Conclusion. The editors of this book have brought together a rich descriptive collection of chapters, helping the reader to construct a context for understanding the idiosyncrasy of at risk students. The use of metaphor to consider the nature of at risk students and the philosophy, policy, program and practice relevant to the at risk student provides a guiding framework for the reader to construct meaning and understanding about the at risk student. The editors, empowered by the excellent 'verbal portraits,' or case studies, have provided argument in support of their idiosyncratic position respective to at risk students versus the more common-sense stereotyping that has existed.

The book presents well written case examples in both part I and II. The authors have brought a voice to a critical issue of our time. Although the voices are not always in harmony, the collective voice of the book resounds with the importance of revisiting our philosophy, policy, program and practice when considering at risk students. More importantly, the collective voice speaks loudly to the necessity to reconsider the common-sense and ideal type lens we use when viewing the at risk student. The student at risk may be more obvious than our trained minds are capable of accepting.



Children's Books

Dragons!

The Dragons are Singing Tonight by Jack Prelutsky. Illustrated by Peter Sis. ISBN: 0-688-09645-X. 1993. 40 pp. US\$15.00 *Komodo*. Written and illustrated by Peter Sis. ISBN: 0-688-11583-7. 1993. 32 pp. US\$15.00. Each of these books is published by Greenwillow Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019.

Jack Prelutsky's new volume of poetry, *The Dragons are Singing Tonight*, is devoted to the songs of many different dragons — dragons imaginary and elusive, morose and introspective, tiny and feisty, or loudly thunderous.

This captivating book may certainly be enjoyed on two levels, for Peter Sis' splendid artistry stands alone and demands full attention — as well as being companion to the enchanting poetry. Prelutsky fills this book with the songs of dragons, "songs [I] can only hear one night a year."

In *Komodo*, Peter Sis once again allows readers a glimpse into his imaginary "dragon world." The story is short and simple, following a boy and his tourist parents to the Indonesian island of Komodo to view the large reptiles called dragons. On the large, colorful pages dragons sinuously wind through emerald landscapes, and playfully hide in unexpected places. And yes, the little boy meets a dragon! (SDC)



Two adventures for young boys

Timothy Twinge. Written by Florence Parry and Roxanne Heide Pierce. Illustrated by Barbara Lehman. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-10762-1. 1993. 32 pp. US\$14.00.

Shelly Schragg

Sonoma Elementary, Harper Community Schools

Timothy Twinge's vivid and boisterous imagination has caused him to worry about things that might happen to him and his surroundings. In his fantasy, his ordinary, everyday life is turned into one frightful experience after another. Timothy starts his day concerned about his own fate and soon discovers as he reaches for his hands and feet that he's all complete. He panicked and thought he had melted in his sleep. His day continues as he goes to the grocery store and fears the shelves are actually flat jaws that grab at your hand if you reach too far back on the shelf for an item. The exciting part of the story is the ending. Timothy Twinge unlocks the mystery of his fears and becomes the Ruler of the Galaxy. The illustrations capture Timothy's fears and make them come to life. The rhyming text depicts Timothy's thoughts about the world and how it can be filled with monsters or terrible events — those fears which seem so real to young children.

Time To Get Out. Written and illustrated by Fulvio Testa. Tambourine Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-12907-2. 1993. US\$14.00.

Janet Chupka, Battle Creek Public Schools

Join a young boy who takes a wonderful adventure to a tropical island full of animals, exploration and danger. Just when all is lost the young boy is jolted back to reality by his mother telling him it is time to get out of the bathtub! This

imaginative adventure is similar to Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Testa captures your attention with the bright, simple illustrations. He creates a curiosity which lends itself to prediction as you join the character's exploration to discover what the mysterious noises are.



I Love You As Much. Written by Laura Krauss Melmed. Illustrated by Henri Sorensen. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11718-X. 1993. 24 pp. US\$14.00.

Shelly Schragg
Sonoma Elementary, Harper Community Schools

A tender heart-warming story, *I Love You As Much...* conveys how a mother's love is unconditional and never-ending for her young. The author utilizes mother animals and their babies using simple analogies: "said the mother whale to her child, I love you as much as the ocean is deep." The watercolor illustrations are as heartwarming as the text. The passage reminds the reader how precious mothers and their young truly are. This book would be a wonderful springboard to an activity that would have the children create their own books for those special people: "*Mom, I love you as much...*"

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A biography for children

Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare. Written by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema. Illustrated by Diane Stanley. Morrow Junior Books, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-09108-3. 1992. 48 pp. US\$15.00.

Sherry Myers, Kalamazoo Public Schools

Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare is a first-rate picture book biography. The facts, from the author's note at the beginning to the postscript, are intriguing, readable and honest. There remains much mystery about Shakespeare's life, and the book is quick to point this out, saying "we don't know" rather frequently and honestly. However, what is known and speculated about his life is reported in fine fashion. Shakespeare becomes a real person and his time period much clearer to any reader.

Much of the book explains the theater of the time, including the political climate, the actual stagings, the history of the playhouses, the nature of the audiences who attended the plays, and the actors in the troupe. The breadth of this information and the interesting tidbits, such as actor Will Kemps dancing 111 miles from London to Norwich as a publicity stunt, keep the story lively and entertaining as well as informative. The lengthy and fascinating postscript tells us about the language of the period, from the lack of consistent spelling (even on the cover of the first English dictionary) to the number of words and phrases Shakespeare added to the language. A good bibliography is also included, noting texts appropriate to younger readers.

The potential audience for this portrait of Shakespeare is a wide one. Certainly, it could be read aloud to children from

about age seven, but it is also appropriate for middle and high school readers as they begin their study of Shakespeare's plays. The art in the book is lively and appealing, as well as being accurate in terms of what we know of the theaters and dress of the period. The four-color, full page illustrations are done in gouache, an opaque watercolor, and the result is a blend of simple folk-art and high detail. This painstaking reliance on accuracy and detail in both the text and the art makes *Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare* a welcome addition to any library, as well as suitable for "coffee table" display.

Alamo Across Texas. Written by Jill Stover. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11712-0. 1993. 32 pp. US\$13.00.

Sherry Myers, Kalamazoo Public Schools

Alamo is an alligator, content with his life along the Lavaca River in southern Texas. He has everything he needs: water, fish, shade, and friends. Then a draught dries up the river, and all of these things disappear. Alamo begins a trek to find a new home. He tries a ranch, the ocean, a swimming pool, and a city, but none of them is right. Now, there is no more water to be found in the whole state. Exhausted, Alamo falls asleep under a cactus in a dry river bed. While he sleeps, the rain starts, and Alamo drifts down the river. When he awakens, he is home.

Stover tells a simple story, but one that will engage young listeners. It is a tale that they will soon be able to tell as the pages are turned, and in the process they will learn about a place within the United States very different from much of the rest of the country. The bright, four-color drawings vividly illustrate the varied and sometimes exotic landscapes of our second largest state. The use of color is especially fine, making the book very visually pleasing. This, in combination

with the short text, make it an ideal choice for reading aloud to a group. The last page of the book maps Alamo's trek around Texas, providing an opportunity to find Texas on a U.S. map and to talk about climate and topographical differences.



I Spy Two Eyes. Written by Jill Stover. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard, 1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10019. ISBN: 0-688-11712-0. 1993. 32 pp. US\$13.00.

In the magnificent array of recent alphabet books, Lucy Micklethwait's *I SPY: An Alphabet in Art* is a standout. Now she has followed that enchanting collection with a counting book, *I Spy Two Eyes*, whose title is her caption to match Karel Appel's brilliantly colored painting, "Cry for Freedom."

Many of the twenty artists whose work is represented here are well known: a Van Gogh painting shows eight boats, a Rubens, nine children. Other artists are less familiar: Thomas Cooper Gotch, whose blissful "Alleluia" presents thirteen singers; Fernand Leger, in whose intricate, bright abstract "Divers On a Yellow Background" fifteen hands and feet are tangled; Robert Indiana, whose poster art "American Dream" shows nineteen stars. An endnote gives brief information about each of the paintings, and lists the museums of whose collections they are a part.

Art speaks to each of the ages in a single human life, and to the life of humanity across time. The artworks chosen here come from many cultures and span five centuries, and the collection is designed to be a family treasure, to be shared across generations, over time. (JMJ)

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