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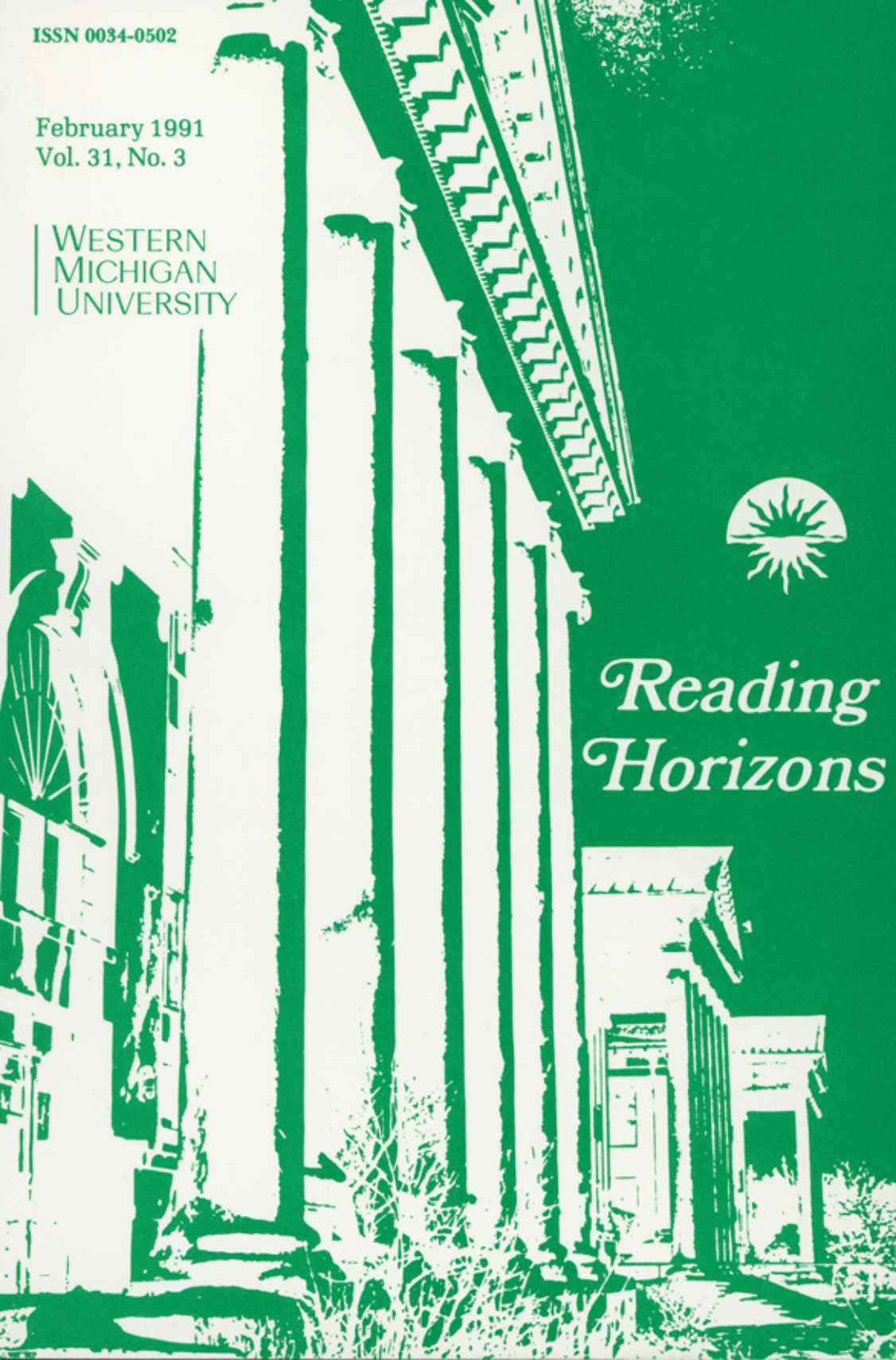
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READING HORIZONS has been published since 1960, on the campus of Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. As a journal devoted to teaching reading at all levels it seeks to bring together, through articles and reports of research findings, those concerned and interested professionals working in the ever widening horizons of reading and related areas of language.

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Students as Storytellers in the Classroom

Karla Hawkins Wendelin

Engaging students in storytelling activities develops communication skills and encourages shared learning experiences. Telling stories enhances oral language and sharpens listening. Speaking ability is improved through attention to articulation, clarity, and volume. Poise and confidence in speaking before a group are acquired in the accepting environment of the classroom. Students experiment with various intonations and reflect a range of emotions in their voices. They are faced with the need to select just the right word to convey a thought. As they manipulate language, they also listen to, evaluate and appreciate the expression of others.

Although telling tales of one sort or another is part of everyday life, getting students to view themselves as storytellers engaged in the art of storytelling takes patience and preparation. Modeling by the teacher is essential. Teachers need to introduce students to a wide range of story possibilities and the numerous opportunities in which the telling might take place. Familiar favorites from folk literature; anecdotes from the lives of real people, past and present; stories that teach a scientific concept or reinforce aspects of health and safety; stories that introduce a social studies unit, and stories that entertain on special days should be part of the teacher's repertoire. Students need to

observe and listen to teachers telling many stories before they begin to tell their own.

A variety of classroom activities involving students in less formal ways can serve as preparation for actual storytelling. Several of these “warm-up” experiences are described below.

Participation stories

In participation stories, the storyteller assumes the major role, but members of the audience are actively involved in portions of the telling. A set of cues and responses, in the form of actions, words (as in a refrain), or sounds, are established prior to the telling. Children listen for the cues as they appear in the story and respond accordingly. Cues should be explained and rehearsed ahead of time. Most children can remember seven or eight cues. With preschool or kindergarten children, however, three or four cues is usually the maximum.

Stories that are familiar to students, such as “Three Billy Goats Gruff,” may be adapted to participation stories. Many children’s books are also appropriate for active participation. For example, students will enjoy creating the variety of sounds made by a group of animals as they elude a determined crocodile in Gail Jorgensen’s *Crocodile Beat* (1989). The field trip to the farm in *The Day Jimmy’s Boa Ate the Wash* by Trinka Hakes Noble (1980) will be even zanier with children making schoolbus, tractor, and animal sounds and screaming along with the farmer’s wife. Pamela Allen’s *Bertie and the Bear* (1984) invites not only making sounds of an assortment of musical instruments but also creative movement. Father Bear is disturbed in every room in the house by a variety of noises when all he wants to do is sleep in *Peace At Last* by Jill Murphy (1980).

Poetry also lends itself well to audience participation. Poets such as Jack Prelutsky and Shel Silverstein whose work is popular with children have many poems in their collections that adapt well to movement and repetition of sounds and refrains. Both oral language and listening skills are stimulated through participation stories. These activities work well with students of all ages and are especially useful with reluctant readers and children whose English language backgrounds are limited.

Wordless books

There are considerable differences in the complexity of wordless books, so their use is appropriate across a wide age range. Some wordless books tell a story through the illustrations. Others are collections of individual illustrations that are tied together by the presentation of a concept to be taught. Both types may stimulate storytelling.

Young children who tell the wordless story *Deep in the Forest* by Brinton Turkle (1976) (a twist to the "Three Bears" tale in which a young bear is the intruder in the home of three people) are likely to include details such as eating "porridge," and use deep "Papa" and squeaky "baby" voices in their tellings. The highly detailed illustrations in Peter Spier's *Rain* (1982) and in both *Sunshine* (1981) and *Moonlight* (1982) by Jan Ormerod provide stories suitable for telling by primary grade children and offer opportunities for them to relate similar personal experiences.

Older students could use Anno's "travel" books as stimuli for storytelling. In *Anno's USA* (1983), for example, historical landmarks and events, village scenes and rural landscapes are interspersed with the vitality of contemporary New York City as bits and pieces of American art and literature are liberally sprinkled across the pages. John

Goodall's Edwardian books provide the setting for stories about England in an earlier time. His wordless paintings in *Above and Below Stairs* (1983) contrast English aristocracy with the serving class from the Middle Ages to present day, thus teaching history while allowing for some lively storytelling. David Wiesner's *Free Fall* (1988) is a young boy's dream fantasy of exotic places and creatures inspired by objects surrounding his bed. Images that shift and change, places that emerge from a book of maps, and chess pieces that come alive in this book may prompt several storytelling adventures.

In addition to telling a story from a wordless book to an eager group of listeners, students might also put their stories on cassette tapes for the classroom listening center. In this way, listeners may hear several different versions of the same story, thus realizing what real storytellers know: a single story may be told in several ways.

Traveling tales

In a traveling tale, several people are involved in the telling of the same story. Students must listen to everyone who precedes them so that they are ready to continue the plot of the story. The tale may be told one word at a time. Since each participant adds only one word or a punctuation mark, these stories are brief, usually relating a single incident. Tales may also be told in longer segments as one student tells part of the story and stops at any time, passing the story on to the next person to continue. Time limits may need to be instituted as part of this activity to prevent an individual from dominating the telling. A good model for storytelling in longer segments is provided in the book, *The Tyrannosaurus Game* by Steven Kroll (1976). Bored by the weather, a group of children take their teacher's suggestion of playing a game by starting a story about a tyrannosaurus

who comes to their city. Each child contributes to the story until a satisfactory conclusion is reached.

Another possibility for the traveling tale is the use of a Story Box. The Story Box contains a ball of yarn or twine with knots tied at intervals. The first teller pulls the end of the yarn from a hole in the box and relates a story until he or she comes to the first knot. The box is immediately passed to the next storyteller who talks until another knot is reached. Knots may be placed varying distances apart, thus randomly allowing students to contribute a great deal or small portions of a story while necessitating attentive listening.

Words, objects, situations

Unusual words or ordinary words in unusual combinations, unique objects or assortments of objects, and contrived situations may stimulate storytelling.

Students may work together in small groups to create a story using a specific group of words. Each group is given a card with five or six words on it and time to plan a story. Each word on the card must be used in the story. Cards might include words groups such as: 1) *sword, ransom, witch, path, beautiful, cheese*; 2) *curtain, table, puppy, spaghetti, clown, roof*; 3) *moonlight, shoes, shipwreck, girl, candle, spinach*. A teller is appointed by the group to tell their story to the rest of the class. As regrouping is done for future use of this activity, different storytellers should be selected.

Objects may encourage storytelling. Using a variety of hats, for example, students may each select one and tell a story about the person who wore it. A similar activity may be done with shoes. These kinds of experiences help students

develop different characterizations, which is an important aspect of storytelling. Single objects that seem to have a story within them, such as a large, rusty old key, a well worn teddy bear, or a multi-colored stone, are useful for prompting creative tales. Objects that are not readily identifiable by the students usually elicit interesting stories as well.

"What if..." questions allow students to use their problem-solving abilities, creativity, and some common sense to develop short story situations. Teachers might pose a "what if..." question in the morning or at the beginning of a class period to allow think and talk time among the students and call for the stories later in the day. The length of these stories and the amount of detail included will vary with the nature of the question and the age of the students. A group of teachers generated the following "What if..." situations:

*your mother were president of the United States
everyone in the world had the same name
your dog started talking
it rained popcorn
all the clocks stopped
you were a book
there were no colors
a computer was programming you
no one ever smiled*

With a little exposure to this kind of story, students will soon be creating "What if..." situations themselves and offering them to the class for storytelling.

Stories in songs

Songs often tell stories, and they involve the entire group in a single storytelling activity. Folk songs, such as "Billy Boy," "Clementine," and "Sweet Betsy From Pike," use several verses to tell the tale. There are generally multiple

versions of these songs, as well, for students to compare. Some story songs teach concepts, such as the historical information presented in "The Erie Canal" and "The Star Spangled Banner," and the introduction to other cultures in "Waltzing Matilda" and "Always Room for One More."

The repetition and cumulative nature of some songs, as well as their familiarity, allow for extension into other types of storytelling activities. Songs such as "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" and "Over in the Meadow" adapt well to flannel board stories. Students can dramatize, dance to, or play games associated with other songs, such as "Over the River and Through the Wood," "Skip to my Lou," and "Farmer in the Dell." Small groups of older students who are familiar with a number of folk tunes might choose a story and set it to music. Folk tales, because their plots are sequential and easy to follow, are well suited to this activity. In order to create their "folk songs," the students must select the essential elements of a tale and "retell" it, adapting their words to the rhythmical pattern of a known tune.

Students as storytellers

Students need to study the art of storytelling. As they gain confidence with the informal activities, teachers can introduce the telling of stories to a group. Cross-age arrangements in which older students prepare stories for telling to children in lower grades provide a purpose for the task and an audience as well. Students will need some assistance in selecting a story. Discussion of the types of stories that they have enjoyed the most, characteristics of a good story, and possible sources for stories, aids the selection process. Teachers should share practical hints that have worked for them regarding story preparation and practice. Students might work in small groups critiquing

each other on use of voice and expression. The classroom climate while students are working on storytelling should be accepting and non-threatening.

The students themselves should establish the storytelling schedule so that they may tell their stories when they feel they are ready. In order that a few storytellers do not dominate the activity, a simple policy that everyone should have the opportunity to tell a story before someone has a second turn is effective. Reluctant tellers may need additional exposure to storytelling, more assistance with preparation, and time, combined with consistent encouragement to share their stories. As the model of effective storytelling, the teacher should continue to tell stories even after students are regularly telling stories themselves.

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Teaching As We Are Taught: A Model for Whole Language Inservice

Maureen C. Prenn
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Teacher educators teach in a system of isolated and fragmented courses, passing on knowledge about teaching to passive students sitting in desks. They cannot expect either preservice or in-service teachers to teach on the basis of new models of learning and literacy when their college classrooms and many of the public schools in which they teach continue to operate from old models.

Short and Burke, 1989, p. 194.

We acknowledge the truth of this criticism. As teacher educators we are well aware that *how* we teach is not always compatible with *what* we teach. While this reality is often a concern to us in our work with preservice teachers, it struck us as especially important because we had been asked to teach an off-campus, whole language inservice course. Teaching whole language demanded that our methodology complement the course content. Because of this, we organized the class in concert with characteristics of a whole language environment: time, ownership, process, conferences, and resources (Butler and Turbill, 1984). Implementing these elements provided many challenges both for the students in the course and for us. The story that follows is our view of how these characteristics affected our students' experiences and our own.

Time

Butler and Turbill point out that children need time “to practice the processes of reading and writing” (1984, p. 22). A similar statement could be made that graduate students need time to be language users in an inservice class. As we considered how we might best model whole language, we found ourselves trying to provide regular, weekly opportunities for the teachers to read, write, talk, listen, and choose. During every class period time was provided for several key experiences: reading aloud, whole group instruction, small group sharing of self-selected texts and adult literature, reading/writing workshop, individual conferences, and a brief closure. The weekly sessions became predictable for students. They came to expect that the time for whole group instruction would be teacher-directed, that they would have time to work in small groups, and that they would also have time to choose their own individual literacy activities. As one student wrote in a final evaluation: “We came in knowing what was to be expected of us and left exhausted knowing we had really put in our time learning something. Our questions were answered — not just by teacher answers but by small group work or by individual research.”

Our students were not the only ones who needed time. In order to become whole language teachers, we found it also necessary for us. Because we were commuting, we spent many hours in the car. We used our travel time to plan, share observations, and encourage one another. Teaching as a team meant we had joint responsibility for teaching and planning. It required us not only to be organized and clear about the lessons we prepared together, but also to take time to communicate with one another about where we were and where the class was going. Additionally, we needed individual time to respond to student writing and to plan portions of the class session that

each of us would lead. Because teaching this whole language class became important to us, we found time which we did not think we had.

Although we both saw ourselves as readers prior to this course, we did not always regularly read. This teaching and learning experience helped us to adjust our time so that today we have become practicing readers. Students reported a similar discovery. John reflected, "I have learned to *make time for reading*. I have gone back and reread books that greatly influenced me earlier in life. I've also started reading simply for pleasure."

Ownership

Control and responsibility for learning belong to the learner (Butler and Turbill, 1986). Graves (1982) refers to this as student ownership. In an attempt to build choice, responsibility, and ownership into this class, we developed the following requirements:

1. Students chose one of two texts to read and share, and they also chose one of four literature selections. The groups with whom they shared their readings were also chosen by the students. Determination of the weekly assignments, then, was the individual group's responsibility.

2. Students wrote a piece of self-sponsored writing on a topic of their choice. These pieces were published in books which became part of the class library.

3. Students wrote I-Search papers (Macrorie, 1984), again on topics of their own choosing. It was up to the students to decide not only what questions they would pursue, but also the resources they would use in the search for their answers.

The choice and responsibility that were extended to our students often generated a sense of pride and independence in them. In turn, they sometimes invited their own students to take ownership. In reflecting on her learning, Susan told us:

My I-Search was good. I accomplished something useful, not just a paper to please someone else... I found my students to be thrilled at the freedom allowed in literature circles and eager to write and discuss their writing. Publishing brought tremendous satisfaction to the students and the pupil-to-pupil interaction was beyond my expectations.

The opportunity for teachers and their students to make personal learning choices not only allowed, but also required, ownership. One of the most risky aspects of this class for us was relinquishing the feeling of ownership that we had over student learning. Becoming whole language teachers required us to give up responsibilities. Some students expected that we would directly provide procedures for setting up a whole language classroom. We knew there was no such formula, and our resistance to providing such definitive answers was disappointing for them.

Teachers are the ones who most often make the instructional decisions. In many respects this class was no different. We made several key choices. We decided how to structure the class in a way that reflected a whole language philosophy. We determined what the specific requirements were in a way that allowed for student choice. And we intentionally forced students to take responsibility in a way which was sometimes exciting, and at other times uncomfortable. As we reflect on the decisions we made, we find ourselves satisfied with the productive learning environment that was created. On the other hand, we recognize that a different

set of teacher choices and responsibilities may be necessary the next time we teach this class.

Process

Process is central to teaching and learning. Both require reflection, time, and personal involvement; neither is ever really finished. Perhaps the most significant indicator of the process our students were experiencing was the recursiveness we observed. Not surprisingly, on the first and second nights of class, we fielded many comments that began, "Yeah, but..." By the fourth week we noticed a definite change. Our students entered the class happy, their talk was easy, they were feeling confident and knowledgeable. Progress continued until later in the quarter when students became more knowledgeable and encountered new questions. Once again we heard, "Yeah, but." This time, however, students addressed these questions to each other. They were learning to do without us. No gift from any student was greater than Donna's reflection: "I found that just as learning is a process, so is teaching. I used to think that because I had gone through schooling to be a teacher I should just 'know' how to do everything. After reading about other teachers' experiences a great pressure has been taken off my shoulders. I don't have all the answers, but I will continue to learn and grow with time and experience."

Another example of process was the class' experience with the topic of evaluation. Not surprisingly, this was an issue that students were anxious to address. When we first focused on the topic, students were frustrated and revealed a lack of prior information. There was confusion about what standardized tests were and the difference between formal and informal evaluation. In a second session, they showed an increase of knowledge, but also some lingering misunderstandings. For example, in a semantic map reflecting

concepts of whole language evaluation, some students identified journals as a formal assessment tool. Still, we were making progress. In order to understand something new, learners need time to manipulate concepts and to make "mistakes." It was only during the third, and final, class on evaluation that students became more tentative about the current evaluation practices in their own districts. They questioned the value of their elementary report card forms, and showed a new openness to alternatives that might better reflect a whole language philosophy.

We were also in the process of learning. We were learning what it meant to teach a whole language class, especially about our roles in this setting. In spite of the fact that we were the teachers, we did not assume the role of experts or dispensers of knowledge; we relied on our students for direction. As teachers and learners we listened, observed, read, and responded. Several students commented, "We want more of *your* ideas. We want to know what *you* think about it." In their journals they occasionally complained that we were not lecturing enough and that we were not answering their questions. One wrote: "What is the purpose of these journals anyway? Just to check to see if we're reading our assignments?" When students struggled and demanded, we struggled and wondered. Were we meeting their needs? Were they becoming more independent learners? Not every student valued the process-centered experience we sought to offer, and a handful of students never did accept this approach. Being process teachers required us to be reflective about our own roles, and to be patient with ourselves and with our students.

Conferences

Conferences are an integral part of whole language classrooms, allowing teachers to help individual students at

their own point of need (Butler and Turbill, 1984). Rita, for instance, began the class prepared to learn from traditional teachers. For the first weeks, she sat in a center, front seat with her pencil poised and a sober expression on her face. Rita's attention to details both in her journal and in the questions she posed before and after class suggested frustration at not receiving information about specific whole language practices. Several times she arranged to have conferences with us. These meetings provided her with the support she needed until she could modify her approach to learning. On one occasion, for instance, Rita wanted to know about the role of invented spelling in her kindergarten classroom. When should it be allowed? When should it be corrected? What should she tell parents? In these conferences, Rita learned what other teachers have done, and she learned about resources she could go to for further information. By the end of the class, Rita was enthusiastically planning to reread books to her students, to allow students to choose their own writing topics, and to integrate the teaching of skills with students' literacy activities. In her final reflections she outlined the following goals: "I plan to... read more about whole language and the reading-writing process...[and] to stay on top of national trends and continue growing professionally." For many students, as for Rita, conferences became a vehicle for bridging the gap between individual needs and group experiences.

Teaming allowed us to benefit from conferences just as our students did. We provided feedback and encouragement to each other, focusing on our point of need. For instance, we strongly believed in the importance of beginning each class with a read aloud. Despite our careful selection of literature and preparation, the class appeared to be in a stupor during the reading. It was tempting to abandon the idea, but in our conferences we helped one another

see glimmers of interest and attention. We continued to read aloud, and students gradually learned to relax and enjoy having someone read to them. This enjoyment was reflected in their faces, in their journal entries, and in their plans to do more reading in their own classrooms.

Resources

Because we believed that the use of multiple and varied resources is important in a whole language classroom, we provided students with both printed and visual materials. Besides the text and adult literature selections they read, students also had access to books and articles from our university library. These were available during workshops and were signed out regularly for use at home. In class, as a part of our whole group lessons, students viewed video tapes which provided examples of reading and writing conferences, Author's Chair, and the use of big books.

Another resource that was highly valued in this setting was people. Students held interviews, wrote letters, and made phone calls in order to tap the expertise of other educators. They also came to value their interactions with one another, which allowed them to find out what other students were learning about whole language from their teaching experiences. About the time we were in the midst of struggling with the topic of evaluation, we read DeeDee's self-sponsored writing. It was a powerful piece, and because it was about evaluation, we asked her if she would be willing to share it for closure with the rest of the class. She agreed. With some difficulty, DeeDee read to her colleagues about the death of a junior high student she had taught in another state a few years earlier. The girl received an "F" in DeeDee's English class and was therefore required to attend summer school. Because her family could not afford this expense, her father shot her and then killed himself.

The room was uncomfortably silent as the students made their way out that evening. DeeDee was one of us and evaluation was something we did all the time. Beverly wrote: "When DeeDee read her paper, I couldn't stop thinking about what an impact we have on kids and their families." DeeDee's willingness to share this difficult experience made her a significant resource not only for Beverly, but for others as well. Her experience continues to shape our thinking about evaluation.

We came to view our human resources as most valuable. Our students were our primary resources. It was from them that we got our ideas about what needed to be done next and how future experiences might best be crafted. We counted on them to share experiences and to encourage one another; we expected them to become a caring community. Likewise, we had one another. As team members our backgrounds were different, but complementary; one of us specialized in reading, the other in language arts. Nevertheless, we shared a philosophy about what it means to teach and learn. Working as a team meant we could get feedback on what was happening when each of us was at the front of the class; we could see with another pair of eyes the dynamics of our own teaching. We also relied on the help of our colleagues and friends in other universities who were teaching whole language classes. From them, we learned about new materials; we also received the encouragement and support that whole language teachers need.

Conclusion

As the call for whole language courses increases and as such classes appear in more and more teacher education programs, the challenge before us is to create environments which show, rather than tell.

The kind of learning environments created in teacher education exert a slow, but steady pressure on students' sense of themselves as learners and teachers. What students learn from how they are taught in the college classroom will remain with them long after they have forgotten the theories and ideas discussed in those classrooms (Short and Burke, 1989, p. 203).

Butler and Turbill's five elements of whole language classrooms provided a framework for us to develop such an environment. Time, ownership, process, conferences, and resources were all critical components of this whole language inservice. These elements encouraged us and our students to shift roles, they nudged us to rethink our approaches to learning and teaching, and they urged us to re-examine our practices as readers and writers. These characteristics are certainly not the only way that we can model what we teach. But for us, they provided an exciting and effective means of reaching for this goal.

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The Emergence of Bibliotherapy as a Discipline

Dan T. Ouzts

In 1988, Ryan White spoke before the National Education Association and discussed his battle with AIDS:

'I stand before you to ask for your help,' Ryan told the teachers. 'The many people against me said they weren't against me, but against my disease. Help me beat the odds and together let's educate and save the children of the world. By proper education, AIDS can be a disease, not a dirty word.'

Ryan White was the child who had contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion and was barred from school when school officials and parents rejected health authorities' assurances that AIDS cannot be spread through casual contact. Ryan became the spokesperson to lead the nation out of ignorance and hatred of people with AIDS. His legacy has taught us lessons of courage, understanding and hope. In teaching and learning about these concepts, the book *Losing Uncle Tim* (Jordan, 1989) is recommended. In this book, a young boy learns that his favorite grown-up is dying from a disease called AIDS. This book is recommended for use in the intermediate grades.

As educators we must sensitize children to themselves and to others through books. We cannot ignore the emotional aspect of learning and adjustment and concentrate solely on the academic aspect. It is detrimental to both the learner and the learning process to consider the intellect without consideration of the social aspect of learning. The reading teacher occupies a strategic position in the development of emotions of children, and it is through this development that the teacher is able to help shape the future of children who are experiencing stress and crises in their lives. Caring, competent and knowledgeable educators fully appreciate how authentic interactions with literature can contribute to overall cognitive and affective growth (Jalongo, 1983).

The effects of social change on children

Life is a continual adjustment to many different types of problems and these problems can cause times of sadness, uncertainty and stress. Many children must face problems stemming from handicapping conditions and cultural differences, and now the threat of nuclear war (Ouzts, 1984).

Galen and Johns (1976) conducted a survey in which teachers were to select the ten problems most prevalent among primary grade children. Three categories were analyzed (concept of self, relationships with others, and need to cope with change). The ten developmental/emotional problems were: 1) coping with competition, and divorce or change in family status; 2) coping with failure; 3) coping with peer group pressure; 4) recognizing and accepting one's strengths and weaknesses 5) coping with alienation and rejection; 6) resolving problems with siblings; 7) accepting the strengths and weaknesses of others 8) moving to a new neighborhood; 9) new baby, and 10) coping with physical

handicaps or differences. If we were to examine these ten problems facing both teachers and children since this study, one would find that many of these same problems still exist. With the dilemma of homelessness, this problem will be encountered in the future. Educators are recognizing the critical need for delivering literacy instruction to at-risk and homeless children and their families (IRA, 1990). It appears that a movement away from the traditional fairy tales has occurred in today's literature and more real-life situations are being presented. In a study conducted by Ouzts (in press), the favorite fifteen books in each of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were determined from a population of 555 middle school students. Forty-five books were determined as favorites of children in these grades, and, of these, only five books were fairy tales — *Three Little Pigs*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Cinderella*, and *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*. Some of the favorite books were *Superfudge*, *Freckle Juice*, and the *Ramona* books, which reflect more contemporary trends.

One needs only to examine the content of many concept books and one would find issues such as adoption, AIDS, alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, blindness, day care, divorce, Downs Syndrome, latchkey children, and even nuclear war (Albert Whitman, 1990).

The background of bibliotherapy

The word *bibliotherapy* first appeared in 1930 in an article by G.O. Ireland. Other terms applied to this type of therapy were therapeutic reading. In the United States, Drs. Will and Karl Menninger were among the first to foster an interest in this type of aid to healing (O'Bruba and Complese, 1983).

Bibliotherapy was first used as a type of therapy with people who were emotionally ill. Today bibliotherapy is also used with a wide range of people from school children to adults in prison. It is used to help people adjust to life's many problems as well as to promote change in attitudes toward people and situations.

Shrodes (1949) first linked three interdependent stages in psychotherapy — identification, catharsis, and insight — to bibliotherapy. Russell (1970) used *identification* as the holistic name for the process under which the other two processes are subsumed. Jalongo (1983) states that theoretically the process follows a consistent pattern in which the reader or listener initially senses a common bond with the story's character, and finally, the reader/listener, by sharing vicariously in the dilemma of the story character, reflects upon personal circumstances and internalizes some of the coping mechanisms. Garfinkel and colleagues (1988) state that any young person attempting to cope with severe emotional problems, alone or in an ineffective way, needs assistance. Whenever teachers are aware of a situation where a young person is facing a series of traumatic events or a one-time crisis, they should be alert to the emotional fallout and offer whatever help they can.

In *Responding to Adolescent Suicide* (Garfinkel et al., 1988), suicide is reported as the second leading cause of death among high school students, exceeded only by motor vehicle fatalities. This useful resource text details what to do in the wake of a teenage suicide, suggests how to manage the crisis, and recommends the establishment of a school crisis team. It also presents an at-risk adolescent checklist. It is important that educators play an important role when a suicide occurs, and this publication will help with the problems that arise after a suicide.

Table 1
Bibliotherapy Topics and Recommended Books

- ABUSE: *The Pinballs*, Betsy Byars; *Cracker Jackson*, Betsy Byars
ADOPTION: *Adoption is for Always*, Linda Girard
AIDS: *Losing Uncle Tim*, Mary Kate Jordan
ABSENT FATHER: *A Father Like That*, Charlotte Zolotow
BLINDNESS: *Knots on a Counting Rope*, Bill Martin, Jr., and John Archambault; *Redbird* (in Braille), Patrick Fort
CANCER: *Hang Tough*, Matthew Lancaster
DEATH: *I'll Always Love You*, Hans Wilhelm; *The Two of Them*, Aliki; *A Taste of Blackberries*, Doris Smith; *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, Robert Service
DISABILITIES: *Our Teacher's in a Wheelchair*, Mary Ellen Powers; *The Summer of the Swans*, Betsy Byars; *I'm Not So Different*, Barbara Seuling
DIVORCE: *The Divorce Express*, Paula Danziger; *Win Me and You Lose*, Phyllis Wood; *It's Not the End of the World*, Judy Blume
DOWNS SYNDROME: *Where's Chimpy?*, Berniece Rabe
FAMILIES: *What Kind of Family is This?*, Barbara Seuling
ILLITERACY: *My Mom Can't Read*, Muriel Stanek
MOVING: *My Best Friend Moved Away*, Joy Zelony
NEW BABY: *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl*, Eloise Greenfield
NEW PARENTS: *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Patricia MacLachlan
RACIAL ISSUES: *Overcoming Prejudice and Discrimination*, Joy Berry
RELATIONSHIPS: *Blubber*, Judy Blume; *Queenie Peavy*, Robert Burch; *The Hating Book*, Charlotte Zolotow; *The Get Along Gang and the Bully*, Margo Lundell
SEX ROLES: *William's Doll*, Charlotte Zolotow
SIBLING RIVALRY: *The Pain and the Great One*, Judy Blume; *Jacob I Have Loved*, Katherine Paterson

Beginning the use of bibliotherapy

Jalongo (1983) recommends that one begin bibliotherapy by administering an interest inventory to select several books with general appeal. *The Book Finder*, a guide to children's literature about the needs and problems of youths aged 2 and up (Dreyer, 1989) is an excellent source. *The Book Finder* lists books by subject or problem area, author, title, and recommended ages. It can be

purchased in four volumes. Volume 1 contains lists of books before 1975, Volume 2 contains lists of books from 1975-1978, Volume 3 contains lists of books from 1979-1982, and Volume 4 contains lists of books from 1983-1986.

According to Jalongo (1983), the following three decision points should be considered when planning and preparing lessons: 1) set purposes considering what you hope to accomplish; 2) decide who will participate, and 3) plan timing to produce synchrony between a child's experiences and the story character's conflict. After children have completed a reading they need to ask several questions to analyze whether the particular reading has affected the problem (Partridge, 1976). The questions may include the following: 1) did I resolve my problem? 2) how do I feel about the book, and 3) am I satisfied with the results from my reading?

Criteria for book selection

There are three criteria to be used in selecting books for bibliotherapy: potential for controversy, accuracy or credibility, and value to literature (Jalongo, 1983). Sanacore (1982) has noted that many censorship crises in public education are related to language arts materials and has urged discretion in the selection of material. The seven most controversial subjects that Sanacore has pointed out are those of politics, religion, ethnic groups, strong language, drugs, alcohol, and sex. He has given special attention to the latter two, emphasizing that careful consideration must be given as these are very controversial subjects. It should also be noted that in *Reading Today* (IRA, 1989), the following were noted as the ten most frequently banned books in the United States: 1) *Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger; 2) *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck; 3) *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck; 4) *Go Ask Alice*, anonymous; 5) *Forever*, Judy

Blume; 6) *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective Staff; 7) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain; 8) *The Learning Tree*, Gordon Parks; 9) *My Darling, My Hamburger*, Paul Zindel and 10) *1984*, George Orwell (Demac, 1990).

Support for the use of bibliotherapy

Heitzmann and Heitzmann (1975) concluded that while bibliotherapy was "not yet a science" (pp. 120-124), several excellent studies tended to support its use. One helpful step in determining how, why or when bibliotherapy works is to study published research by age group (Tillman, 1984). Tillman reviewed nine research studies on bibliotherapy, concluded that careful planning for length of treatment is required, and recommended longitudinal studies. He also stated that consideration should be given to the "how, why, and when" of bibliotherapy. In particular, the "identification, catharsis, insight" explanation of how bibliotherapy works needs to be verified (pp. 713-19).

Even though some studies on bibliotherapy have not always indicated positive and significant results, it would appear that to the teacher who is willing to become familiar with children's literature and who is willing to work within the framework of a normal classroom to develop character, morals, attitudes, and self-worth, bibliotherapy would be worth a try. It appears that bibliotherapy is emerging as a discipline in the reading field, as evidenced by the literature and by the research being conducted.

The listing of books concentrating on bibliotherapy which is presented above in Table 1 shows books which the author has used in graduate reading classes. This listing is recommended to the classroom teacher.

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Teaching Reading in the Nigerian Primary School

Ezekiel A. Abe

Nigeria is a multilingual society with about 250 different languages accompanied by many dialects. Such a situation makes for a comfortable adoption of the English language as the official language of government and as the language of instruction in schools. Internal politics apart, the English language affords Nigerians easy communication among the many linguistic groups in the country and with other English speaking peoples all over the world. The position the English language holds in Nigeria, therefore, calls for the need to look more closely into the teaching of the arts of the language in order to enhance adequate mastery of it.

Nigerian children are faced with the task of studying at least two languages in school. When they get to school, usually at the age of six, they are already capable of communicating orally in their mother tongue. They are faced with the complex task of learning to read in their language and then in the second language which is invariably English. In some schools, reading instruction in both languages is carried on simultaneously.

It is essential to search for an effective instructional approach which will help children become proficient readers

and users of both the mother tongue and the second language. It is a well known fact that the mother tongue exerts a noticeable influence on progress in learning a second language. First, there is the interference of habits learned in the articulation of the sounds of the mother language as children make efforts to produce related but different sounds in the second language. Second, Nigerian children learn to read in the mother tongue shortly before, or at the same time, as they learn to read in English. Since the sound values of letters differ in the two languages, the confusion and frustration of the Nigerian learners of the English language is increased. Third, the linguistic structures of the mother tongue tend to be transferred to the writing of the second language. As a result, progress in learning to read is severely limited; the average Nigerian primary school children are about three years behind their American or British counterparts in reading age.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to discuss the different approaches to reading as used in the early years of Nigerian children, to point out the merits and demerits of the approaches, and to alert readers to the urgent need to open up studies on what would be the best approach in the peculiar situation Nigerian children learning to read find themselves. For the sake of clarity, the writer will use just one of the many Nigerian languages as a means of comparison and illustration throughout the paper – in this case the Yoruba language, one of Nigeria's major languages. Among others are Hausa, Ibo, Fulani, Nupe and Efik.

Readiness

In order to be able to read in any language, children must be mature enough to be able to make the necessary visual and auditory perceptual discriminations, as well as to listen attentively and produce the sounds as required. They

must be sufficiently intelligent and able to concentrate their attention on the learning task. They must be relatively free from speech, sight and hearing defects. It is assumed that Nigerian children have attained all these criteria before entering the primary school.

In those situations where Nigerian children learn to read in the mother tongue before learning to read English, basic training in general readiness such as making visual discriminations, handling books, and making left to right movement of the eyes in reading may be unnecessary. Usually, children have learned those skills in learning to read in the first language. However, these children do need to establish an oral base prior to learning the literacy skills of the English language. Assuming then that children have been given adequate readiness training and are free from all physical defects that may hinder normal reading, the next consideration is one arising from the initial presentation of the English reading material itself. One of the important questions to ask is: should the initial presentation of reading be letters, words or sentences?

Reading approaches

Historically, there has been controversy surrounding the most appropriate way of teaching children to read. Despite the search for one "best method" it is evident that there is no consensus of opinion. The argument centers around how to begin, when to begin, what instructional materials to use and how to organize classes for reading instruction. Many experiments have been conducted, materials developed and approaches tried by linguists, teachers and researchers concerned with problems of teaching, particularly to the linguistically diverse (Smith and Johnson, 1980). It is not the intention of this paper to delve into the depth of the debate; rather it will analyze the relevance of

the approaches to the Nigerian situation and the reasons why none of the approaches may be wholly appropriate.

In the whole-word approach, children are taught to read the names of common content and function words, while the phonic approach attempts to teach children the sound values of letters and letter clusters. Where does Nigeria stand in the two approaches? The situation in Nigeria is rather interesting. When reading in English is going to be taught, materials tend to be based on the whole-word method. When reading in the native languages is going to be taught, the phonic approach is used. The situation is worse for children who are taught reading in the two languages simultaneously, for they have to use phonics for one language and the next hour start with look and say for reading in the other language.

The rationale for this approach is based on the premise that the English language has had a written form for a long time and that oral forms of language tend to change more rapidly than written forms. Consequently, over time, there develops a widening gap between speech and writing. This gap partially accounts for some words with irregular spellings in written English — such words as *knight*, *caught*, *plough*, *yacht*, *depot*, and *aisle*. Moyle and Donald (1974) point out, "There is some evidence that one of the stumbling blocks to reading progress is the irregularity of the sound/symbol relationships of the English language," though some may argue that there is enough phonic regularity in English to warrant phonic instruction. On the other hand, many Nigerian languages have had written forms for only a comparatively short period of time. When written forms were developed, great care must have been taken to produce an orthography or spelling that closely reflects pronunciation. For example, in the Yoruba

language, the vowels /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ usually or regularly represent the same sounds in every context. This might have led the educators and publishers to choose phonics as the prime means of initial instruction in Yoruba reading. But it should be noted that while the regularity of association between letters and sounds certainly enhances phonic instruction, it does very little to solve the much more fundamental problem of the child's understanding of the reading process.

Phonic instruction, in wide use in Nigeria, is both abstract and removed from the natural learning strategies employed by young children. The introduction of reading via synthetic phonics makes it unnecessarily difficult for many children to learn to read, particularly when learning to read in the first and second languages is done simultaneously. This may very well contribute to significant numbers of Nigerian children becoming backward or reluctant readers.

It is appropriate to point out certain similarities and differences that exist between the alphabet of the English language and that of the Yoruba language. While the English language has a twenty-six letter alphabet, Yoruba has twenty-five. The following English letters are not present in the Yoruba alphabet: C, Q, V, W, and Z. There are four Yoruba letters not present in the English alphabet: *e* as in *elephant*; *gb*, no similarity for this in the English sound system; *o* as in *order*; *s* as in *push*. Orientations of the common letters are the same. With regard to pronunciation, even though there are some differences in sound values of the corresponding graphic symbols in the two languages, certain similarities can be identified in both the consonant sounds and the vowel sounds; however, the Yoruba language has no diphthongs.

The importance of this somewhat skeletal analysis is to point out the closeness in the graphics of the alphabet of the two languages which the writer feels should aid Nigerian learners to read in the English language after they have mastered the basics of reading in their own language. It should be an advantage to the teacher in teaching spelling, to some extent, and in developing, to a large extent, sight recognition of words in English. More importantly, the differences in the sound values of letters of the two language systems should point to the need for teaching reading in the English language not by a whole-word approach alone, but through an eclectic approach — a combination of the phonic, word, sentence, and experience approaches.

As soon as the similarities and differences in the graphophonemes are mastered by the children, the teacher should move on to develop their reading skills through the language experience approach. The language experience approach to teaching reading builds on the oral traditions that children bring to school. Fortunately, Nigerians have a very strong tradition of oral literature. Moreover, the language experience approach circumvents the problems presented by a dearth of published materials since the method does not rely on commercially prepared books. (Such materials can readily be incorporated when available.) Furthermore, the language experience method does not merely avoid the conceptual difficulties inherent in the whole word and phonic approaches, but is designed to develop an understanding of the reading process and to strengthen the learning of the specific associations between spoken and written words. It should, however, be emphasized that this approach presupposes that an effective start in oral aspect of the language has been given to the children. Typical experience stories might look like these:

*There was a big storm yesterday
We saw the lightning.
We heard the thunder.
There was a big bang.
The big tree fell across the road.*

*Wole is a boy.
Ayo is a girl.
Ayo is Wole's sister.
Wole is Ayo's brother.
They go to the same school.*

No deliberate attempt is made to simplify the vocabulary. Sentences should be short and direct, but there is rarely any need for the teacher to exercise control in this area since the children tend to produce such sentences quite naturally. Each story should be quite short.

The language experience approach is viewed as the most practical and most sensible approach for meeting the reading needs of children of linguistically diverse environments (Smith and Johnson, 1980). One of the key advantages of the language experience approach is that the written language presented to the children uses vocabulary, sentence patterns and situations that are familiar to the children, and is based on the children's experience. Durkin (1978) points out that the experience approach, among other things, is capable of motivating children to want to learn to read, demonstrating the relationship between spoken and written forms of language, and demonstrating the values of written language in preserving information, ideas and feelings; and DeHaven (1983) asserts that "children's

experiences provide the content for listening, speaking, writing and reading activities... the teacher serves as the scribe..." Through experience, readers become capable of predicting the words they encounter. The ability to make such predictions is based on the intuitive knowledge of the way sentences are constructed. However, such predictions are only efficient if the sentences conform to natural and familiar patterns, such as the ones produced through the experience approach. Phonics teaching may be incorporated into the language experience approach through activities which call children's attention to sounds of similar letters and letter combinations.

Summary and recommendations

It is an established fact that reading is a complex process and learning to read a foreign language is a more difficult task. For Nigerian children, reading is much more complex and rather more difficult. The Nigerian language and the country's political situation are such that Nigerian children are necessarily faced with the task of having to learn two languages – their native tongue and the English language. The latter is supposed to be mastered sufficiently well and within a reasonably short time because, among other reasons, it becomes the language of instruction beginning in the third year of the child in the elementary school.

At the present time it appears that teachers of young Nigerian children are choosing between whole-word and phonic approaches for the teaching of reading. They tend to use phonics for the native language and a whole-word approach for the second language. While both methods have advantages, they both suffer from the following serious faults: they present young children with severe conceptual problems, they present children with distorted

and unfamiliar language, materials in the mother tongue of many Nigerian children are not available, materials available in the English language are often removed from the children's experience and background, and the strong oral traditions of the Nigerian society are ignored. The effect of these conditions is that the children become poor and reluctant readers – never mastering reading in either their native language or in the second language.

The language experience approach, if used with caution, is seen as being capable of steering a middle course and reducing a total reliance on either the word approach or the phonic method. On the whole, it is an eclectic approach that can teach children the nature of the reading process, provide reading materials couched in their own experience and language, and permit children to read both in their mother tongue and the second language, capitalizing on the strong story-telling tradition of Nigeria.

In order to accomplish anything worthwhile in reading in the Nigerian schools the following recommendations are worth considering: 1) Nursery schools should be provided and made compulsory for all children. The nursery school will, to a large extent, provide the general readiness program most children are not likely to have at home (Most of the parents are illiterate and most children have no opportunity even to handle books until they get to school. For such children, nursery school will be an advantage.) 2) Reading should be made a main subject at all levels of the primary school. At present, reading is taught as part of language lesson. This does not allow adequate focus on the reading problems children face in schools. 3) Teachers should be given regular in-service training in the teaching of reading. 4) Teaching of reading must be introduced and be

made a compulsory course at all levels of the teacher training programs.

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A Celebration of Teaching Practice!

On June 26-28, 1991, a conference for practicing teachers will be held on the campus of Western Michigan University. The conference will create an arena where teachers can share knowledge about their craft with peers in an atmosphere where sharing and learning are primary. Keynote presentations and half-day workshops on the themes of individualization, diversity, integration, and technology will be featured.

For further information, contact conference organizers, Dr. Mary Ann Davies or Dr. Stefinee Pinnegar, Department of Education and Professional Development, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Michigan 49008.



The Dolch List Revisited – An Analysis of Pupil Responses Then and Now

Robert E. Leibert

A little more than a half century after its introduction, the *Dolch List of 220 Basic Sight Words* (1936) continues to be used in classrooms and cited in reading textbooks. In addition to its instructional application in both classroom and clinic (Fry, 1977), the list is also used for assessment, and published as a test (Dolch, 1942).

To aid in the interpretation of results, Dolch (1948) proposed a rough correlation between word knowledge and text difficulty. He estimated that pupils who could pronounce all 220 words should be able to read books of third grade difficulty. Pupils knowing half of the words should be able to read second grade texts, and those pupils who could identify less than half of the words he considered to be first grade readers. Dolch provided another performance indicator by dividing his list into two groups according to word difficulty. Using the results of a study based on 6,000 pupils, 3,000 in each of grades one and two, he formed an easier and more difficult 110 word grouping (Dolch, 1948).

However, the most specific means cited by reading texts for interpreting pupil performance on the Dolch List is a scale developed by McBroom, Sparrow and Eckstein (1944)

which converts a raw score from the Dolch List to an estimated reading level from preprimer to third grade; i.e., 0–75, preprimer; 76–120, primer; 121–170, first reader; 171–210, second reader; above 210, third reader and above (Zintz, 1981; Zintz and Maggart, 1988).

Purpose

One reason that this versatile list remains relevant is that it still reasonably represents the vocabulary of primary materials (Palmer, 1986). Interpretive data, on the other hand, have not been revalidated. The purpose of this investigation was to provide more recent information about the performance of pupils on the Dolch Test, and to provide some observations to assist teachers in interpreting the result of pupil responses to these words.

The following questions guided the data analysis:

1. What was the average number of words mastered at each reader level for the pupils in the study?

2. How does the McBroom-Sparrow-Eckstein (MSE) scale compare with the average score of pupils in this study?

3. How does the difficulty of words for the current population compare with the subdivision of the Dolch List?

4. What are the most common trends for incorrect responses to words on the Dolch List?

Background

A study (Neff and Leibert, 1981), in the spring of 1981, provided a means for collecting performance data on the Dolch Words. Responding to the need to improve the learning of urban youth, several principals in a Midwestern

urban school district decided to incorporate the learning of basic information in a game-like environment. In common with many other urban schools, achievement in this district was below national norms and the project schools performed below the district average. The staff designed games and activities which appeared in school yard graphics and in-school activities. Common games like hop-scotch were revised so information such as the names of the states and the Dolch Words were worked into the games. Special school recognition was accorded children for improving their mastery of the targeted information. After the project had been in effect for more than a year, a study was conducted to determine the efficacy of the incidental practice. This report focused upon the examination of pupil responses for the three grades in this investigation.

Procedure

Pupils in the original study were selected from grades two through four in five comparable urban schools. Twenty pupils were randomly drawn from each grade level and from each school for a total of 100 pupils each from grades two and three. Four pupils moved during the data collection in grade four, resulting in a total sample of 296 pupils. Testing was performed individually by a team of graduate students who used a common system for administering the lists and recording responses. As each list of 20 words was completed any word missed or omitted was presented for a second trial. Reading level was defined as the placement of each pupil in the district reading series by the classroom teacher. At the time of the study the 1974 edition of the Houghton Mifflin Series was the basic instructional program.

For the current investigation, incorrect responses were recorded and tabulated for each word. The resulting data allowed comparisons to be made with existing estimates of

word list difficulty. Pooled responses permitted a study of the variability of incorrect responses as well as determining, for this population, the ranking of word difficulty.

Research question 1: What was the average number of words mastered at each reader level for the pupils in the study? Pupils in this investigation were being instructed in basals ranging from preprimer to the fifth reader level. The average number of correct responses by reader level was computed for each grade.

Table 1

Average number of words pronounced correctly on the first trial by grade and by reader level.

	PP	P	1	2	3	4	5
2	79	129	188	197	214		
3		135	166	204	211	218	
4			140	198	208	217	218

Scores at each grade level show incremental growth in word mastery for each level of reading. This mastery is associated with both grade and reader level. Greater variability of scores is observed among pupils reading at the primer and first reader level than pupils at levels two through four.

Research question 2: How does the McBroom-Sparrow-Eckstein (MSE) scale compare with the average score of pupils in this study? The MSE data are reported as ranges for each grade level. Average scores for the current sample were compared with the top of the score range for the MSE scale for each reader level. Pupils in both studies demonstrated almost complete mastery of the list words by

second reader level, 90 and 95 percent respectively. Pupils in the current study who received instruction at the preprimer through first reader levels evidenced slightly higher average scores than the top score for each range of the MSE scale. Pupils assigned to levels two and three performed slightly lower than the top scores reported on the MSE scale. That is, pupils reading at the beginning levels in the current study appeared to know more Dolch Words than the pupils in the MSE sample. For example, the MSE scores are reported as a continuous scale so scores in the range of 76 to 120 would be estimated to be equivalent to the primer level. Using the current data this means that a considerable number of pupils who were placed at the preprimer through first reader levels in the Houghton Mifflin series would have been estimated as reading a level higher by the MSE data.

Table 2

Comparison between the average scores of the current population and the upper score of the McBroom, Sparrow & Eckstein scale by reader level.

	PP	P	1	2	3	4	5
C	79	131	176	199	210	217	218
P	75	120	170	210	210+		

C = Current Data - Combined scores for all three grades.

P = Published Data - High end of range reported in the MSE scale.

Research question 3: How does the difficulty of words for the current population compare with the subdivision of the Dolch List? By arranging the words in the current study according to their difficulty, it was possible to compare the easiest 110 words for this urban group with the list reported by Dolch (1948). This comparison indicated close

agreement in word difficulty then and now. These two lists differed by only 15 words or by about 14 percent.

Another observation made while analyzing the results was that pupils were able to correct a number of their first trial responses. For example, fourth grade pupils made a total of 1305 incorrect responses on the initial trial, but corrected 461 or about 35 percent of these responses on the second trial. Directions for administering the Dolch List (Zintz, 1981) indicate that only immediate self corrections are counted as correct.

Table 3

Percent change of incorrect responses on a second trial

	PP	P	1	2	3	4	5
2	02	08	17	23	50		
3		08	11	34	35	100	
4			13	29	50	69	100

Table 3 confirms that pupils corrected words at each level tested, indicating that the initial score represents a lower estimate of actual word knowledge. Improved performance because of a second trial increases in significance as reading level increases. A second trial also shows that some of the words were still not correctly identified by pupils reading in 4th and 5th grade books.

Research question 4: What are the most common trends for incorrect responses to words on the Dolch List? Some words proved to be exceptionally prone to error even for pupils reading at levels above third grade. Does this mean that certain words are more difficult to learn, or are

some other factors involved? One possibility is that some words are not encountered in written materials until later levels. A partial answer to the question was explored by addressing the relationship between the degree of word mastery and the level where five of the most difficult words on the Dolch List were introduced by the Houghton Mifflin program (Durr, 1974).

Table 4

The relationship of the grade level of word introduction to the percent of word mastery for five Dolch list words

Word	Grade introduced	Book level		
		1	2	3
FAR	2	40	55	82
FULL	3	57	58	89
GAVE	2	40	57	74
THANK	P	43	62	84
WERE	1	43	36	50

The data shown in Table 4 do not provide conclusive evidence to link mastery with the level of word introduction. These data also support improvement in mastery associated with higher reading levels which is consistent with the data from Table 1. The word *were*, for the pupils in this study, was exceptionally difficult. Mastery is slow and apparently neither strongly connected with either level of introduction nor continued practice.

Incorrect responses were also examined for trends. As would be expected, words missed by a sizable number of pupils produced a variety of responses. Nevertheless,

many words produced a high number of similar responses. A listing of the most common incorrect responses for the five most difficult words provides an example of this observation.

Table 5

Most common response for the five most difficult words

List word	Pupil response	%
full	fall	58
far	fare/fair	72
were	where	82
thank	think	88
gave	give	88

Except for the word *were*, the most difficult word for this population, the other four responses involved a vowel shift. This type of response accounted for most errors including those made by pupils reading at the fourth and fifth reader levels. Further inspection of responses revealed that *were* was also the most frequently given incorrect response for *where*, another word on the Dolch List. Considering the total list, there were several notable exceptions to the vowel shift response. *Must* was the most frequent response for *much* (74%), while *himself* was often identified as *myself* (58%), *who* was substituted for *how* (49%), *way* for *why* (60%), and *lunch* for *laugh* (39%).

Summary and conclusions

Responses by 296 urban pupils in grades two through four provided the data to make comparisons with past indi-

cators of the Dolch List difficulty, and to provide insights about pupils responses to the list words.

The relative difficulty of the Dolch Words for pupils today and about 50 years ago was accomplished by comparing the easiest 110 words for the current pupils with a similar listing provided by Dolch (1948). These two listings differed by only fifteen words indicating that the relative difficulty of the Dolch List was highly similar for a current sample of urban pupils.

A second comparison was made by equating the average word mastery for the three grade levels for each reader level with the top score at each level of the McBroom-Sparrow-Eckstein (MSE) scale. Overall, pupils in both studies showed a command of the Dolch Words by the end of the second reader level. However, if the MSE scale had been used to estimate reading levels for the current population, a sizable number of pupils would have been placed a book level higher than their assigned levels. This is not surprising considering the increase in basal difficulty during the intervening years. Difference in results may also be related to variations in the manner in which teachers assigned pupils to books. The current data suggest that the MSE scale may overestimate reading level by as much as a book level for pupils reading from the preprimer through second reader levels. This is striking considering that the pupils in this study score below national norms on standardized tests of reading achievement.

As might be expected there was a variability among the incorrect responses for each word, but for about half of the words there was one predominant incorrect response. A vowel shift was evident in four of the five difficult words used as examples, as well as for many of the other words

for which a single word dominated the responses given. In a few cases the most frequent response involved some form of substitution, as the *st* for *ch* in *much*. With the possible exception of the word *why*, responses could not be attributed to words immediately preceding or following the stimulus word. Rather, the overall consistency of incorrect responses for any given word intimates that decoding knowledge alone may not account for these responses. The response of *give* for *gave*, for example, suggests that the answer may be triggered by some other factor. Perhaps because the responses often bear great similarity to the stimulus word, some combination of visual and auditory cues may explain these responses in a manner comparable to the auditory explanation for spelling substitutions offered by Read (1975).

Because of the relatively high level of response correction, recording second trial responses should be considered in any screening process using the Dolch List. While the scores on the MSE scale are based on first trial scores, assessment to discover actual word knowledge should include second trial information.

Frequency of errors also suggests some cautions about teaching words on the Dolch List. It is clear that for this urban population of pupils, certain words were more difficult than others to master. While these are considered basic words, it is also evidence that it takes several years for pupils to master them. While the comparison of overall mastery of words for this population was similar to that done years ago, it is possible that word difficulty may vary from population to population. Oral language and types of text used for reading instruction and practice may have an effect on the relative difficulty of the Dolch Words. At the very least, the observations about word difficulty and response

variability suggest caution about inferring decoding knowledge from word errors. Knowledge about local population trends with the list should prove helpful in using the Dolch List more effectively. Finally, developing a performance data-base appears to be a useful project for schools or clinics that wish to use a word list like the Dolch 220 for assessment and instruction.

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Project CAPER (Children And Parents Enjoy Reading): A Case Study

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Parents are our best allies in supporting the overall goals of the elementary reading program. Research clearly indicates that parents' involvement with children's reading development is a prominent factor in promoting children's academic success (Allen and Freitag, 1988; Melton, 1985; Rich, 1985; Smith, 1988). In serving as models for their children, parents' reading behaviors impact on children's attitudes toward reading. When parents frequently read "just for the fun of it," children view reading as a valued, recreational home activity (Demos, 1987). When parents transmit the view that reading is vital to one's development, children carry these values into school.

Cousert (1978) found that the amount of time that children saw their parents reading was a powerful influence on children's success in elementary school. Whether they read books, magazines, newsletters, or any other type of reading material was not as important as the amount of time spent reading. In a similar vein, Smith (1988) reported that parents' interest in what children were reading and how they were responding was crucial for children's reading success. In other words, modeling was more important than coaxing.

Even with the nation's attention to children's recreational reading development, schools need to provide direction and encouragement so that parents know what to do (Au and Mason, 1989; Fredericks, 1989). Schools need to stress ways in which to create a home atmosphere where the importance of reading is taught through role modeling (Cohen, 1987; Murrin, 1989). It is not enough for parents to read *to* children; parents must read *with* children, so that an image is formed that parents enjoy reading.

One school-home partnership for encouraging parents to read along with their children is Project CAPER (Children And Parents Enjoy Readng), an at-home recreational reading program implemented in the East Brunswick School District, East Brunswick New Jersey, an affluent suburban school district characterized by families with adequate literacy skills. Created as a district-wide program for any student in grades one through five, this seven-month project was offered to parent-student volunteer teams to promote reading as a part of children's everyday habits. The project's purpose was to see whether children's attitudes toward reading would improve.

Project CAPER action plan

During the summer preceding the project, six of the district's eight elementary principals agreed that their schools would participate. In September, reading specialists from these six volunteer schools participated in a staff development session to organize and plan for the project. Subsequently, volunteer teachers engaged in a workshop to prepare them to present Project CAPER to parents during Back-to-School night. In addition to presenting the project's purpose, teachers asked the children of volunteer teams to complete surveys indicating their interest in reading.

In late October, the project began officially. Volunteer parent-child teams were asked to read together daily. Directions to parents explained that CAPER was designed to spark interest in reading for pleasure. Time was to be set aside each day for pleasure reading, with parents and children reading any type of acceptable reading material (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, poetry, manuals). They, together with their children, were to read anything enjoyable and/or informational. Also included in the directions were suggested (but not required) incremental time frames: 10 minutes every day for the first two months (November-December), 15 minutes every day for the second two months (January-February); and 20 minutes every day for the last three months (March-May).

Teachers distributed a color-coded, double-sided monthly Reading Record that students and parents completed. On one side students recorded daily the amount of time spent reading and the title or type of material read; they also recorded the total time spent reading each week and the hours and minutes spent reading per month. Parents did the same on the reverse side of the same form (see Figure 1). When students turned in their Reading Record each month, they received the same form in a different color and a small token (e.g., paper bookmark) for their efforts. Teachers gave all forms to the reading specialists to organize; reading specialists, in turn, sent forms to the reading supervisor. At the end of the project in May, the 200 participating students received a certificate of recognition for demonstrating enthusiasm for reading. The same Likert-type attitudinal survey, used in September, was completed by students to measure attitudinal differences toward reading.

Figure 1.
CAPER Monthly Progress Report
 Please fill in daily the amount of time spent reading
 and the title or type of material read.

PARENT READING RECORD

Sun. Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri. Sat.

Total time spent reading Week 1: _____

Total time spent reading Week 2: _____

Total time spent reading Week 3: _____

Total time spent reading Week 4: _____

Total time spent reading Week 5: _____

I read for a total of _____ hours and _____ minutes this month.

Signature

Name (please print)

Note: on the reverse side is the same form, entitled Student Reading Record

What happened?

Four student survey questions ("I like to read every day," "I like to read," "I like to read when my parents read," and "I am a good reader"), with 3 = "all of the time," 2 = "sometimes," 1 = "never," weights were subjected to a correlated *t*-test. Students could receive anywhere from a maximum score of 12 to a minimum score of 4. The mean for the pretest score was 9.095, with a standard deviation of 1.61; the mean for the posttest score was 9.505, with a standard deviation of 1.65. Results were statistically significant ($p < .05$), indicating an improvement in students' attitude toward themselves as readers.

Table 1
Summary of Results for Attitudinal Survey

	Pretest	Posttest
Mean	9.095	9.505
s.d.	1.61	1.65
<hr/> $t = 2.016; p < .05$		

We believe that this difference can be attributed to the children's opportunity to experience reading with their parents rather than only in school. In fact, many students commented to their teachers that they enjoyed the time alone with their parents. Some students stated that it was the only opportunity they had to receive attention from their parents on a one-to-one basis.

Another serendipitous finding by one of the reading specialists was that all the second grade Chapter 1 students in one of the participating schools no longer qualified for the Chapter 1 program since they had scored above the minimum level of proficiency on a standardized test.

Analysis of this same school's 38 student and parent records indicated that 23 or approximately 60% of the 38 teams were male students, yet all of the parent participants were female. Because this school's kindergarten teachers volunteered for the project, seven kindergarten parent-child teams participated. Each team read between five and six days a week for about 15-20 minutes a day. Slightly more than half (53%) of the teams followed the suggested 10-15-20 minute time frame while the other teams read for varying amounts of time, ranging from 5 minutes to 60 minutes.

Students who recorded what they read indicated that they chose to read mostly books (e.g., *Curious George*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, and *The Berenstain Bears* at the primary level; Cam Jansen, Beverly Cleary, Judy Blume, and *Encyclopedia Brown* at the intermediate level). A few intermediate students spent some of their time reading magazines and newspapers. Similarly, many of the parents recorded that they read mostly books; however, some parents also read newspapers, magazines, and technical manuals. Two parents spent every session reading the newspaper. One parent wrote on the record-keeping form "I think this program is fantastic. Thank you."

Midge Murrin, a reading specialist in Haskell Elementary School, Haskell New Jersey, implemented the same project on a smaller scale in her K-8 school for four months. Twenty-six (or 74%) of the thirty-five children in the special reading program completed the project. All students were in grades one through seven except for one kindergarten student who already was reading (Murrin, 1989). Although Murrin's pre-post survey differences were not significant, she found from informal interviews with parent-child teams that they enjoyed the program and, in fact, asked for additional calendars so that they could

continue to read at home and keep track of their time. Parents commented that it was a "great way to spend time together" and that "it created a scheduled, quality time for reading." Parents also stated that the project got them interested in reading again, and that it allowed their children to see them reading. One mother said, "My son who was reluctant to read before would announce, 'It's time to read.' He set aside reading materials for himself for our sessions." Even though some parents expressed concern about the difficulty of finding time for reading, most felt that a program of this nature should be part of every child's education.

Administrative realizations

Three unanticipated administrative problems arose during the course of the school year. First, we found that some parents were unwilling or unable to make the required commitment to reading with their children on a daily basis; in fact, questions about the feasibility of using a parent substitute were raised. Moreover, a number felt that reading should be its own reward and that providing a small tangible item such as a bookmark would impact negatively upon students' future involvement with recreational reading. A number of parents complained about the project to the superintendent who, because of his peripheral involvement, didn't know whether their complaints were valid or not. It took a few weeks before the community accepted that it was a voluntary program for interested parent-child teams.

Second, we discovered that the staff did not feel "ownership" of the program. Although teachers volunteered to participate, they commented that they did not have sufficient information on the "whys" and "hows" of the program. Teachers also felt that they did not have enough time to work with the project during the school day. They had not anticipated the struggle to keep abreast of CAPER paper

work. For example, because of some attrition, teachers had difficulty determining whether parent-child teams were remiss in returning forms or were dropping out of the program. The amount of time and energy spent on gentle reminders to return the forms became frustrating.

Third, we realized that our record-keeping system was too cumbersome. Since it was a district program, the forms came back to the district office at varying times. There was a continual stream of forms that had to be organized and filed without a proper system in place to account for drop-out teams. It took months to get organized.

Implementation guidelines

Inasmuch as the project turned out to be successful for encouraging at-home recreational reading and for helping students to feel better about themselves as readers, the district intends to include this project as part of its annual recreational reading goal. However, modifications currently are being made which are reflected in the following twelve recommendations and guidelines.

Community awareness 1) Parents need approximately nine months to digest the idea, either through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or through a district newsletter. Use the district newsletter to intrigue parents about your program. Also use the newsletter to provide as much background information as possible. Print the record keeping form in one issue, with an illustration of how to complete the form. 2) Meet with the PTA to share information about your project. PTA presidents can, in turn, communicate this information within their respective schools, possibly printing highlights of the program in their school-based newsletters. 3) Create manageable guidelines so that parents don't feel threatened by the project. (We are

changing our guidelines from reading every day to reading five out of seven days each week.) 4) Use the community's public library to sponsor CAPER times so that parent-child teams can join other parent-child teams for reading time. 5) Do extensive preplanning with your superintendent so that s/he can take a detailed plan back to the Board of Education. The superintendent's public endorsement of the program before its implementation should help to offset community concerns. 6) Encourage parent substitutes to participate if parents cannot find the time, and encourage fathers to participate more.

Staff development 7) Use reading specialists as resources for getting staff input before the program begins. Create a survey with reading specialists that invites volunteer teachers to share their ideas and concerns about the project. Include proposed goals, procedures, and classroom-based responsibilities in the survey. 8) Create a staff development schedule during the year preceding the project. In addition to presenting information about the mechanics of the program, make certain that teachers understand the program's value. 9) Promote on-going dialogue with the staff, either at the school or district level, to insure that concerns which arise are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Budget and record-keeping 10) Work ahead to get a budget in place for books, record-keeping forms, token rewards and certificates (if desired), and clerical staff. 11) Devise a manageable record-keeping system. Consider collecting information on a mechanically scored answer sheet that can be placed directly into a computer for storage. If possible, use school-based personnel to keep track of their own schools before sending it to a district office. 12) Create an exit form for parents to complete if they decide to

drop out of the program. This form should help alleviate unnecessary teacher follow-up.

Conclusion

Project CAPER emphasized that reading is an important activity for the whole family while promoting good feelings between students and their parents. Parents began to appreciate that, in order to develop lifelong readers, reading had to occur on a regular basis outside the classroom environment. Using parents to model this behavior enhanced students' attitude toward reading.

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Modeling Strategic Reading Within A Text Structure Framework

Christine Gordon

Duffy, Roehler, and Herrmann (1988) have described how teachers can model thinking to reveal for poor readers the reasoning process in the activation and use of prior knowledge and in the use of context clues when describing the meaning of unknown vocabulary. Through think-alouds, Gordon (1985) modeled for teachers the reasoning involved when making inferences. In a more recent article (Gordon, 1990), the method of using a think-aloud to explain a strategic reader's use of text structure was elaborated. The aim of this article is to expand on how, once students are adept at using text structure knowledge in think-alouds and in their silent reading, knowledge of text structure can serve as a framework on which not only the content of the selection is bound but within which a number of other reading strategies operate. In other words, the aim is to elucidate how a strategic reader uses text structure knowledge as an overarching strategy, a framework within which to incorporate other strategies (e.g., inferencing, using prior knowledge, making predictions, repairing confusions) to gain ideas from text.

Prior to much of the research on expository text structure, Davey (1983) operationalized the think-aloud to in-

clude five techniques which research has shown are keys to weak points in the strategies used by poor comprehenders. The weak points called for the making of predictions, describing images formed as a result of the reading, sharing analogies to link prior knowledge with new material in the text, verbalizing confusing points during on-going monitoring, and demonstrating repair strategies such as re-reading, reading ahead, and using context clues. Davey (1983) recommended that the teacher select or develop a short passage to read aloud that has points where students encounter difficulty. As the teacher reads the passage out loud, students listen to the thinking-through of the trouble spots using the five strategies mentioned. In Davey's procedure, students are gradually encouraged to take turns reading aloud and sharing their thinking/reasoning process. Eventually readers are encouraged to practice thinking in the same manner when silent reading school materials (selected reading lessons and content area selections). To monitor independent strategy use and stimulate student involvement, Davey recommended use of strategy checklists. The think-aloud to demonstrate text structure strategy use, described by Gordon (1990), followed much the same procedure as Davey's think-aloud, but did not incorporate Davey's five strategies.

Because strategic readers use a number of strategies in any one reading the teacher should start by modeling a few strategies (e.g., predicting, using prior knowledge, or any of the five strategies suggested by Davey) along with the text structure strategy when students have mastered the use of expository text structure strategy *per se*. As students become more proficient, the teacher can add other strategies to those suggested by Davey (1983), such as self-questioning, summarizing and inferencing as necessary with an explanation of the reasoning involved.

Strategy modeling in a text structure framework

To illustrate the use of the text structure strategy in conjunction with other strategies, here is an example of teacher modeling of reasoning processes when reading a science text at the primary grade level. (See Appendix A for the complete text without teacher modeling.) Here the teacher explains how s/he reasons when using the text structure strategy as a means of organizing information into a coherent framework, the reasoning when using the five strategies in Davey's (1983) think-aloud, and any other strategies relevant to the comprehension of this text. The strategies are stated explicitly and simply for the novice learner in the course of the reasoning and are placed in parentheses (for the reader of this article) in the context of the modeling. The actual words in the selection are underlined. The teacher also begins to involve students in the process by asking the students questions.

Teacher: I want to show you how I think as I read some information about fish. I want to show you how you can use the organization of an informational selection as well as other strategies to help you understand the selection.

Teacher reads and thinks aloud:

The title is A Fish Story, but it must be some true information about fish. It is not really a story. We are taking science and science is supposed to be based on fact so I predict that this piece gives us some information about fish. (Makes a prediction and explains reasoning involved.) Fish lay their eggs in different places. But I have a question. I wonder if all fish do that? Or just some fish? Maybe I'll find the answer as I read on. (Self-questions and expects a qualifier.) There's an important word in this sentence and that word is "different." It says to me that I might think of different places that I already

know of from past experience, places in which fish would lay their eggs, like on the water, on lily pads, on rocks, and in the mud. I know that because I once saw a program on television about fish. I know, too, that the word different tells me there will be more than one place. So I think that three or four places will be mentioned but in no particular order. I'll have to watch for words like "the first place," and "the second," or words like "then" that I know are used in listing or in sequence. (Makes a prediction on the basis of prior knowledge of content and structure.) Let me keep reading to see if I am right. It says that Some lay their eggs in mud. Others lay their eggs on stones or underwater roots. Still others lay their eggs on top of the water. I was right; the author listed four places but the author did not use the same key words that I thought might help me recognize each different place. The author used some, others and still others and that makes me think there should be three places but the author actually listed four places. So to summarize, the eggs are in mud, on stones, underwater roots, or on top of the water. (Summarizes to get the picture.) It's just like listing all the places in which I might want to hide Easter eggs for an Easter egg hunt because they would have to be in different places and quite well hidden (camouflaged) so they can't be seen — except for the eggs on top of the water. (Makes an analogy and shows reasoning.)

Class, you've been good listeners so far and now I'm going to see if you can help me by answering some of the questions I have in my head as I think out loud. (Teacher begins to involve students more directly even though primary responsibility for modeling is the teacher's.) Let us go to the next paragraph. I read First—and what does this make me ask? Yes, Jack, it makes me ask, is this going to be another list or is the author going to give me a sequence? (Self-questions to monitor strategy use.) Let us read on to find out. (Decides on the strategy to use.) First one fish swims around blowing bubbles. I ask, has this anything to do with building nests? I'm unsure because the author did not give me

the main idea of this paragraph right away. (Self-questions and verbalizes a confusion and the reason for the confusion.) Since I'm reading a new paragraph and I know that each new topic begins with a new paragraph, it is probably a new idea on this topic. What should I do, Cindy? Yes, I'll read ahead and see, as I can't get my answer from what came before. (Chooses a fix-up strategy to follow and states the reason for choosing this one.) Then these bubbles stick together and make a nest. (Demonstrates the use of the repair strategy.) So I was right in guessing these are the steps in building a nest! (Confirms hypothesis made earlier and no longer is confused.) Finally, so OK, I know from my past experience that anytime anyone or anything builds something there is usually an order that is as important as the steps in building a model airplane and I've watched birds building nests too. (Relates new to known and tells how.) What does the word "finally" signal to me? Yes, Brian, the word "finally" signals for me that I will be reading about the last step in how the fish builds a nest. Finally, the bubble nest floats to the top of the water, like an umbrella. I get the picture. It seems to me that it's like a floating umbrella that would have air trapped in it. The nest floats on top of the water because it's made of air. (Forms a mental image based on prior knowledge.) Now let's see if we can remember all the steps in order. (Summarizes to check/monitor comprehension.) Who is willing to try? Go ahead, Tom. (Tom's response is: "First, the fish swims around and blows bubbles; second, the bubbles stick together to form a nest; finally, the nest floats to the top.") I'll bet the next thing I will read about is how the eggs get into the nest. It makes sense that somehow the eggs and the nest have to come together. Let's skip ahead and see. (Makes a prediction, shows the reasoning and demonstrates a strategy to use to enhance comprehension.) How many students found it? Great.

Yes, there it is at the beginning of the last paragraph. Sarah, read it for me. (Sarah reads: Into this bubble nest, the fish puts the eggs that a mother fish has laid.)

OK, back to the second paragraph. The nest is strong. Wind and waves cannot break it. That is a description of the nest. It is a sentence that tells me just how strong the nest is. We must be talking about fish in a lake or ocean because I know that's where there are waves on the water. With rivers we usually talk about currents. (Explains reasoning on the basis of prior knowledge.) I wonder what makes those bubbles stick together so well? Would the fish secrete some sort of glue when it blows those bubbles? Do we know the answers? How will we find out, Troy? Yes, we might have to read more on fish to find out the answers to those questions. (Self-questions and chooses a strategy to use to get the answer.)

Modeling the use of a text structure strategy on the last paragraph of *A Fish Story* shows how a reader imposes a structure on a less well-organized text. In this example, students are also involved in a shared teaching responsibility.

Teacher: In A Fish Story, the last paragraph which I already know starts out by telling me that the fish put the eggs into the nest...OK, Into this bubble nest, the fish puts the eggs that a mother fish has laid. Wait a minute. Susan, you take it from here. Think aloud as you make sense out of this sentence.

Susan: I guess it makes me think that a different fish, not the mother fish, put the eggs in the nest. I thought maybe when we started reading this that the mother laid them into a nest.

Teacher: OK, so it's a different fish. I wonder if it's the father fish or just any other fish that happens to be around? Jim, read on to see and think aloud as you read.

Jim: Then he watches over the nest. I think the word "he" in this sentence tells me if it is a "male" fish, so it's probably the father. That makes sense. There was

probably a mother and father in this selection right from the beginning. Yes — here's a clue. In the second paragraph it says "one fish swims around," so there must have been another one there, too. And there are usually two birds, a mother and father, building nests, so why not two fish?

Teacher: Excellent. Jim has just made an inference. That's a strategy a good reader uses to figure things out. Jim used what knowledge he already had in his head and he put that information together with information in the text. OK, who wants to add anything to the think-aloud? Colin, your hand was up first.

Colin: The sentence says, "Then he watches over the nest." "He" must be the father because it's just like a father in a family, like our moms and dads who share responsibilities, like looking after the kids, doing the cooking or the housework.

Teacher: Excellent. Colin used the "like a..." strategy and explained his thinking.

Teacher: Now it's my turn to finish reading the text and thinking aloud. He takes care of the eggs. When an egg falls out, the fish puts it back again. Hey, I think it would make more sense to me if I re-ordered those last three ideas because taking care of the eggs is the main idea here and should come first. The others tell how he takes care of eggs. So I say to myself, this is how the fish takes care of the eggs. He watches over them and when one falls out, then he puts it back in. Sometimes a selection is not as well-organized as it could be and then I can use what I know about good organization to fix up the writing as I read along. This strategy helps me to better understand what I am reading.

The students can use a checklist such as the one shown in Figure 1 for monitoring their reasoning processes during silent reading.

Figure 1 Self-Evaluation of Multi-Strategy Use

(adapted from Davey, 1983)

What did I do while I was reading? (Put a √ in the column that applies.)

	Not much	A bit	Most of the time	Always
Used text structure				
Made predictions				
Formed pictures				
Used "like a..."				
Found confusions/ problems				
Used "fix-ups" such as rereading, reading ahead				
Summarized				
Self-questioned				
Other strategies I used:				

Conclusion

As stated in "Modeling an expository text structure strategy in think alouds," published in the previous issue of this journal (Gordon, 1990), teaching students to use their knowledge of text structure through a think-aloud is one method of developing good reading comprehension. However, a strategic reader is aware of not one strategy but of a *repertoire* of strategies (e.g., use of text structure, making predictions, self-questioning, drawing inferences, clarifying confusions) and a competent user of a number of these strategies when and where necessary. Thus, promoting strategic reading by demonstrating the use of a

variety of strategies within a text's structural organization is another way of enhancing student's comprehension of text. In addition in the "expanded text structure strategy" described in this article, student involvement is promoted through shared teaching situations and through techniques to encourage independent application to silent reading.

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Appendix A: A Fish Story*

Fish lay their eggs in different kinds of places. Some lay their eggs in mud. Others lay their eggs on stones or underwater roots. Still others lay their eggs on top of the water.

First, one fish swims around blowing bubbles. Then these bubbles stick together and make a nest. Finally, the bubble nest floats to the top of the water, like an umbrella. The nest is strong. Wind and waves cannot break it.

Into this bubble nest, the fish puts the eggs that a mother fish has laid. Then he watches over the nest. He takes care of the eggs. When an egg falls out, the fish puts it back again.

* source unknown to this author

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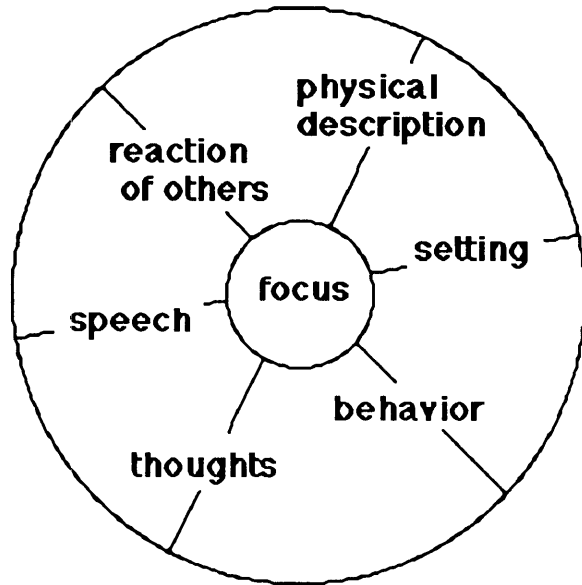
READING: THE CONFERENCES

Mary Ann Davies

**National Middle School Association
17th Annual Conference
November 1990**

One of the presentations at the annual conference of the Middle School Association, held in Long Beach in November, was titled "Character wheels: A reading and writing model for middle school students." Catherine Gourley, from Field Publications, shared a paradigm she designed for helping students identify the cause/effect moments in a story. She discussed the wheel model, its emphasis on process writing and critical thinking skills, and demonstrated its implementation.

Characterization comprises one critical element of fiction, as it often distinguishes good literature from poor. Young adolescents usually select their reading material based on the characters. They are more interested in exploring *who* they want to be, rather than *what* they want to be. The wheel provides a model for focusing on characterization. The character wheel contains six spokes corresponding to different types of characterization. The spokes include physical description, setting, behavior, thoughts, speech, and reaction of others.



The hub of the wheel is a character, a personality, a scene or an object. "The nucleus word triggers memories, emotions, and images, which the student records as quickly as possible." This process of clustering and rapidly generating word associations stimulates creativity, evokes prior knowledge, and provides a framework for examining character development. The wheel serves as an effective tool for pre-writing or for analyzing stories read. Gourley suggests that students first practice using the wheel to create their own characters before applying the model to literature. As a pre-writing activity, an unusual object or picture provides an effective hub and a concrete stimulus for generating images and emotions.

A model of the character wheel illustrates its use. Initially, students find it easiest to begin with the *physical description* spoke. Using the nucleus word (or object), students describe it employing all five senses. Encourage

image evoking descriptions – colorful, specific, and sensory. They list under the spoke labeled *physical description* any thoughts that emerge using the clustering technique. As students become more comfortable using the character wheel, they can begin with any spoke on the wheel they choose.

The second spoke allows students to create a *setting* for the character. They generate a time and place. The ideas recorded under this spoke interact with and reflect the thoughts contained under physical description. The *behavior* spoke requires students to make their character move. In moving or doing something, the character may shift settings and/or a conflict may emerge.

As students develop a cluster of ideas around the *thought* spoke, they need to reflect on what they wrote under the other spokes. Students generate ideas related to what the character might be thinking. For example: “If you were in this setting, what would you be thinking?” or “If you saw someone acting this way, what would you guess was going through their minds?”

Under the *speech* spoke, students describe what the character says and how it is said. Finally, students link the character’s physical description, thoughts and actions to the reactions of others. The process of using the wheel fosters the development of critical thinking skills. Students learn to compare and contrast, use sensory details for descriptions, select relevant details, create supporting details, recognize cause and effect relationships, draw inferences from visual clues, reason logically, predict outcomes, order events, and read critically.

Gourley also views the wheel as a tool to motivate students to read. She suggests having students read a story and then use the wheel to go on a character scavenger hunt. Different groups could examine different characters. The same process could be used as a pre-reading activity to generate interest. Conference participant response to this presentation was positive. The strategy is a technique likely to promote student enjoyment of the reading and writing processes.

1. A character wheel is a right brain, pre-writing activity that can increase a student's understanding and enjoyment of literature. This simple model encourages students to create their own interesting characters-in-conflict and helps them to analyze character development in the stories they read.

2. By constructing a character wheel, student writers begin to recognize how the spokes of the wheel are related. They gain insight to character conflict and motivation. They learn how characterization is first created and then revealed to the reader.

3. Writing and reading have always complemented each other in the junior high school classroom. Character wheels are another example of the effectiveness of this match. By first creating and then identifying examples of characterization through character wheels, students' knowledge and appreciation of good literature can grow.

– Remarks by Catherine Gourley

Mary Ann Davies, the guest editor for this month's column, is a faculty member in the Department of Education and Professional Development at Western Michigan University.

MICHIGAN READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

An upcoming conference of interest to reading educators in the midwest is the Michigan Reading Association Conference, which will be held in Grand Rapids Michigan on March 12, 13 and 14 at the Amway Plaza. Further information about the conference may be obtained by contacting Annena McCleskey, Conference Coordinator, 4791 Sturtevant, Detroit Michigan 48204.



REVIEWS

Professional Materials

High Interest-Easy Reading. Editor, William G. McBride. National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana IL 61801. ISBN: 0-8141-2097-0. Paperbound. 130 pp. US\$7.95.

Reviewed by Mary Jo Smith
Western Michigan University

Organized alphabetically by subject headings, this easy-to-use guide is designed for use by junior and senior high school students in selecting high interest-easy reading materials. Titles are grouped under twenty-four categories of interest, including Adventure, Death, Family Life, Mystery, Poetry, Science Fiction, Social Problems, and Supernatural.

Annotations of over four hundred titles of contemporary fiction and nonfiction published between 1987 and 1989 by a variety of notable authors are included in the booklist. Each annotation contains publication information, a brief synopsis of content, and a notation signaling mature content when necessary. Reading levels are not identified but are suggested by mentioning characters' ages.

The volume includes a directory of publishers, and author, title and subject indexes. Although developed primarily for student use, this practical guide would be a valuable tool for classroom teachers and librarians interested in choosing books that appeal to less sophisticated readers and encouraging students in grades 7-12 to make reading a habit.

Books for Children

Julius, the Baby of the World. by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. 32 pp. ISBN: 0-688-08943-7. US\$12.95.

Reviewed by Sherry R. Myers
Western Michigan University

Lilly was entranced by the idea of having a new baby in the family – until he arrived. She is disgusted by Julius' looks, his smell, and his inability to do anything of merit. Nothing seems to be able to convince Lilly that the baby is worth keeping until Cousin Garland voices the same uncomplimentary thoughts. Lilly has a sudden and profound change of heart. *Julius, the Baby of the World* is a delightful romp through a big sister's adjustment to the arrival of a new baby. I brought it home intending to give it as a big sister gift for friends of ours who just had a second child. However, my six year old – and my fifteen year old – wouldn't let me give it away. They were positively morose at the thought that Lilly might live somewhere else. And I couldn't fault them in the least. In fact, later in the evening, I found myself reading part of the book aloud to one of my friends, who enjoyed it as well. Some books marked "4 up" mean 4 to maybe 6 or 7; this one truly means "4 up." The illustrations are simple but charming, particularly those on the cover and on the last page, and the language used in the story is perfect: "You will live to regret that bump under your dress," Lilly tells a pregnant passerby. It's the kind of book with which the reader has as much fun as the listener. I have enjoyed reading my children other books by Henkes, but this one tops the list. Lilly is a charmer; she has more personality developed in 32 pages than many characters do in full-length novels.

The adult friend with whom I shared this delight reported, "It's exactly right, that's just the way it is." Siblings can call each other dumb, smelly nothings, but don't let them hear anyone else trying it. I hope to see more of Lilly and Julius as they grow together. After all, they're part of our family now, too!

Quick! Turn the Page! Written and illustrated by James Stevenson. 1990. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09308-6. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$12.95

Reviewed by Michelle Dearmin
Western Michigan University

Quick! Turn the Page! by James Stevenson provides children with a wonderful opportunity to interact with a book. This is how it works: First the book presents the child with a situation such as "The birds are sleeping." Then the book either gives the child a command, or asks for the child's help. "Turn the page quietly..." When the child turns the page, the result is shown. In this case, the birds are flying around – "Too loud!" With its colorful pictures, imaginative situations, and varying print, *Quick! Turn the Page!* is the ideal book for the active reader. It is also an interesting book to read to a child. Reading aloud encourages children to interact with the book, giving them the feeling that they are affecting the outcome. This book is an excellent choice for teaching children to predict outcomes. What *will* happen when you turn the page?



The Stowaway. Written by James Stevenson. 1990. Greenwillow Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-08619-5. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$12.95.

Cartoons are good reading for children, we're sometimes told, but most cartoons are just for looking — the pictures tell the story, often a violent one, and the print is tiny even for grownup eyes. Here the cartoon bubbles are bright with child language, in child style writing, and the story is exciting and appropriately active. Children will enjoy following the adventures of Hubie the Mouse as he travels to France in style, all loneliness banished when he is befriended by a stowaway mouse named Claude. Grownups invited to read aloud will have fun with the sophisticated jokes, such as a luxury liner named the Hedonia. (JMJ)

Noly Poly Rabbit Tail and Me. Written and illustrated by Maggie Smith. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09570-4. 32 pp. US\$13.95.

Hair flying, eyes bright, the narrator of this pleasingly sentimental story smiles broadly at us from the cover illustration, her stuffed rabbit clutched firmly as she runs through a flowery field. Noly Poly Rabbit Tail is a rabbit, a doll, and a best friend in times of joy and sorrow. Her absence is a time of trial; her return, by US mail, a relief and a delight. A dedication, "For Lamby, wherever you are," suggests that the author describes the experience of having a cherished stuffed friend from personal experience. (JMJ)



Natural Wonders: Stories Science Photos Tell. Written by Vicki Cobb. Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09317-5. Hardcover. 32 pp. US\$14.95.

Every one of the brilliant illustrations in this handsome and varied collection — photographs, paired photographs, groups of photographs — illustrates a scientific concept. Accompanying explanations of complex topics are precise, clear, and readable. A photograph produced over a period of year, showing the sun at the same time of day, reveals a figure-eight pattern, an *analemma*, caused by the tilt of the earth's axis. A series of six photos show an experiment designed to investigate the pattern of pesticide distribution from a crop-dusting airplane — an experiment which resulted in a redesign of the plane's wingtip to produce more accurate targeting of the spray. Perhaps the most beautiful of the illustrations is the set of photographs showing a single drop of rain falling into a pond:

...The first photo shows the drop a fraction of a second before it lands. Note that the drop is perfectly spherical, not tear-shaped as it is often imagined to be. In nature, when there are no distorting forces, such as wind resistance, a liquid takes the

shape of a sphere. In the second photo, just after impact, .025 seconds later, the drop causes a coronet of water to rise around the point of impact....

Added features are a useful index and a brief, clear glossary. The book would be a splendid addition to school or home libraries, and an excellent gift for young people interested in science and photography. (JMJ)



A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution. Written by Betsy and Giulio Maestro. Mulberry Books, William Morrow and Company, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. ISBN: 0-688-09589-5. 48 pp. US\$5.95.

Clearly and simply, this book presents the background and history of the Constitutional Convention, which met for four months in 1787 to prepare what now, after a little more than 200 years, is "the oldest written set of rules for running a country still in use in the world." Full page color drawings provide an interesting glimpse of our country in its earliest days. The conflict between large and small states over representation — shall the number of national legislators from each state be proportional to the state's population or shall each state have the same number of representatives? — is clearly presented, but it is regrettable that the authors have only stated that the delegates reached a compromise on this issue; young readers could readily understand how representation in the Senate and the House of Representatives differs and how this difference produces fair representation among states. This is, however, a minor flaw in an excellent book. (JMJ)

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