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## A Study of the Effects of a Reading Program for Reluctant Readers

Florence Evelyn Banks  
*Western Michigan University*

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS  
OF A READING PROGRAM  
FOR RELUCTANT READERS

by

Florence Evelyn Banks

A Project Report  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment  
of the  
Specialist in Education Degree

Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
August 1971

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS  
OF A READING PROGRAM  
FOR RELUCTANT READERS

Florence Evelyn Banks, Ed. S.

Western Michigan University, 1971

The purpose of this study was to obtain some statistical evidence concerning the effects of a reading program for high school students rated as reluctant readers on their reading habits and attitudes. The initial problem which motivated the study was that assignments to read novels were resisted by this group. The students can read, but do not.

The hypothesis is that if students are given a program with books of 200 pages or less that have in the content some universalities that will satisfy the adult interests of students, attitudes about reading will change and there will be an improvement in vocabulary skills.

The methodology used for the investigation involved an experimental group of eighteen students who read from a prescribed reading list as their principal assignments for the semester. The control group consisted of eighteen students who followed the regular curriculum. The data were collected by keeping individual student reading records and administering certain tests. Although the results were not statistically significant, there was evidence of vocabulary improvement and a change in attitude which suggests further study.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this project report, I have benefited from the advice and constructive criticism of Professors Jean Lowrie and Eleanor McKinney. I appreciate their efforts to encourage me to perfect this paper. Appreciation goes to the Ferndale English teacher, Robert MacKay, who allowed his classes to be part of this experiment. His advice, encouragement, and cooperation were vital to the success of the program. Credit goes to the principal of Ferndale High School, John D. McGregor, for his understanding of the problem and his permission to experiment.

Florence Evelyn Banks

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

Both teachers and librarians are concerned about reluctant readers. They feel that many students leave high school with little or no appreciation of good literature and lack a habit of recreational reading that will carry over into their adult life. Teachers sometimes settle for the reading of the popular, superficial junior novels in order to get their students to read. There exists a common philosophy that reading anything at all is better than no reading. Librarians, along with teachers, promote the love story and the sport story on the assumption that the reluctant readers will come back for more, and with reading guidance they can be led to better works. However, as high school students pass the ninth grade they are no longer interested in the subject matter in junior novels. Therefore, if they are to be encouraged to read, they must be given adult themes, and because they have not met much success in reading, the books must be chosen to meet the requirements of interest and ability of this group of young adults.

Students who are reluctant readers have had ten to fifteen years of unsuccessful and unprofitable reading

experiences. Reading is a more difficult skill for them than for the majority of students, resulting in the belief that reading is not enjoyable. They do not consider reading as a recreational activity. The accumulation of books they have read is meager and consequently they are not able to make critical judgments or to develop discrimination of taste.

In attempting to find a solution for the problem the researcher, a librarian, designed a reading program which was tested and analyzed in order to arrive at a list of books and a method of utilization that could be used successfully with reluctant readers at the high school level.

### Background Reading

In the search for professional material on reluctant readers, reading attitudes, and readability, there was no evidence of research having been done with all three of these elements in any relationship.<sup>1</sup> In articles about

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<sup>1</sup>Sources checked:

Education Index (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1966-69).

Educational Resources Information Center,  
Research in Education, vols. 3 and 4, 1968-69  
(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

Pacesetters in Innovation, (Washington, D.C.:  
U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969).

the reluctant reader, the emphasis is on the psychological aspects. Chambers<sup>1</sup> defines reluctance this way: "Reluctance...occurs in those who have the ability to read without any mechanical problems but have little or no inclination to read except what is required by way of work or normal everyday life." Chambers sets sixty percent as that segment of the population who are psychologically disinclined to read creative literature. He questions the reasons and states that there has never been any controlled research into the problem.

While the research being reported here has not delved into the psychological make-up of the type of student used in the experiment, certain attitudes become apparent. Reluctant readers have been affected by their inability to cope with academic subjects because reading is an undesirable activity. They do not read creative literature for recreation. In discussing the underachiever Fine<sup>2</sup> defines him as a student who does not work up to his capacity in school and has a feeling he is doomed to failure. He believes that "a youngster does not meet frustration in school without suffering."

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<sup>1</sup>Aidan Chambers, The Reluctant Reader (New York: Pergamon Press, 1969), p.4.

<sup>2</sup>Benjamin Fine, Underachievers: How They Can Be Helped (New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1967), p. 11.

Carlson<sup>1</sup> goes even further in comparing a good and a poor reader. He states that while the good reader tends to improve his skills, the poor reader falls further behind his age and grade level.

The search for material about attitudes revealed two approaches--what reading does for attitudes about reading and what reading does for attitudes about life. The latter was well researched by Shirley.<sup>2</sup> She found that "adolescents are influenced positively more often than negatively by both fiction and non-fiction." In her evidence she discovered that students were influenced more by voluntary reading than assigned reading. She used the interview as one means of obtaining evidence.

Squire<sup>3</sup> states,

"The attitudes of student readers vary with the personal predisposition of each reader. They are affected by an individual's skill in responding to a literary work; by the ethical, experimental and literary background that each brings to reading; by elements of the content within each reading selection; and by the form in which the work was written.

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<sup>1</sup>G. Robert Carlson, Books and the Teen-age Reader (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p.2.

<sup>2</sup>Fehl L. Shirley, "The Influence of Reading on Concepts, Attitudes, and Behavior," Journal of Reading, XII (February, 1969), p. 412.

<sup>3</sup>James R. Squire, "What Does Research in Reading Reveal--about Attitudes toward Reading?" English Journal LVIII (April, 1969), p. 523.

They are influenced, moreover, by the way in which a selection is presented in the classroom, how it is read and discussed, and how the teacher organizes instruction. In short, what is presently known from research suggests the impact of attitudes of individuals tends to be unique, personal, and highly unpredictable."

Of course, the reluctant reader brings less to his reading than more prolific readers do. Therefore, his attitudes are less sophisticated; he experiences some unconscious enjoyment in the superficial level of a literary work--the story--before he experiences delight in the abstractions.

Motivation has a great deal to do with a reader's attitude. His response to teachers' and librarians' recommendations, according to Squire,<sup>1</sup> will vary depending on trust. This author believes that group discussion with peers is highly important, tending to push the level of thinking beyond the levels which individuals reach on their own. In discussing the virtues of extensive reading, he states that "extensive reading of literature results in the reading of more books, in the development of more favorable attitudes toward books and in continual growth of reading skills."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 528-29.

Ackerman<sup>1</sup> states that seeing the progress of others in reading is ideal motivation. Reading in the classroom and reading records spur the reluctant reader.

Cleary<sup>2</sup> recommends that reading programs have time limits and built-in evaluation because "broad, over-arching, long term goals give little direction to programs of action."

Overcoming poor attitudes held by reluctant readers is one of the strongest challenges faced by those who seek to provide good reading experiences. Anastasi<sup>3</sup> defines an attitude as a tendency to react favorably or unfavorably toward a designated class of stimuli. Anastasi and Freeman<sup>4</sup> discuss what has been learned about attitudes and attitude testing. They provide descriptions of methods and criteria for designing tests. They also caution about the limitation of psychological testing.

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<sup>1</sup>Ann Ackerman, "Reading for Pleasure and Profit," English Journal, LVIII (October, 1969), p. 1041.

<sup>2</sup>Florence Cleary, Blueprints for Better Reading (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1957), p. 79.

<sup>3</sup>Anne Anastasi, Psychological Testing, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1962), pp. 479-80.

<sup>4</sup>Frank S. Freeman, The Theory and Practice of Psychological Testing, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962).

Klare<sup>1</sup> states "that readability is more important in voluntary reading since the person who is not required to read may often stop altogether if he cannot proceed efficiently." To test readability Klare<sup>2</sup> favors the Dale-Chall<sup>3</sup> formula because it is involved in more high inter-correlations with other formulas than any other single formula. Klare<sup>4</sup> estimates that formulas are probably accurate to within one grade level.

According to Bormuth<sup>5</sup> recent research has been done on validity of readability formulas, including analyses of morphological complexity, Latin-base syllables, abstractions, and syntax. Hunt<sup>6</sup> suggests in the implications for further research in his study that T-unit

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<sup>1</sup>George R. Klare, The Measurement of Readability (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1963), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Edgar Dale and J. S. Chall, "A Formula for Predicting Readability," Educational Research Bulletin, XXVII (January 21, 1948), pp. 11-20.

<sup>4</sup>Klare, Op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>John R. Bormuth, "New Developments in Readability Research", Elementary English, XLIV (December, 1967), p. 842.

<sup>6</sup>Kellogg W. Hunt, Grammatical Structures Written at Three Grade Levels. (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. 151.

length or clause length may prove more significant than sentence length in readability formulae.

However, the Dale-Chall formula remains a useful tool for material that does not include technical terms. It is used as a measurement of readability for the textbooks in Ferndale High School and by the reading clinic at the intermediate school district for material at the secondary level. As in the application of any formula, there is a correlation between the number of samples and accuracy.

### The Problem

With the recognition of the fact that there is a certain group of high school students who can read, but do not, there arise questions that librarians and teachers must try to answer. Have the students been assigned the right books? Have they been properly prepared to read creative literature? What happened to discourage them from reading? How are they going to be encouraged to read after unsuccessful experiences?

Since there are no published results of successful reading programs for the high school reluctant reader which include a list of tested books, it can be assumed that not enough research has been done on methods for selecting the right books for them. It can also be



assumed that most of the attempts have failed to change attitudes at the high school level in the motivation of students whose experiences in elementary and junior high school were unsatisfactory.

Since reading is not readily practiced by these students, it can be assumed that their vocabulary skills are not as developed as they should be.

These conditions of unsatisfactory experiences and poor vocabulary skills lead to the assumption that reading for a certain segment of high school students has never been pleasurable nor meaningful.

In attempting to rectify the problems of the reluctant reader, it would appear that careful selection of reading material would motivate the reading of creative literature as a high school experience which may lead to reading habits for adult life.

Therefore, this research was designed to bring to these students some books which they could read easily, in which they would be interested, and which might lead to better reading attitudes.

## CHAPTER II

### DESIGN OF THE EXPERIMENT

The need for developing a reading program for reluctant readers at the high school level seems apparent. Several factors needed to be considered in designing an experiment. The selection of the students for the study and the books to be used were primary concerns. Areas of possible improvement had to be delineated. Collection of data and the analysis were considerations if the results were to have meaning for others. From these elements came the development of a hypothesis.

#### Hypothesis / Definitions

If Phase II students classified as reluctant readers are exposed to short novels of literary merit that have in their content some universalities that will satisfy the adult interests of the students, and the students read them, then their vocabulary skills will improve and to some degree there should be a change for the better in their attitudes toward reading.

Terms to be defined are: Phase II, reluctant readers, exposed, short novel, literary merit, and vocabulary skills.

Phase II is the designation given to that group of English students in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades who are in the second lowest phase of five phases in the Ferndale English program which is an appropriate placement curriculum design. The requirements of each phase are established at increasing skill levels and students may move from one phase to the next as their achievement indicates and as they are motivated. Phase II sets reading ability from seventh to ninth grade level as a requirement. Generally speaking the objective of the course work is increased basic reading, writing, and speaking skills. Phase II students were chosen for the experiment because they met the following criteria:

1. Phase II students are capable of reading adult books.
2. Phase II students have had unsatisfactory reading experiences.
3. Phase II students are classified as reluctant readers because they rarely read voluntarily.
4. Phase II students are beyond the age when the junior novel is acceptable fare.

Reluctant reader is a student who has acceptable reading skills for his phase, but does not read beyond the minimum requirements for the course, nor does he read for recreation.

Exposed refers to that kind of reading guidance that provides motivation through book talks, book lists, and accessibility.

Short novel is the designation given to any novel of less than 200 pages.

Literary merit is an indication of quality writing. The book must qualify by Carlsen's<sup>1</sup> definition that it "has as its theme a profound, mature, and significant appraisal of human life." It must have received the acclaim of critics and the favor of readers.

Vocabulary skill is that ability to recognize meanings of words and to understand the meanings of passages in which they are used.

#### Methodology

#### Limitations and Variables

The limitations for the experiment were set in the matter of duration and number of groups. One semester of reading time was considered long enough to be valid and short enough to maintain students' interest. Two Phase II groups were used: one as the experimental group and one as the control group. While both groups had more

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<sup>1</sup>Carlsen, op. cit., p. 119.

than twenty students at the beginning of the semester, there were only eighteen remaining to take the post-tests. Therefore, the statistics were used for only eighteen from both groups. Both groups had the same teacher so that an instructor's influence was not a variable. The only apparent variable was the matter of reading material assigned to each class. The experimental group read from the list tested by the researcher, while the control group received similar motivation from the teacher.

Preparation of both the material and motivational techniques was essential to the success of the program because the actual variable--the reading by the students--was not controlled. The difference between the two curricula was expected to bring about some changes. Such changes rested on two important elements--the books themselves and the guidance furnished by the researcher.

As an explanation of the fact that the librarian was so involved in the classroom work, the students were told that it was team-teaching, which in reality it was. They were not told that it was an experiment, nor that there would be comparisons made to the other Phase II class. Such information might lead to a Hawthorne effect; i.e., responses by the students to the experiment rather than to the reading program.

### Selection of Books

Based on the assumptions concerning the problem and on the characteristics of the reading abilities and experiences of Phase II students, the criteria for the selection of books to be used were important. Selection had to be based on brevity, literary merit, readability, and adult themes. Considering these needs, the following set of criteria was established:

1. The book should be 200 pages or less.
2. The theme or themes of the book should be from the adult world.
3. The book should meet the standards of the classic according to the definition by Carlsen used earlier. The title would need to appear in Senior High School Library Catalog,<sup>1</sup> A Basic Book Collection for High Schools,<sup>2</sup> or 4000 Books for Secondary School Libraries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Senior High School Library Catalog: 9th ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1967).

<sup>2</sup>A Basic Book Collection for High Schools: 7th ed. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1963).

<sup>3</sup>4000 Books for Secondary School Libraries; compiled by the Library Committee of the National Association of Independent Schools (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1968).

4. The readability of the book should not exceed the level of the tenth grade according to the Dale-Chall<sup>1</sup> readability formula.

The above mentioned lists were searched for novels of less than 200 pages. Every book was read or re-read by the researcher before acceptance. Judgment was made with the prospective readers in mind. Efforts were made to account for both male and female interests.

To test the readability level, the Dale-Chall formula was decided upon because of its dependability and because it is the formula used by Ferndale High School to test its textbooks. The procedure for using the formula is to count the number of sentences and the number of unfamiliar words in a 100-word passage every ten pages. These two figures are correlated on a chart to give the grade level by year and month. The levels for all the samples from each book were averaged to find the grade level for that book.

After some titles were discarded because they did not meet all the criteria a final list was formed. (See Appendix A). The books varied in length from forty-two pages to 212 pages. The readability ranged from 4.6 to 9.4 grade level with an average of 7.5.

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<sup>1</sup>Dale and Chall, op. cit.

### Reading

The books had been carefully selected for the experimental group and tested for readability, but they had not been tested for relevance with such a group of students. Since there were some misgivings about acceptance of the titles, the method of presentation was crucial.

At the beginning of the semester, the researcher visited the classroom of the experimental group with a truck load of books for a book talk. Duplicate copies had been purchased in both soft and hard covers to assure availability. Students were given an annotated book list with room for notes. It was explained that these books were carefully selected with them in mind. The readability of the books was not revealed. Emphasis was put on the facts that they were short, that they were good stories, and that they were definitely not juvenile. Students were assured that no book reports were expected; they had only to keep a record of what they read. At the end of the hour the books were checked out to the students right in the room. Every student chose a book. The rest of the books were placed on a reserve shelf in the library for use by that class only.

The teacher gave daily class time for reading, knowing that these students do very little school work outside of school. The teacher provided time for



informal discussions. Occasionally he brought the class to the library to do their reading. When individual students chose to come to the library to exchange books, they were free to do so. The librarian visited the class now and then to encourage them and to bring additional copies of the popular books as they were added to the collection.

The control group carried on their reading under the teacher's guidance, and the books selected dealt with current social issues. Titles were not tested for readability. The students did not visit the library, nor did they procure their books from the library. They were purchased in paperback from a book store as is the usual procedure for all English classes.

#### Discussion Techniques

The English department of the Ferndale High School has adopted a method of instruction using behavioral objectives. This system of teaching uses Bloom's<sup>1</sup> taxonomy which has three areas of skill building--cognitive, affective, and psychomotor--as a basis for its objectives. Within the cognitive domain, are developmental variables--knowledge, interpretation,

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<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Samuel Bloom (ed.), Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956).

application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The teacher used this series of variables as a basis for discussion in both the experimental group and the control group. This sequence was used by the teacher in order to avoid having the students make evaluations of the books without having first listed the facts of the stories, interpreted them, and applied them to something in their own experiences. The teacher did not ask them to analyze or synthesize, because these are too highly developed skills for Phase II students. At no time during their discussions were they capable of comparing the themes of one book to the themes of another. However, after the first three steps they were able to make thoughtful evaluations of the books. It was a practical teaching technique using a theoretical method. The researcher was an advisor to the groups during their discussions. The same method of discussion was used by the teacher in the control group.

### Accumulation of Data

#### Statistical Evidence

Statistical data to support the hypothesis were gathered through the process of testing. Two kinds of tests were necessary--one to test the vocabulary skills, and one to test attitudes toward reading. The same

instruments were used in pre-testing and post-testing. Both the experimental group and control group were tested before and after the experiment.

The vocabulary test was a multiple choice test prepared by the researcher and approved by the teacher. (See Appendix B). In the Dale-Chall formula words are considered familiar if they appear on its list of familiar words; if not, they are considered unfamiliar. From the list of unfamiliar words taken from the passages of the books tested, 100 words were chosen. No specific criteria were used, except the judgment of the researcher that they were words in the English language that should be familiar to high school students. However, the difficulty of the test was such that it was doubtful if any Phase II students would score 100 percent. Each word had four choices--one was correct, one was close in meaning to the correct answer, one was opposite in meaning, and one had no relationship, frequently absurd. Test scores were percentages from one percent to 100 percent. The raw scores were used to compute the class averages. Scores were compared between the groups and between pre-tests and post-tests.

For the attitude test, the Likert method was chosen. (See Appendix C). The Likert method was chosen over the Thurston method of testing attitudes because of its

simplicity. The Thurston method has a range of eleven. The Likert method has a range of five to cover strong disagreement to strong agreement. When a statement of a controversial nature is made, the respondent's feelings will determine his responses pro or con and to what degree. The scaling of all the statements can be numerically tallied and averaged for an index to his attitudes about the subject in general. The test was also prepared by the researcher in consultation with the teacher. The statements were designed to find attitudes about reading with the focus on fiction. There were twenty-five statements. To each statement about reading the respondent could indicate strong disagreement, disagreement, neutrality, agreement, or strong agreement. Strong disagreement was scored by one and ranging to five for strong agreement. Scoring was accomplished by adding the total score and dividing by the number of statements to reach an index. The index had a range of four whole points and was computed to two decimal places.

The indexes of each group were averaged and used for comparison between the groups, and between

pre-tests and post-tests. The scores of certain significant statements were analyzed.

### Subjective Evidence

Because attitudes are personal feelings, tests which attempt to test attitudes seldom reveal the nuances and subtleties of those feelings. Therefore, interviews were held with each student in the experimental group to discover their reactions to the program. The design of the interview had three parts--1) test scores were revealed and explained; 2) a series of questions was asked about their reading and about the books (See Appendix D); and 3) a list of suggested titles for further reading was custom-tailored for each student according to his expressed interests. Significant responses from the students were used as subjective evidence.

Further subjective evidence was produced by the remarks and observations of the teacher during and after the experiment.

All data will be presented and analyzed in a later chapter.

### Analysis of Data

The raw scores of the vocabulary test were averaged--the median was found. The scores of the experimental group were compared to the scores of the control group for pre-tests and the post-tests. A comparison was made with the pre-tests and post-tests for both groups to show changes in vocabulary skill as a result of the semester's work.

In the attitude test statistics, an index was used, the range being one to four brought to two decimal places. These indexes for each student were averaged and the median found. The scores of the experimental group were compared to the scores of the control group for pre-tests and post-test scores for both groups to show changes in attitudes about reading as a result of the semester's work.

Each question on the attitude test was analyzed for change from pre-testing to post-testing for both groups. Significant differences will be presented in a later chapter.

Responses from the students in the experimental group were recorded as they were interviewed by the

researcher following the experiment. Data concerning title preferences were gathered at the same time.

The students' personal reading records were used to compile the data for number of times each title was read. (See Appendix A).

### CHAPTER III

#### PRESENTATION OF DATA

If the findings supported the hypothesis, there would be two changes taking place. There would be an increase in vocabulary skills, and there would be an improvement in attitudes toward reading.

#### Vocabulary Tests

The data for the vocabulary test are presented below in four tables. The test having 100 parts would score 100 per cent if perfect. The raw scores indicate number of questions answered correctly and appear as percentages. They are compared by group and by pre-tests and post-tests.

TABLE 1  
VOCABULARY TEST SCORES IN PRE-TESTS

	Experimental Group	Control Group
	Percentage	Percentage
Average	57	59
Median	60	57

The experimental group averaged lower than the control group by two per cent, but the median is higher by three per cent. In all, there is no more than a three per cent



differential in any of the scores indicating closely matched groups.

TABLE 2  
VOCABULARY TEST SCORES IN POST-TEST

	Experimental Group	Control Group
	Percentage	Percentage
Average	60	53
Median	51	50

The experimental group's average score exceeds that of control group by seven per cent, while the median is only one per cent higher.

TABLE 3  
VOCABULARY TEST SCORES FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

	Pre-test	Post-test
	Percentage	Percentage
Average	57	60
Median	60	51

An increase in the average score is three per cent. However, the median shows a decrease of nine per cent.

TABLE 4  
VOCABULARY TEST SCORES FOR CONTROL GROUP

	Pre-test	Post-test
	Percentage	Percentage
Average	60	53
Median	57	50

The control group's scores decreased between pre-testing and post-testing for both average and median--seven per cent in both cases.

#### Attitude Tests

The data for the attitude test were scored by an index ranging from one to five with a range of four points. Each score was computed to two decimal places. The indexes were averaged and the median found for both groups in pre-tests and post-tests.

TABLE 5  
ATTITUDE TEST SCORES FOR PRE-TEST

	Experimental Group	Control Group
	Index	Index
Average	3.41	3.24
Median	3.44	3.20

The experimental group showed .17 higher than control group in the average, and .24 higher in the median.

TABLE 6  
ATTITUDE TEST SCORES FOR POST-TEST

	Experimental Group	Control Group
	Index	Index
Average	3.59	3.34
Median	3.60	3.48

The experimental group showed .25 higher than the control group in the average, and .12 higher in the median.

TABLE 7  
ATTITUDE TEST SCORES FOR EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

	Pre-test	Post-test
	Index	Index
Average	3.41	3.59
Median	3.44	3.60

The experimental group increased its average score by .18 between pre-test and post-test, and it increased its median score by .16 between pre-test and post-test.

TABLE 8  
ATTITUDE TEST SCORES FOR CONTROL GROUP

	Pre-test	Post-test
	Index	Index
Average	3.24	3.34
Median	3.20	3.48

The control group increased its average score in the attitude test by .10 between pre-testing and post-testing. In the median score there is a .28 increase between the pre-test and the post-test.

Each question of the twenty-five in the attitude test was compared for significant changes from pre-testing for both groups. Some of the more important ones are herewith analyzed. (See Appendix C for complete questionnaire.)

Question I. I believe that reading fiction is enjoyable.

Experimental Group	Control Group
+ .61	+ .50

Question V. I believe that reading novels increases my ability to understand myself.

Experimental Group	Control Group
+ .50	+ .44

Question X. I believe that the more I read the better I read.

Experimental Group	Control Group
-.23	+.50

(This data is contradicted by the comments given in the interviews when many students in the experimental group were positively convinced that they read faster and better.)

Question XI. I believe that the more I read the better use I have of the English language.

Experimental Group	Control Group
+.39	-.33

(Again this evidence contradicts the data in #10 because the two concepts are related.)

Question XII. I believe that when I find an author I like, I should read other books he has written.

Experimental Group	Control Group
+.17	-.31

(This is also supported in the statistics regarding the number of times both books by Steinbeck were read--9 for Of Mice and Men, and 8 for The Pearl.)

Question XXII. I believe that learning to enjoy good books in school will increase the desire to read when I am an adult.

Experimental Group	Control Group
+.16	no change

Question XXV. I believe that what happens to the people in the story is more important than when it happened.

Experimental Group	Control Group
+.27	+.23

(This may contradict the contemporary belief that young people will only read the "now" literature, that they don't find relevancy in the literature of the past.)

In order to determine whether or not there exists a relationship between the number of books a student read and the degree of improvement in his test scores, the following two tables were prepared. They list the eighteen students' reading records of number of books read ranking the greatest number at the top and giving the corresponding test score.

TABLE 9

RELATIONSHIP OF NUMBER OF BOOKS READ TO CHANGES  
IN VOCABULARY TEST SCORES

Books Read	Test Score Changes
Number	Percentage
18	+5
11	-1
10	+18
10	+8
8	+7
8	+5
8	+3
7	+4
7	+2
7	-6
6	+2
6	-1
6	-5
5	+1
5	-1
5	-9
3	+10
2	+13

There appears to be no relationship between the number of books read and the improvement in vocabulary skill. However, the students representing the top half in number of books read scored 5.6 per cent increase on the average which is 2.6 per cent above the class average increase of three per cent.

TABLE 10  
RELATIONSHIP OF NUMBER OF BOOKS READ TO CHANGES  
IN ATTITUDE TEST SCORES

Books Read		Test Score Changes	
Number		Index	
	18		+.20
	11		+.36
	10		+.40
	10		-.52*
	8		+.44
	8		+.20
	8		+.08
	7		+.68
	7		+.40
	7		-.24
	6		+.52
	6		+.44
	6		+.28
	5		+.32
	5		-.16
	5		-.20
	3		+.20
	2		+.32

\*This student contradicted her test score in her interview. She feels strongly that she has much better feelings about reading than she had before the semester started.

There is no apparent relationship between the number of books read and improvement in attitude test scores.

### Interviews

As soon as the raw scores were tallied, interviews between the students in the experimental group and the researcher were arranged. The interview had three parts: 1) informing the student of his test scores; 2) a series of questions about his reading and about the books (See Appendix D); and 3) a list of suggested titles for further reading was prepared for each student according to his interests. The second part, the remarks and comments by the students, became part of the data. The students were given ample opportunity to speak freely about the project. These interviews were exciting and produced subjective evidence not visible in the statistics.

Here are some of the students' quotations that were typical responses to the question, How did you feel when you had completed reading a book?

"Good. First time I ever completed reading a book."

"Pretty good. Surprised."

"It was a satisfactory experience."

"It was a new experience to finish a book and like it."



"A sense of satisfaction."

"Glad I finished it."

"I felt that I had accomplished something."

All but two students said that the brevity of the books had a great deal to do with their response to the program.

All answered "Yes" to the question, Do you feel that the books dealt with the adult world? At first some said a few books were childish. On questioning it came out that those stories with supernatural characters (The Devil and Daniel Webster, Christmas Carol, and Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street) were being put in the fairy tale category. When they were asked if they thought Macbeth and Hamlet with their ghosts were childish, they reversed their opinion and were willing to accept the supernatural in adult books.

Below is a table showing the titles of books that impressed the students the most, the one they would remember the longest, and the number of votes for each. Most students were free in giving reasons why they felt the way they did about the book. While this was not being tested, it is an interesting by-product of the experiment.

TABLE 11  
MOST IMPRESSIVE BOOKS

Title	Number of Votes
Of Mice and Men	5
Old Man and the Sea	3
Mama's Bank Account	2
Animal Farm	1
Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street	1
Voice of Bugle Ann	1
The Mouse that Roared	1
Lilies of the Field	1
The Snow Goose	1
The Pearl	1
King Solomon's Mines	1

The following table is a list of the books that were named as the book that the students enjoyed the most with the number of votes.

TABLE 12  
MOST POPULAR BOOKS

Title	Number of Votes
Of Mice and Men	4
Old Man and the Sea	3
The Devil and Daniel Webster	2
Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street	2
Animal Farm	1
Voice of Bugle Ann	1
The Pearl	1
King Solomon's Mines	1
The Great Gatsby	1
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	1
The Red Badge of Courage	1

Because the comments the students made when they were asked to say anything they wished about the books or the semester's work were so freely given and subjective, most of them will be repeated here. There is at least one comment from each of the eighteen students.

"I liked the idea of a special project especially for our class. It was not boring."

"It did me a lot of good."

"Interesting--should have had a greater selection of books."

"A good list. I benefited from the program."

"Not fun, but a real good program. There should be more of it in other classes."

"I enjoyed it. I was never involved in this kind of a program before."

"I can read faster and better now."

"Good that we read at our own speed and not be assigned so many pages per day."

"Would like more choice of books. Plenty of time to read in class. Worthwhile English course."

"Interesting. I believe I improved my reading and vocabulary. I knew what I was reading about."

"Pretty good program, because I improved my reading."

"I liked the idea of being able to choose a book. It was a good selection of books that would interest anybody. I like to read at my own speed."

"A good idea. We should have had completely free choice, but it did help more people to read more books."

"O. K. A more satisfactory semester."

"Books were not very interesting. Before we always had to read longer books assigned by the teacher. This was better."

"I liked it because I had enough time to try a book to see if I wanted to read it. If I didn't think I would like it, I didn't have to read it. Some books were really good."

"I liked it better than most classes. I liked it because we had time to read and we could read at our own speed."

"It was successful, because everyone did what they were supposed to do."

#### Teacher's Observations

Anastasi<sup>1</sup> states..."attitudes must be inferred from overt behavior, that they cannot be observed." What the student does may be different from what he says. The teacher was in a position to observe day-to-day behavior and reactions. In evaluation of the project, the teacher made some comments that were based on professional experience.

"The students were stimulated to read by the fact that this project was designed for them."

"From the beginning motivation to read was very strong."

"These students read almost every day for at least part of the class period."

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<sup>1</sup>Anastasi, op. cit., p. 480.

"They seemed to prefer to read than to discuss the books."

"In comparison to the control group, there was a great deal more interest in reading."

"Brevity is the magic formula."

"The rate of reading did not decrease. They were as interested in the books the last month as they were during the first month."

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Recognition that there was a problem of Phase II students being reluctant readers in spite of the fact that they had sufficient reading skills to score at ninth grade level led to questions with regard to causes. Assumptions were made that if certain causes were removed, and if books were used that were tested and selected for them, reading experiences would be more satisfactory and beneficial to the student. The first part of the hypothesis suggested that if Phase II students read from a list of carefully selected books which contained universal concepts, their vocabulary skills would improve. The second part suggested that the students who read from that list would show improvement in their attitudes toward reading.

The procedure used to test these hypotheses was experimental--the experimental group read from a special collection, and the control group read from the teacher's list. Tests for vocabulary skills and attitudes toward reading were administered to both groups before and after a semester's reading. Test scores were used for statistical evidence, while subjective evidence came from interviews and observations.

The test for the first part of the hypothesis--the vocabulary test--was composed of 100 words in a multiple choice test. Results of pre-tests were compared and showed two per cent difference in the two groups on the average, with the control group scoring higher. The median score showed the control group three per cent lower than the experimental group indicating that they were closely matched at the beginning of the experiment. On the post-test, the experimental group showed a three per cent gain over the pre-test on the average and a nine per cent loss on the median. The control showed a six per cent loss on the average and a seven per cent loss on the median.

The data are not statistically dramatic but do encourage the hypothesis that vocabulary skill will improve. The difference in the reading programs was expected to cause some change. That change is apparent in the fact that the experimental group improved while the control group regressed. The differential between groups on the post-test average is seven per cent. In analysis of individual test scores, a significant statistic is an eighteen per cent increase by one student.

The fact that the control group on the test of vocabulary skill lost six per cent on the average and seven per cent on the median supports the statement

made by Carlsen<sup>1</sup> that poor readers fail to keep up with their peers. Their familiarity with certain words was less than it had been because the control group had not been reading at the rate established by the experimental group.

The test for the second part of the hypothesis--an attitude test--was composed of twenty-five statements about reading that was scored by an index of one to five with a range of four. Scores were computed to two decimal places. Each respondent could respond to each statement from strong disagreement to strong agreement. The twenty-five responses were averaged for the individual's index. These were averaged for the class. A median index was also reached. Results of the pre-tests showed that the average of the experimental group was higher by .17. For the median, the experimental group showed .24 above the control group. On the post-test, the average for the experimental group was .25 above the control group and .12 above on the median. From pre-testing to post-testing the experimental group raised its average index by .18, and its median by .16 points. The control group raised its average index by .10 and its median by .28.

While both groups showed an improvement in attitude toward reading, the experimental group's average index of .25 was .15 higher than the control group.

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<sup>1</sup>Carlsen, op. cit., p. 2.



There was improvement in the scores of the experimental group's attitude test, and therefore, it would appear that the second part of the hypothesis has some support.

Analysis of specific responses to statements in the attitude test shows changes for the better in the following beliefs: 1) reading is enjoyable; 2) reading increases ability for self-understanding; 3) reading increases the ability to use the English language; and 4) historical fiction is more acceptable.

The general tenor of the interviews held with the librarian was that of enthusiasm. The students felt important because of the attention they were given as a class and as individuals. The most gratifying answers came to the question, "How did you feel when you had completed reading a book?" It seems that even though these students could read and had read enough to "get by" in school, completion of books was a new and exciting experience to them. It had a positive effect on them--a group to which so much in school is negative.

Another positive factor about the interviews was that the students discussed a book and its characters with the librarian in a way that seemed important to them--it was not a classroom exercise. They enjoyed just talking

about what impressed them about certain books and why they thought the books were adult. Specific events and characters were discussed, and the students seemed to recall them very readily which indicated comprehension. The interview focused on their comments. They saw that their remarks were being recorded, but that seemed to encourage rather than inhibit them.

The interviews showed substantial support of the hypothesis in terms of attitudes toward reading. The number of books read by the experimental group was greater by far than the number read by the control group. The students in the experimental group felt that they accomplished more which means that they have had some successful reading experiences for the first time in their lives. The interviews and discussions revealed that there was comprehension of the stories, and that the reading was not merely an assignment. Their comments indicated that they were aware of their reading weaknesses, and that because this program allowed them to read at their own rate, it was a more desirable experience than having deadlines for completion and trying to keep up with others.

#### Consequences of Experiment in Ferndale Schools

Four results of this experiment occurred during the semester following the experiment.

1. The teacher was so impressed with the results from the experimental group that he instituted the program as the curriculum for the second semester with the control group. In the first two weeks of reading, fifteen books had been completed. The post-tests from the previous semester were compared to post-tests in June. The same discussion techniques and reading time were practiced. The students showed enthusiasm after the book talk, and at the end of the first marking period they were still strongly motivated.

2. A teacher of two Phase IV sections in World Literature felt her students could benefit from a similar program. Together, the teacher and the librarian set the criteria for the books and devised an attitude test for these more sophisticated students. The books were presented to the class in the same way, with a book talk and an annotated list.

3. The results of this research were presented to an English Department staff meeting with the recommendation that all Phase II classes have this program for their curriculum for at least one semester of their high school career.

4. There was a student in the class that had been the control group who was ready to move up to

Phase III, but she was unwilling to do so. She was so engrossed in reading from the book list that she did not choose to change. The teacher indicated that there would be more challenge in Phase III, but the student believed this program was the finest challenge she had ever faced.

### Conclusions

While the data did not support the hypothesis to the degree that would appear to be statistically significant, they did, nevertheless, indicate improvement in both areas--vocabulary skill and attitude. The subjective evidence gleaned from the interviews and the teacher's observations suggests a stronger degree of success than the statistics indicate.

Other measurements of success come from the following results of the experiment:

1. Further experiments are being carried on in the school with this program and may be a part of the curriculum.
2. An experiment of this type is being carried on with Phase IV groups.
3. Teachers are recognizing that choice in reading matter is preferable to assignments in which students read the same title at the same time.

4. A list of twenty-five titles has been tested for readability and with the exception of two, accepted by young adults as appropriate reading material for reluctant readers.

As a result of this study certain inferences can be drawn which should help teachers and librarians:

1. Teacher and librarian teams can work successfully to improve the reading experiences for reluctant readers.

2. The library may be considered to be a more attractive place since it was the source of books with which reading success was met.

3. Students respond to curriculum plans that are especially designed for them.

4. Testing as a part of a reading program can reveal a great deal about the students and can be used in evaluation.

5. Extensive reading programs may be better than intensive programs for reluctant readers. Reading in itself improves the skill and until their experience with literary works broadens, they will lack the skill to deal with analysis and criticism.

6. The tried and true books have universal value even to those students with little literary background because they have themes with significant

appraisal of the human experience.

7. Books with a readability level less than the reading ability level of the student may lead to successful reading experiences.

8. Books that are short are successful in use with reluctant readers because their brevity is a positive factor when the student is selecting a book to read.

It would appear that in spite of slight statistical evidence to support the hypotheses, the experiment had a measure of success as indicated by the fact that there appeared to be improvement in the attitude toward reading.

#### Recommendations

Partial success of this experiment would indicate a need for further research. Many concerns are still not adequately answered.

In view of recent research on the validity of readability formulas, including the Dale-Chall formula, it is recommended that books selected for reluctant readers be tested by those methods which consider linguistic dimensions other than sentence length and word familiarity.

Hunt,<sup>1</sup> in the analysis of sentence structure in his

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<sup>1</sup>Kellogg W. Hunt, "A Synopsis of Clause-to-Sentence Length Factors", English Journal, LIV (April, 1965), p. 308.

study of maturity levels of writing, has identified a sentence part called the T-unit. The T-unit is defined as a main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses happen to be attached to it or are imbedded in it. Hunt<sup>2</sup> recommends the T-unit as a measurement of readability in place of sentence length. Other linguists have both supported and refuted his position. (See Appendix E.) This appears to indicate that readability is still being researched. Therefore, newer formulas ought to be used in research which could then be compared to the results found using the Dale-Chall formula until one is established that has been proven scientifically valid.

Efforts should be made to add to the list of short, adult books which have good stories and quality writing. The list prepared for this project will need to be revised and supplemented as titles that meet the criteria are discovered.

Finally, this research gives strong emphasis to the need for continued team efforts by teachers and librarians in the matter of reading guidance in all five phases in the Ferndale English program.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

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APPENDIX A

ANNOTATED BOOK LIST

PHASE II READING PROGRAM

Note: List includes number of pages, grade level of readability, and number of times read.

Andrews, Mary Raymond Shipman. The Perfect Tribute.

The personal feelings of Abraham Lincoln before and after the Gettysburg Address.

47 p.            7.3 Gr.            Read 4 times

Barrett, William. The Lillies of the Field.

A World War II veteran sets out to see the United States in his station wagon, and after finding some German muns, he becomes involved in building them a church. A warm story of learning how to understand other kinds of people.

127 p.            6.5 Gr.            Read 4 times

Benet, Stephen Vincent. The Devil and Daniel Webster.

A farmer sells his soul to the devil and gets Daniel Webster to plead his cause to redeem his soul.

61 p.            5.7 Gr.            Read 11 times

Buchan, John. The Thirty-nine Steps.

A mystery and suspense story that follows the hero's pretending that he is a murderer.

170 p.            7.4 Gr.            Was not read

Crane, Stephen. The Red Badge of Courage.

A young boy enlists in the Union Army during the Civil War and discovers that he is a coward the first time he is under fire.

159 p.            9.4 Gr.            Read 3 times

Davies, Valentine. Miracle on Thirty-fourth Street.

A modern Christmas story about a widowed mother and her child who didn't believe in any kind of fairy tale.

120 p.            8.0 Gr.            Read 4 times

Dickens, Charles. A Christmas Carol.

A favorite story of Scrooge and the Cratchit family at Christmas time.

128 p.      8.0 Gr.      Read once

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby.

During the 1920's a man meets the Great Gatsby, who is some kind of a racketeer. The story deals with a few summer months when their lives become entangled and tragedy strikes.

182 p.      6.6 Gr.      Read once

Forbes, Kathryn. Mama's Bank Account.

A family story as told by the teen-age daughter. Humorous and warm.

204 p.      6.3 Gr.      Read 7 times

Gallico, Paul. Mrs. 'Arris Goes to Paris.

An extremely determined cleaning woman wants one of the famous Dior dresses from Paris. The story tells how she achieves her goal and how she affects the lives of the people who help her.

157 p.      7.0 Gr.      Read 6 times

Gallico, Paul. The Snow Goose.

With World War II as its setting, the tale is of a crippled artist, a poor girl, and a wounded Canada goose.

58 p.      7.0 Gr.      Read 6 times

Haggard, H. Rider. King Solomon's Mines.

A real suspenseful adventure of an African hunter who seeks the treasures hidden by King Solomon in Bible days.

191 p.      6.8 Gr.      Read 4 times

Hale, Edward Everett. The Man without a Country.

Banished from the mainland for cursing the United States, an army officer spends his life on board ship.

53 p.            7.3 Gr.            Read 9 times

Hemingway, Ernest. Old Man and the Sea.

An old fisherman wants desperately to catch one more good fish. His adventure is exciting, frustrating, but heroic.

127 p.            6.2 Gr.            Read 14 times

Hilton, James. Good-bye Mr. Chips.

The quiet life of a school master, that in spite of personal tragedy is a very rewarding one.

132 p.            7.7 Gr.            Read 5 times

Irving, Washington. Rip Van Winkle.

A famous legend of the man who slept for twenty years in the Catskill Mountains.

42 p.            9.0 Gr.            Read 5 times

Kantor, MacKinley. Voice of Bugle Ann.

The hunting life of people who live in the South is told so that we become very involved in the problems created by the loss of one dog.

128 p.            6.8 Gr.            Read 3 times

Lane, Rose Wilder. Let the Hurricane Roar.

A bride and groom leave their families to settle in the Dakotas. They meet many hardships, but they love the country and prepare to stay.

152 p.            5.6 Gr.            Read 6 times

Nathan, Robert. Portrait of Jennie.

An artist paints a phantom girl and sells her portrait, but she returns and they fall in love.

212 p.      4.6 Gr.      Read 2 times

Crwell, George. Animal Farm.

A group of animals take over a farm and set up their own way of life without the help of humans. The animals run true to their characteristics and some of them lose sight of their original ideal plans.

118 p.      6.8 Gr.      Read 11 times

Richter, Conrad. Sea of Grass.

A western in setting, but the people are the same as people everywhere. A good story of a black sheep brother.

149 p.      9.0 Gr.      Was not read

Steinbeck, John. Of Mice and Men.

George takes over the care and welfare of a friend who is retarded. Lennie loves animals but he is so strong that he is sometimes cruel without meaning to be.

119 p.      5.4 Gr.      Read 9 times

Steinbeck, John. The Pearl.

A pearl diver finds a fabulous pearl and is then endangered because others want it from him. It becomes a terrible curse to him and his family.

122 p.      6.6 Gr.      Read 8 times

Stevenson, Robert Louis. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

A doctor who has a dual personality becomes involved with drugs and his other self becomes very evil.

69 p.      7.9 Gr.      Read 10 times

Wibberley, Leonard. The Mouse That Roared.

A small European nation needs financial help and they declare war on the United States in order to get its attention. Hilarious events result.

152 p.      8.7 Gr.      Read 3 times

APPENDIX B  
VOCABULARY TEST



Instructions: Circle the letter in front of the word which means the same as the word by the number.

Example: 1. advance

- a. to go behind
- b. to promote
- Ⓒ to go ahead
- d. to travel

1. arrears

- a. arrangement
- b. toward the rear
- c. able to be heard
- d. forward

2. timid

- a. easily frightened
- b. bashful
- c. bold
- d. at the right time

3. landscape

- a. picture of a person
- b. get-away
- c. outdoor scene
- d. gravel sliding down hill

4. uneasy

- a. difficult
- b. uncomfortable
- c. mentally disturbed
- d. not troubled

5. entranced

- a. charmed
- b. in a dream
- c. on a train
- d. in a doorway

6. distance

- a. far-away places
- b. a mile
- c. the length of space between two points
- d. a race

7. portrait

- a. a photographer
- b. artist's studio
- c. servant
- d. picture of a person

8. schooner

- a. a drinking glass
- b. before
- c. a covered wagon
- d. a sailing vessel

9. apparently

- a. clearly
- b. in a motherly way
- c. able to appear
- d. ghostly

10. unusually

- a. frequently
- b. new
- c. uncommonly
- d. regularly

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 11. earnestly                           | 17. sarcasm                   |
| a. a man's name                         | a. a scornful expression      |
| b. without spirit                       | b. criticism                  |
| c. sadly                                | c. curiosity                  |
| d. seriously                            | d. an Arab                    |
| 12. translated                          | 18. immediately               |
| a. transmitted                          | a. in a minute                |
| b. changed from one language to another | b. at once                    |
| c. expressed                            | c. in the middle              |
| d. changed in appearance                | d. by and by                  |
| 13. altitude                            | 19. chamber                   |
| a. vertical distance                    | a. a channel                  |
| b. horizontal distance                  | b. a servant                  |
| c. frame of mind                        | c. The Senate                 |
| d. a mountain peak                      | d. a bedroom                  |
| 14. ruffian                             | 20. fatigue                   |
| a. a boxer                              | a. a French coat              |
| b. a recklessly brutal fellow           | b. weariness                  |
| c. a decoration on a dress              | c. Mohammed's daughter        |
| d. not smooth                           | d. over-weight                |
| 15. assembled                           | 21. inevitably                |
| a. spread around                        | a. not to be avoided          |
| b. a meeting, especially students       | b. unnecessarily              |
| c. gathered together                    | c. uneventfully               |
| d. agreed                               | d. avoidable                  |
| 16. hospitality                         | 22. imagination               |
| a. a hotel                              | a. magic powers               |
| b. eating and drinking                  | b. thoughts                   |
| c. entertaining guests                  | c. fantasy                    |
| d. a place for sick people              | d. creative power of the mind |

23. beyond

- a. beside
- b. farther than
- c. closer than
- d. over-seas

24. quality

- a. to have enough skill
- b. degree of goodness
- c. amount
- d. control

25. multitude

- a. a large number of people
- b. a number to be multiplied
- c. a large amount
- d. a word with many meanings

26. engaged

- a. promised
- b. attractive
- c. bound by a promise
- d. made a contract

27. desperately

- a. pitifully
- b. not together
- c. in the manner of a bandit
- d. recklessly

28. infinite

- a. unlimited
- b. unsure
- c. universal
- d. unfaithful

29. dignity

- a. to hold in honor
- b. a person of high rank
- c. personal importance
- d. courtesy

30. swarthy

- a. blondness
- b. sunburned complexion
- c. roughness
- d. strength

31. reluctantly

- a. living alone
- b. impolitely
- c. with a reckless air
- d. unwillingly

32. noble

- a. high-minded
- b. a knight
- c. unknown
- d. of poor birth

33. incessant

- a. noisy
- b. continual
- c. not moving
- d. stopping

34. fiendish

- a. like a devil
- b. kindly
- c. morbidly
- d. murderous

35. consciousness
- a. knowing right from wrong
  - b. easily seen
  - c. in a coma
  - d. awareness
36. surgeon
- a. a lieutenant in the army
  - b. a doctor who treats animals
  - c. a doctor who operates
  - d. an illness
37. studio
- a. a classroom
  - b. a room in which one studies
  - c. a painting
  - d. a workroom of a painter
38. seclusion
- a. a place away from society
  - b. including everything
  - c. a hermit
  - d. one's private life
39. bliss
- a. a mistake
  - b. unhappiness
  - c. great joy
  - d. a color
40. sufficiently
- a. well-done
  - b. enough
  - c. not getting enough air
  - d. competently
41. catastrophe
- a. a sudden misfortune
  - b. a riot
  - c. water currents
  - d. a projectile
42. acute
- a. sharp
  - b. angular
  - c. pretty
  - d. small
43. apparition
- a. an understanding
  - b. cutting apart
  - c. a divider between two rooms
  - d. a ghost
44. exquisite
- a. cruel
  - b. painful
  - c. delicately beautiful
  - d. completely appreciated
45. obstacle
- a. a race
  - b. what is seen
  - c. a barrier
  - d. a race course
46. countenance
- a. county government
  - b. a counting machine
  - c. a blanket
  - d. appearance

47. pretense

- a. act of pretending
- b. honest actions
- c. part of a sentence
- d. facts

48. slightly

- a. magically
- b. small
- c. a little bit
- d. slender

49. nevertheless

- a. yet
- b. however
- c. less than
- d. a matter of fact

50. destitute

- a. poverty-stricken
- b. rich
- c. affluent
- d. ragged

51. astonishment

- a. shock
- b. attraction
- c. amazement
- d. understanding

52. zeal

- a. the sky overhead
- b. enjoyment
- c. a fanatic
- d. enthusiasm

53. image

- a. ghost
- b. likeness
- c. portrait
- d. mirror

54. quest

- a. a card game
- b. a question
- c. a friend in your home
- d. a search

55. carcass

- a. contempt
- b. the body of an animal
- c. a city in South America
- d. an automobile frame

56. descent

- a. act of coming down
- b. an elevator
- c. son or daughter
- d. clean and proper

57. opinion

- a. a belief
- b. an argument
- c. facts
- d. a nut

58. torrent

- a. a storm
- b. a whirlpool
- c. a cataract
- d. a strong flow of water

59. successor

- a. one who is  
    successful
- b. one who follows  
    another
- c. one who helps  
    another
- d. one who comes  
    before another

60. duration

- a. war
- b. period of time in  
    which anything  
    lasts
- c. having holes
- d. strength

61. academy

- a. a college course
- b. a student
- c. a trade school
- d. a school which pre-  
    pares a student for  
    college

62. ornamental

- a. adding to the beauty  
    of
- b. Chinese
- c. a small tree
- d. part of the army  
    equipment

63. prairie

- a. a pasture
- b. a mountain slope
- c. a field of grass
- d. an argument

64. rigorously

- a. in a stern manner
- b. in a kindly manner
- c. with great strength
- d. with rebellion

65. comprehend

- a. believe
- b. fold under
- c. understand
- d. give in a little

66. precisely

- a. properly
- b. exactly
- c. at the present time
- d. in a nice way

67. reckon

- a. take back
- b. know somebody
- c. count
- d. guess

68. rheumatism

- a. a disease
- b. a study of words
- c. pity
- d. sorrow

69. alfalfa

- a. a clover-like plant  
used to feed mammals
- b. a clown who plays  
in opera
- c. a grain grown for  
flour
- d. a grass for sheep  
grazing

70. awe

- a. wanderings
- b. religious  
enthusiasm
- c. a reverent fear
- d. an exclamation

71. luxury

- a. a necessity
- b. something very clean
- c. a special  
indulgence
- d. a beautiful home

72. reflection

- a. a bent ray of light
- b. the image in a  
movie
- c. a light
- d. thoughtful  
meditation

73. rations

- a. a relationship be-  
tween one thing and  
another
- b. a fixed allowance
- c. food supply
- d. clear thinking

74. ancestors

- a. those who follow us
- b. inheritances
- c. forefathers
- d. a group of stories  
or poems

75. debt

- a. a payment received
- b. an account
- c. transgression
- d. that which one owes  
to another

76. victorious

- a. triumphant
- b. defeated
- c. armistice
- d. surrender

77. martial

- a. civil
- b. describing anything  
done by the army
- c. fighting
- d. militant

78. barren

- a. dead
- b. unproductive
- c. fenced-in
- d. except

79. opposite

- a. different
- b. argument
- c. in a position
- d. contrary

80. incredible

- a. not trustworthy
- b. impossible
- c. difficult to believe
- d. not able to tell experiences

81. ceremony

- a. a formal rite
- b. a celebration
- c. a wedding
- d. an important day

82. oath

- a. swearing
- b. a vow
- c. a vote
- d. support

83. ay

- a. forever
- b. no
- c. yes
- d. I know

84. narrative

- a. a story-teller
- b. a poem
- c. a story
- d. a narrow passage

85. refuge

- a. denial
- b. protection from danger
- c. a person who flees his country
- d. part of an airplane

86. fugitive

- a. a person who flees from the law
- b. a prisoner
- c. a criminal
- d. a person who is thrifty

87. rural

- a. far away
- b. agricultural
- c. poor
- d. concerning country life

88. alter

- a. high
- b. change
- c. front of the church
- d. the other one

89. reassure

- a. regain one's confidence
- b. think out carefully
- c. insure again
- d. encourage

90. eternal

- a. inside of
- b. everlasting
- c. infinite
- d. outside of



91. doomed
- a. condemned
  - b. finished
  - c. fought against
  - d. having a rounded roof
92. colonel
- a. medal winner
  - b. a court-martial
  - c. an officer in the
  - d. a group of people in a new country
93. tattered
- a. dirty
  - b. sloppily dressed
  - c. walked weavingly, as if dizzy
  - d. clothed in rags
94. anecdote
- a. a short, factual story
  - b. a legend
  - c. a joke
  - d. a puzzle
95. pondered
- a. understood
  - b. wandered
  - c. thought about carefully
  - d. made a quick decision
96. regiment
- a. a military uniform
  - b. a system of government
  - c. order of things
  - d. a group of soldiers
97. foes
- a. members of a team
  - b. opposites
  - c. enemies
  - d. criminals
98. saddlery
- a. a stable
  - b. a blacksmith shop
  - c. sorrowful
  - d. saddles and harnesses for horses
99. rigid
- a. inflexible
  - b. inexact
  - c. top of a hill
  - d. casual
100. encounter
- a. face-to-face fight
  - b. a meeting
  - c. furniture in a store
  - d. against

APPENDIX C  
READING ATTITUDES TEST

Instructions: Circle the number for the answer which most nearly represents the way you feel about the statement.

I. I believe reading novels is enjoyable.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

II. I believe that reading novels is more interesting than reading biography.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

III. I believe that reading novels is more interesting than reading history.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

IV. I believe that reading novels is more interesting than reading science.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

V. I believe that reading novels increases my ability to understand myself.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

- VI. I believe that reading novels increases my ability to understand other people.
1. strongly disagree
  2. disagree
  3. neutral
  4. agree
  5. strongly agree
- VII. I believe that reading novels is the next best thing to actually having the experience.
1. strongly disagree
  2. disagree
  3. neutral
  4. agree
  5. strongly agree
- VIII. I believe that reading novels is better than seeing the movie based on the book.
1. strongly disagree
  2. disagree
  3. neutral
  4. agree
  5. strongly agree
- IX. I believe that reading novels increases my appreciation of a movie based on the book.
1. strongly disagree
  2. disagree
  3. neutral
  4. agree
  5. strongly agree
- X. I believe that the more I read the better I read.
1. strongly disagree
  2. disagree
  3. neutral
  4. agree
  5. strongly agree

XI. I believe that the more I read the better use I have of the English language.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XII. I believe that when I read a novel that I should read for at least an hour at a time.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XIII. I believe that when I find an author I like, I should read other books he has written.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XIV. I believe that when I read a book, I should know who the author is.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XV. I believe that knowing about an author's life increases my appreciation of the book.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XVI. I believe that discussion of a book increases my enjoyment of it.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XVII. I believe that it helps me to enjoy a book more if I let my imagination go.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XVIII. I believe that when an author uses happenings and people that are not real, it can help me understand what is real.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XIX. I believe that when my friends recommend a book to me I will like it also.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XX. I believe that finishing a book gives me a great deal of satisfaction.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XXI. I believe that it doesn't matter whether the book is a paperback or hard cover, as long as it is a good story.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XXII. I believe that learning to enjoy good books in school will increase the desire to read when I am an adult.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XXIII. I believe that stories are more interesting if the characters seem real.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XXIV. I believe that action is the most important aspect of any story.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

XXV. I believe that what happens to the people in the story is more important than when it happened.

1. strongly disagree
2. disagree
3. neutral
4. agree
5. strongly agree

APPENDIX D  
THE INTERVIEW



Part I. Explanation of test scores

Part II. Questionnaire

1. How many books did you read?
2. Which book impressed you the most?
3. How did you feel when you had completed reading a book?
4. Do you feel the brevity of the books had anything to do with your response to the reading program?
5. Do you feel the books dealt with the adult world?
6. Which book did you enjoy the most?
7. What comments would you like to make about the semester's work?

Part III. Suggestions for further reading

**APPENDIX E**  
**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN READABILITY RESEARCH**

## Appendix E

## Recent Developments in Readability Research

The matter of a valid readability formula remains unsettled. Weaknesses of several in use are pointed out by Baskette and Sissors.<sup>1</sup> They state "most readability formulas use a few fundamental elements but neglect context or story structure." Such a criticism is true of Hunt's<sup>2</sup> study in which he uses a unit of measurement called the T-unit, a main clause and possibly some subordinate clauses. He<sup>3</sup> states that,

"according to the statisticians who analyzed our data using a chi-square and a contingency coefficient, the T-unit length is probably a better index of grade level than any of the other indexes evaluated. Sentence length is the poorest index. Subordination ratio is somewhat better. Mean clause length is still better, and mean T-unit length is at least as good as any, and apparently the best of all."

Christensen,<sup>4</sup> however, refutes Hunt's position by stating that "the relatively high frequency of free

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd K. Baskette and Jack Z. Sissors. The Art of Editing. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Kellogg W. Hunt. "A Synopsis of Clause-to-Sentence Length Factors," English Journal, LIV (April, 1965), pp. 300-309.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 306.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Christensen, "The Problem of Defining a Mature Style," English Journal LVII (April, 1968), p. 579.

modifiers" indicates a more mature style and hence a higher level of readability than the T-unit indicates. He believes that "the long clause is not the mark of a mature style but of an inept style--the easy writing that's curst hard reading."

Both the Hunt and Christensen studies were based on analyses of the characteristics of writing styles at a variety of levels. Baskette and Sissors are concerned with journalistic writing styles. However, all suggest that analysis of style will lead to validity in readability formulas.