AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S CRITICAL RESPONSE TO LITERATURE DURING GROUP STORYBOOK READING

by

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ABSTRACT

It is now well known that linguistically interactive experiences with stories during the preschool years develop the child’s knowledge about written language, along with abilities to construct meaning from literary forms of language. Storytime as a literacy activity in school is just beginning to be explored. It appears that there are ways of eliciting and interpreting children’s implicit responses to stories which positively affect their thinking, understanding, and sensitivity about literature. In turn, these responses strengthen the foundation of the kind of critical reading abilities necessary for the continuation of literacy development.

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether a teacher reading selected books and practicing specific teacher interaction behaviors during group storytime would increase the critical responses about literature from a group of children. A pretest-posttest nonequivalent group design was used. Subjects were two intact groups of upper middle class kindergarten children who attended either morning or afternoon sessions in the same school with the same teacher. The researcher read the treatment group ten different stories, one per day, over the period of ten days. During this time, the researcher practiced specific teacher interaction behaviors with the group. For the same period of time, the researcher read random books to the nontreatment group and did not practice specific teacher interaction behaviors. The comments and questions arising from three pretest storytimes and three posttest storytimes for each group were coded according to an author-adapted matrix instrument composed of ten literary elements and four levels of knowledge. The children in the treatment group gave significantly more critical responses than the children in the nontreatment group.
Qualitative observations during the study indicated the need to develop means of identifying and evaluating behaviors of both teachers and children related to literature and literacy learning.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Storytime remains an important part of the kindergarten program for several reasons. One reason is that experiences with stories during the preschool and kindergarten years appear to positively affect later reading abilities. This study relates literature and critical thinking to literacy development within the context of group storytime. In particular, this study examines the assumption that children have a tacit knowledge about literature and that adults can enrich and extend that knowledge by engaging children in responsive interactions with stories.

1.2 Background to the Problem

According to emergent literacy theory, preschool children learn concepts of books, print and reading when they participate in language and print rich settings (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Dyson, 1984; Teale, 1986). Specifically, it appears that it is the language around the print, creating an interactive literacy event, that is the key to the child’s knowledge of literacy (Clark, 1976; Shanahan and Hogan, 1983; Snow, 1983). Thus, participation in frequent informal literacy related activities with involved and supportive adults in the early years are an integral part of the child’s literacy development. Central to this study is research which correlates storyreading activities with reading development (Feitelson, Kita, Goldstein, 1986; Sulzby, 1985; Moon and Wells, 1979; Schickedanz, 1978; Teale, 1982; Walker and Kuerbitz, 1979; Wells, 1983).
Findings indicating the benefits of oral storyreading activities extend into several facets of literacy development. These include vocabulary and syntax (Cohen, 1968; Fox, 1979; Ninio and Bruner, 1978; Scollon and Scollon, 1981), metalinguistic awareness (Bruner, 1984; Olson, 1984; Schickedanz, 1981), and story structure (Applebee, 1983, Golden, 1982; Morrow, 1984; Wells, 1983). But beyond becoming familiar with the conventions of written language, storybook reading experiences appear to educate the child as to how to make meaning with a book (Altwerger, 1985; Cochrane-Smith, 1982; Heath, 1982; Wells, 1983). This correlation of storyreading activities with the development of higher order thinking strategies is a promising area of research. Studies and theories related to this aspect of the meaning making process tend to be identified by their focus on macro-structures—structures which underlay "relations among the events, objects, and facts"... which may be "unstated" and which "... may require a reader to make plausible inferences using his knowledge of the world and of the text's structure" (Just & Carpenter, 1987, p. 224).

The interplay of research and theories of literacy is generating an expanding list of reading behaviors and a more detailed description of the reading process. Reading is coming to be regarded as a complex transaction between the psychological, social and cultural constructs of both the reader and the text (Anderson and Stokes, 1985; Bruner; 1986; Schieffelin and Cochrane-Smith, 1985). One construct which appears to be significant for young children is narrative (Applebee, 1978, 1983; Egan, 1979; Rosen, 1983; Wells, 1983). It is the macro structures of narrative fiction, which are referred to here as stories, and how children use these structures to understand literature, that this study is concerned with.
Part of understanding literature is the ability to draw on a store of shared knowledge about how stories fit together in terms of both content and structure. To know that wolves always get caught and that justice is done in the end, not only reflects what a child in Western mainstream culture already knows from other story experiences, but is also a means for that child of making sense of a new story. Put another way, how a reader organizes a transaction with literature is determined by the literary constructs of the reader's culture and the experiences the reader has had with those constructs. Furthermore, these constructs are encoded in the two interwoven dimensions of literature—content and form—the big, bad wolf and the resolution of conflict.

Negotiating meaning with a text involves both a familiarity with a culture's literary structures, as well as an ability to interpret and evaluate the use of those structures (Applebee, 1983; Cochran-Smith, 1984). One of the ways the shared book event becomes a meaning construction event is when the adult helps the child formulate and extend what the child already knows. In this way, the adult is a partner to the child in the process of seeing implicit understandings evolve into purposeful meaning making resources. In other words, in evoking, listening to, and guiding the child's response, the adult helps the child to be a critical reader—a reader intent upon meaning construction. It is the thesis of this study that critical reading requires a continual and evolving interplay of knowledge, reflection and reaction. In addition, critical reading abilities can be identified and supported in the child's response, and can develop over time in interactive book reading events.

As educators learn more about the reading process and reading development, attention is being directed to the kinds of stories which parents and schools use with beginning readers (McConaughy, 1980; Morrow, 1982; Morrow, 1984). Both
story structure (Stein and Glenn, 1978; Stein and Trabasso, 1982) and story content (Nezworski, T., Stein, N.L., & Trabasso, T., 1982) appear to influence how a reader or listener makes sense of a story. Theory in literature education says that certain kinds of stories can elicit imaginative and thoughtful responses linked with other experiences with narrative fiction (Meek, 1983; Rosenblatt, 1978). These "significant texts" (Meek, 1983) seem to relate closely to the child's affective and cognitive development; and the language of the story conjoins the magic of the mind and the structures of the thoughts. The young child's enthusiastic engagement with fantasy worlds, the accessibility of those worlds through clear and varied story grammars, and the attraction into the fantasy worlds of literature through language, suggest the relevance and benefits of selected storybooks for beginning readers. As a "mythic thinker" (Egan, 1978), the young child responds aesthetically to literature (Rosenblatt, 1980), "fus(ing) the cognitive and affective elements of consciousness . . . into a personally lived through poem or story" (p. 388). Thus, it appears that narrative fiction with intensely imaginative content, appealing language, and well-formed story structures offer a richer experience with literature than do other stories in this mode.

Examinations of curriculum guides lead to the conclusion that insufficient attention has been paid to the use of literature in the beginning stages of reading. From the preceding discussion, it appears that more care needs to be given to the choice of literature as well as to the role of literature in kindergarten storytimes. It also appears that young children have a tacit knowledge of the macro-structures of narrative fiction, and that they use this knowledge to construct meaning from a story. Furthermore, if we listen to children's responses to literary experiences, it seems that this knowledge
develops in an interactive spiralling process of experience and learning. Research with older children indicates that more careful structuring of the interactions between teacher and reading group about literary knowledge needs to be acknowledged as part of providing for literacy development (Baumann, 1984; Sloan, 1985; Young, 1987). This may also be true during the kindergarten year.

To summarize, this study is based on theory and research about literacy development which indicates relationships between literature, interaction, and critical thinking. This theoretical perspective assumes that a child's response is central to the development of a critical knowledge of those relationships. Literature which evokes aesthetic response motivates the child to question and bring into play the personal, social and cultural knowledge he needs to understand the story. Finally, this study assumes that response can be elicited and interpreted as a child's understanding of the literary experience.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In this study, the main area of interest was the effect of a teacher reading selected books, as described by the author, along with encouraging interactions which require the children to comment or question about their knowledge of literature upon a class of kindergarten children's critical response to stories. This study attempted to explore the following question:

Will kindergarten children who have group storybook reading experiences guided by specific teacher behaviors and using selected books elicit more frequent critical responses during group storyreading than kindergarten children who have had nonspecific teacher guided storybook reading experiences with random books?
1.4 **Hypotheses**

There were three null hypotheses arising from the general research question:

1.4.1 *Hypothesis I:*

There will be no statistically significant difference in the number of interpretative responses as measured on an author adapted test of literary knowledge, regardless of the kind of book read and regardless of the kinds of teacher interaction behaviors practiced.

1.4.2 *Hypothesis II:*

There will be no statistically significant difference in the number of evaluative responses as measured on an author adapted test of literary knowledge, regardless of the kind of book read and regardless of the kinds of teacher interaction behaviors practiced.

1.4.3 *Hypothesis III:*

There will be no interaction between the two variables, book and treatment.

1.5 **Significance of the Study**

This study provides understanding and recommendations for teachers on how to acknowledge and support the critical responses children are already making to literature, and how to continue to facilitate interactions requiring children to comment and question about their knowledge of literature.

1.6 **Definition of Terms**

*Selected Books:* Illustrated storybooks chosen by the author based on the imaginative appeal of the content, the clarity and richness of literary elements—events/plot, characters/relationships, setting/mood/atmosphere, images, ideas/themes, and language/style/structure—and the consistency with which these
elements are integrated into a whole literary work. (Appendix 2 and Appendix 4)

Unselected/Random Books: Illustrated storybooks suggested by the current British Columbia Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (1984) as suitable and appropriate for the development of language and literature concepts during the kindergarten year. (Appendix 3)

Critical Response: Oral questions and comments demonstrating knowledge of the literary elements. Types of knowledge included in this study are factual, personal, interpretative, and evaluative.

Teacher Interactive Behaviors: Certain kinds of teacher interactive behaviors appear to affect the child's critical responses to a book during group storyreading. Basically, these behaviors can be divided into two categories: 1) teacher initiated dialogue, and 2) teacher responses. Teacher initiated dialogue includes inviting questions and comments, giving information, encouraging predicting and risk-taking, modeling thinking and linking a story theme with listeners' experiences. Teacher response behaviors include showing spontaneous appreciation for stories, allowing time for response, valuing the child's response, scaffolding responses by increasing interaction with the book or peer group, and providing opportunities for the child to extend his interaction with the story (discussion, sharing of self-generated interpretative activities such as art, writing, music, movement and drama).
1.7 Limitations of the Study

1. The population of the study consisted of two intact groups—i.e. two kindergarten classes already in place as groups. Not using random sampling limits the making of generalizations beyond the group.

2. The two groups listened to the story at different times of day and this time factor may have affected their abilities to attend and respond.

3. The time of year in which this study took place—i.e. the end of the school year—placed a time constriction on the length of the period of data collection. The study took place over six weeks, thus the results are limited to the responses that children were capable of forming over that time.

4. One person (the teacher) was involved in the pre/posttest administration and another person (the researcher) in the treatment. Thus the results may be limited to the variable of test administrator. Also, the difference in the teacher effect between the pretest and the posttest, and the treatment may be a limitation.

5. The study is designed to determine the responses of the group. However, responses may not be evenly distributed within the groups as well as between the groups. This distribution limitation occurs because individuals differ in their styles of interaction and kinds of knowledge. Thus the sample of each group may represent a part of the group—those who are more outgoing and/or those who express more kinds of knowledge.

1.8 Summary of Chapter 1 and Overview of the Remainder of the Thesis

In this chapter, the problem of the effect of a teacher reading selected books and practicing specific interaction behaviors was introduced within the
context of current theory and research on literacy development. Hypotheses, definition of terms and limitations of the study were also stated. The next four chapters will consist of the following topics: chapter II, a thorough review of the literature as it applies to the delineation of a conceptual framework from which hypotheses and assumptions are drawn in this study; chapter III, descriptions of the methodology, working definitions of terms, and procedures used to collect and analyze data; chapter IV, reports of both the statistical and qualitative findings; chapter V, a summary of the preceding chapters, a discussion of the findings, recommendations for practice, and suggestions for future study.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction: Stories and Literacy

Reading and telling stories to young children is assumed to be a common occurrence in most homes, preschools and kindergartens. Current interest in transactional learning theories, along with theories and programs relating language and intellectual development (emergent literacy, whole language and literature based reading programs) have prompted investigations into how experiences with stories influence learning, particularly the learning of reading and writing (Doake, 1979; Feitelson, Kita, Goldstein, 1986; Fox, 1979; Roser, 1987; Sulzby, 1985; Teale, 1984; Wells, 1983, 1986). If, as Donaldson (1978) says, the responsibility of the schools is to ensure the development of symbolic thinking, then reading and writing activities provide an important means as well as evidence of this development. Applebee (1983) points to the special role of literature in education:

The production and use of 'literary' materials are complementary aspects of the generative process of building and sharing symbolic representations of our meanings (p. 87).

2.2 Transactional Learning and Critical Response

Transactional learning, based on the theories of symbolic interaction and social constructivism, views the learner as an interpreter of human experience and an inquiry motivated participant in the construction of personal and social meaning (Bruner, 1980). When children listen to or read stories, they are actively involved with the written language structures, both as individuals and as members of what Purves (1983) calls a "cognitive community," in the process of
interpreting and constructing meaning from the text. It is in this way that some theorists view reading as a transactional process.

The theories of "reader in the text" and "reader as recreator" (Barthes, 1974; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) are based on a reciprocal interaction between reader and text. An important ability which allows the reader to make sense of progressively more complex literary experiences is critical response (Fillion, 1981; Rosenblatt, 1978; Sloan, 1985). Northrop Frye (in Purves, 1974) defines criticism as the application of a series of structures of knowledge upon a text (p. 70). Likewise, Young (1987) describes critical reading ability as the "understanding of the process whereby responses are both required of and by the structures of literary texts" (p. 21). Familiarization with a variety of these structures and their assimilation as schemata available to the reader during transaction with a text, enables focusing of attention, organization of response and, finally, transactions with the world. These constructions are based on a myriad of social and cultural discourse systems.

Applying social constructivist theory to the teacher child relationship, the adult interacts with the child in a way that provides structural scaffolds as the child formulates, refines and extends conceptual knowledge (Bruner, 1980; Vygotsky, 1962; Wells, 1983). Vygotsky (1962) sees the higher mental functions as internalized social relationships. Wells (1983) says: "For those of us who are more knowledgeable and more mature—parents and teacher—the responsibility is clear: to interact with those in our care in such a way as to foster and enrich their meaning making" (p. 222). When the interaction centers around storyreading, the adult is, in effect, guiding the child in this process of transactional reading.
2.3 Imagery: The Origin of Response

Transactional reading is dependent on reader response (Rosenblatt, 1983). This shift of the reader’s status meant trusting that the reader could make valid responses. The proposed relationships between thought and language (Vygotsky, 1962) and between the affective and cognitive domains (Eisner, 1979), are influential in the reconception of the learner for this researcher. The human propensity for symbol making generated interest in the basic process of imaging (Langer, 1942/1978) and in the role of the imagination in educational development (Egan, 1978). People represent their experiences in a variety of symbolic forms—e.g. visual, aural, kinesthetic as well as linguistic. The arts, with its function of image making and image reading, became recognized as both a natural and epistemological activity (Eisner, 1978; Abbs, 1982). In the process of transforming the subjective into objective representations, the artist follows the impulse to image with "its desire for reflection, a desire for an image which will hold, comprehend and complete" (Abbs, p. 40). Thus, activities which enable children to formulate their subjective responses to literature would appear to positively affect development of literacy (Morrow, 1988; Pellegrini and Galda, 1982).

2.4 Narrative: Linking Thought and Experience

Narrative is one of the oldest forms of communication. Some researchers have emphasized the importance of narrative in literacy development (Applebee, 1978; Cates, 1979; Wells, 1983). Theories of narrative come from the fields of psychology, aesthetics, literary criticism and literature education. Narrative in its broadest sense consists of both form and content—form being the narrative
discourse system rooted in structuralism, and content being human experiences of
the past, present and future.

Narrative theory describes two levels of narrative—as art in literature and
as everyday thinking in storying (Bruner, 1986; Rosen, 1983). A culture's literature
continues the verbal structures of distilled collective feelings, thoughts and
actions (Bruner, 1986; Rosen, 1983). Rosenblatt (1968) says that the "province of
literature is all that man has felt, thought and created" (p. 288). On the other
hand, the province of our personal stories are necessarily more limited to
individual experiences. Our personal stories are verbal embodiments of our
experiences (Bruner, 1986; Wells, 1983), as well as frameworks, or what Wells
(1983) calls mental models, from which we negotiate meaning of new
experiences. Rosen (1987) sees the self as synonymous with one's personal
stories when he says "we are the stories we tell and the stories we could tell"
(p. 3).

Narratology is the structural study of narrative in order to understand "how
recurrent elements, themes and patterns yield a set of universals that determine
the makings of a story" (Pradl, 1983, p.1). Narratology arose from the recognition
of narrative as a "primary act of mind" (Hardy, 1977) and as a "cognitive
resource" (Rosen, 1983). Whereas literature is narrative elevated to an art,
storying is the process people engage in everyday both to make sense of their
experiences and to interpret them to others.

For we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate,
hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip,
learn, hate and love by narrative. In order to really live, we make up
stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as the
social past and future. (Hardy, 1977, p. 7)
In addition to storying being a cognitive resource, Wells (1983) claims that storying is also the "means whereby we enter a shared world, which is continually broadened and enriched by the exchange of stories with others" (p. 196). Within the bounds of narrative theory, people create their own stories as well as listen to the stories of others. In this way, listening and responding to the stories of others increases personal, social and cultural experiences in the familiar narrative form. It follows that experiences with stories "involve learning the variety of conventions which govern discourse in this mode, within the cultural group of which the child is a part" (Applebee, 1983, p. 92). It appears that in the narrative mode, form and content are combined in a way that provides the most accessible, engaging and meaningful resource for constructing the self in society.

2.5 The Readerly Text and Reading

Traditional theories of reading and writing focused on passive perceptual, linguistic, decoding, and encoding skills. Reader response theory and research (Holland, 1975; Purves, 1968, 1972; Squire, 1964) elevated the status of the reader to being at least equal to that of the author as embodied in the structure of the text (Richards, 1929). The autonomous text, celebrated by New Criticism, was balanced by a newly active, responsible reader. Reader response researchers and literary theorists, who viewed reading as the reconstruction of meaning through a series of negotiations between the text and the reader, prompted research and theorizing into the deep structures of literacy (Barthes, 1974; Bruner, 1986; Iser, 1978, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978).
Familiarity with the conventions of narrative discourse along with a meaningful connection with the experiences evoked in literature, opened a door to the relationship between literature and literacy (Fox, 1983; Meek, 1982; Sulzby, 1985; Wells, 1985). In this view, the reader not only decodes the deep structures of language and thought, but encodes understanding of those structures. Iser (1978) claims that "the reader receives the text by composing it" (p. 24). Iser’s (1978, 1980) concepts of the "implied reader" and "telling gaps" gave a new role to the reader as a recreator. In the same vein, Barthes (1974) says the "greatest texts allow for rewriting by the reader" (p. 37). By implication, the ability to write, or compose, became an important component of the transactional reading process. These theories and studies led to recommended instructional practices for the development of literacy that are generally grouped under the paradigms of emergent literacy, whole language and literature based reading programs.

2.6 Theories and Programs

Emergent literacy theory emphasizes a generative view of literacy and the formation of conceptual understandings of literacy before formal reading and writing instruction (Clay, 1976; Teale, 1982, 1986). Whole language programs are grounded on the importance of contextualized and purposeful learning, using real books and real writing, along with the child’s natural approach to complete language structures rather than to isolated and abstracted linguistic items (Altwerger, Edelsky and Flores, 1987; Goodman, 1986). Both programs encourage and value the writing process and, in early childhood, drawing and other visual forms of representation. These representations are regarded as the child’s means of giving form to his understanding of the linguistic and cognitive structures of literary experiences within a meaningful context.
Literature based reading programs extend the significance of affective-cognitive relationships in learning to experiences with literature. One reason for using literature instead of basal readers is related to comprehension. It appears that story structure influences comprehension (Stein and Trabasso, 1982). The story structures in literature are more various and more clearly developed than the story structures in basal readers (Morrow, 1982). Consequently, children should have more success comprehending literature as well as more success developing strategies which will allow them to predict patterns of events in other stories.

Literature response programs assume that frequent, emotionally satisfying literary experiences affect the child's qualitative responses to a book (Meek, 1983, Rosenblatt, 1968, 1978; Sloan, 1975). Implicit in this assumption is that literacy is more than the mechanical acts of reading and writing. Rosenblatt (1978) says that the literate person engages in an "event" as he negotiates a sensitive and intelligent transaction with a text. A reader not only brings emotions, but a "series of structures of knowledge" (based on experiences as a member of a cognitive and cultural community) about language and thought to a text. The quality of the reader's involvement, participation and understanding of new texts increases in relation to the quality of previous experiences with texts (Rosenblatt, 1968, 1978; Sloan, 1985; Wells, 1983). Britton (1968) describes the central notion of this process as "an increasing sense of literary form" where we find satisfaction in a greater range and diversity of works, and particularly as we find satisfaction in works which, by their complexity of the subtlety of their distinctions, their scope or their unexpectedness, make greater and greater demands upon us (p. 5).
2.7 Reader Response: Theory

Theory in reader response has provided educators with a framework for perceiving reading as organized responses—responses to how language structures experience as well as to language structures themselves. Rosenblatt (1978) makes it clear that responses are indeed composed during the reading process when she says that it is "the structured responses to the text by the reader, not the words alone, which constitute the literary work of art" (p. 16). She proposes a continuum upon which readers' responses fall, shift and vacillate according to the particular context of the immediate reading as well as past experiences, both personal and literary. She labels the two ends of the continuum the aesthetic and efferent stances. Rosenblatt (1983) describes these two stances in relation to the reading act. "In the aesthetic transaction, the reader's attention is focused on what he is living through during the reading event" (p. 25). "In efferent (nonaesthetic) reading, the reader's attention is centered on what should be retained as a residue after the actual reading event" (p. 24).

Although the aesthetic stance remains the primary response and is the nucleus of more meaningful readings, such cognitive abilities as organization, interpretation and explanation of a text enhance the total literary experience. Miller (1980) says that "until the student learns to make ordered readings, literature will only be a mirror which reflects back our own preconceptions, not a window through which to look at experiences that are new and different (p. 47). In this light, Britton (1979) distinguishes between the spectator and participant roles that readers take. In the role of the spectator, the reader may be engaged emotionally and intellectually in a literary work, but nevertheless has no direct involvement in its events (Corcoran, 1987, p. 17). People take the
participant role in everyday life as they act directly on the world. This is the stance readers normally adopt with expository texts, accepting or rejecting the evidence presented to them.

2.8 An Overview of Research in Reader Response

Research in children’s response to literature is in its infancy. Implicit in a reconception of the reading process is the continued understanding of what constitutes response. Rosenblatt (1983) says that

studies should be made of the kinds of elements in a written or oral response that can be judged to reflect the inward-looking synthesizing activities which lead to the crystallization of a sense of the work (p. 46).

Early research in reader response, during the 1960’s and early 1970’s (Holland, 1975, Purves, 1968, 1972; Squire, 1974), was based on a cognitively oriented definition of response. Purves and Beach (1972) state "response consists of cognition, perception and some emotional or attitudinal reaction" (p. 178). Using inventory and survey data collection methods, the studies just named began the immense task of identifying and coding responses to literature from adults and young adults.

Purves’s (1968) study of literature education in ten countries concluded that "schools appear to train students how to order their responses to what they read and appear to bind the students to a single set of concepts" (1974, p. 70). Thus, Purves’ message to educators is to be aware of "indoctrination in literature" and instead of "imposing one structure or several structures . . . . . to place before the students the variety of structures so that they might apply them to the variety of literary works they read" (1974, p. 70). Squire’s (1964) finding that expressions of personal involvement with a story correlated with
expressions of literary judgement indicates that text selection for beginning readers is important to literary development. Likewise, Meek (1982) emphasizes the importance of initial reading experiences to future attitudes about literature.

Applebee's (1978) work concluded that children's patterns of evaluation of literature are constrained by their current stage of intellectual development. According to Applebee, children in the preoperational stage are characterized by more subjective, simplistic responses than children in the concrete operations stage, the latter give evidence of more objective differentiation, ordering and classifying of response patterns. Likewise, Bunbury (1979) reports that children ages nine to eleven answered more inferential questions about stories than children ages seven to nine, who answered questions more frequently at the concrete operational level—i.e. referentially. However, Bunbury did note that teachers tended to ask more literal questions than inferential questions of younger children.

As the definition of literacy expanded to include emergent literacy, response studies began to be conducted with young children. Recent reader response studies (Hickman, 1981; Kiefer, 1983) also differ from past studies in their use of ethnographic methods of gathering and analyzing data. In this way, these researchers are exploring and enlarging the definition of response by describing the behaviors of young children in naturalistic literary environments.

Hickman (1981) was one of the first researchers to document young children's primary responses to literature. In her analysis of data, she classified verbal and nonverbal reactions as "response events." These categorizations were: listening behaviors, contact with books, acting on impulse to share, oral responses, actions and drama, making things and writing.
Kiefer's (1983) study on the conditions of artistic literacy relate to environmental influences of literacy development. Among the findings from her study is that the setting in which responses occurred was the key to the richness and depth of the response. "Children seemed to need time, a variety of materials and, most important, a teacher or other adult who was able to develop their early responses instead of stifling them" (p. 19-20). In particular, the teacher helped the children to "look beneath the surface" in all aspects of their thinking, "her comments did not instruct so much as they encouraged children to discover on their own," the teacher "never asked the children what they liked; instead she asked them to compare or comment or express feelings" and "her questions were always open-ended" (p. 19). As Purves (1974) found 10 years earlier, "the teacher tends to be a major force in influencing the student's choice of critical approach" (p. 69) to literature.

2.9 Story Reading and Adult Interactive Behaviors

As reported earlier, a body of literature is beginning to accumulate about adult interactive roles during story reading. Investigations have looked at specific adult interaction behavior (Flood, 1977; Ninio and Bruner, 1978; Roser and Martinez, 1985), the relationship between adult interactive behavior and child responses (Heath, 1982) and the relationship of story reading to literacy development (Shanahan and Hogan, 1983; Wells, 1985). The majority of studies have focused on one-to-one parent to child book reading sessions at home. Although conclusions from these studies were based on one-to-one interactions, there are possible implications for classroom story reading. Currently, there is little research looking at teacher interaction behaviors during group storytime (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Roser and Martinez, 1985).
2.10 General Conclusions of Storyreading Activities

Storytime is a social activity occurring between adult and child centering on a written text. During storytime, the child participates with an adult in an intentional construction of meaning (Sulzby, 1985). The child, by virtue of his predisposition and experience with narrative brings certain expectations to the story experience. The adult anchors an interaction around the story on the child’s narrative expectations. Through oral exchange, specifically through negotiation and mediation, the adult assists the child to make sense of the immediate text (Scollon and Scollon, 1981; Snow and Ninio, 1986). On another level, however, the adult enables the child to apply knowledge of literary structures from past story readings as well as form and extend awareness of new and emerging structures (Teale, 1984).

2.11 Some Specific Findings of Storyreading Activities

Some positive adult interactive behaviors which research has identified include "questioning, scaffolding, dialogue and responses, offering praise or positive feedback, giving or extending information, directing discussion, sharing personal reactions, and relating concepts to life experiences" (Morrow, 1988, p. 92). Furthermore, there appears to be a relationship between the number and quality of the child’s storytime experiences (as indicated by the level and independence of responses) and the amount and kinds of adult interactive behaviors (Heath, 1982; Bloome, 1985; Morrow, 1988).

These studies also report certain patterns in storyreading behaviors. Over time, an adult changes from expecting interruptions to expecting listening, from
supporting dialogue during the reading to asking comprehension type questions at
the end, and from asking literal questions to asking more inferential questions.

Morrow (1988) observed another characteristic pattern of the evolving
interaction between child and adult. She found that children's responses began to
reflect the adult's interactive behaviors—i.e. the child internalizes the adult
behavior. Consequently, the child gradually assumes more control of the literary
transaction, being less dependent on the adult. Likewise, the adult decreases the
management and prompting interactive behaviors and increases the informing and
sustaining interactive behaviors. Also, the child's responses change from
constructing meaning at a literal level to constructing meaning at a more
interpretative level which in turn increases interest in story structure and print. In
sum, Morrow found that using specific adult interaction behaviors during story
reading increased the child's verbal participation and complexity of verbal
interchange.

2.12 The Key to the Beginning: The Evocation

Bogdan (1986) describes the condition of literary stasis as "that ideal state
of imaginative identity with the literary object, typified by the fusion of intellect
and emotion...a coalescence of Rosenblatt's aesthetic and efferent readings" (p.
52). Rosenblatt calls this condition the "evocation." It is the evocation of a
literary work of art that readers respond to both during and after the aesthetic
transaction. Evocation includes both emotional and intellectual processes, thus
critical response can operate even at this subjective level. And since the
evocation is a transactional process, understanding this process as an educator
implies knowing about the relationship between the experiences of the reader and
the "types of imagery, social assumptions and basic emotional structures, as well as linguistic patterns, offered by specific texts" (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 43).

At the opposite end of the continuum of reader response is deconstructionism. The deconstructivists, or post-structuralists, see literature as an "ideologically constructed field of discourse and thus a cultural construct... the nature of this construct is what should engage students and teachers of literature" (Corcoran, 1987, p. 249). In this way, deconstructionism takes the New Criticism one step further. The reader is not just equal with the text, but is its master.

Applebee (1983), Corcoran (1987) and Rosenblatt (1983) caution against crediting idiosyncratic interpretations of literary works of art at the cost of violating the underlying structural conventions. There are certain criteria which make an interpretative response valid, rather than "correct" or "incorrect". Rosenblatt (1983) says that "clarification of the criteria being applied—not necessarily the consensus—is the basis of critical communication" (p. 49).

2.13 Summary

A review of the literature indicates a strong relationship between literature and literacy. The relationship is complex and complicated to study. More needs to be known about why storyreading activities are important to literacy development in general and to reading in particular.

There is seemingly conclusive evidence that storyreading at home and storyreading in school positively affect children's literacy development. The ways in which adults affirm and support children's narrative expectations of the story
experience is the pivotal point around which children continue to develop meaning making resources.

This ability to take meaning from stories is now being viewed within the context of literature comprehension as social and cultural interaction. That is, educators are acknowledging the theory that written language, like oral language, is a symbolic form of various social and cultural constructs which must be learned. Some of these constructs are unique to literature and some are learned in experiences outside of literature. As the reader learns more complex forms of these constructs, he/she is able to interact with and comprehend more complex stories.

Reader response theory is based on reading as a form of interaction. The reader is involved in the process of communication and needs time and encouragement to respond—either efferently or aesthetically or both. Studies in reader response report that individuals employ a variety of strategies for different texts and at different times to negotiate meaning with the text.

Research in narrative suggests that certain forms of written language are composed of structures which young children use more easily than others to make sense of stories. Emergent literacy theory proposes that young children become literate as they make the transition between oral language and the new, more complex symbol system of written language. Therefore, when children listen to narrative fiction, this transition is easily effected because children are usually experiencing literary language in oral narratives. Adult-child storybook interactions with narrative provide rich opportunities to experience and respond to more complex literary structures.
To conclude, current research and theory support a view of literacy that emphasizes reading as active communication centering around psychological, social and cultural constructs. In order to participate in the process and take meaning from the story, the child must develop inherent knowledge about narrative—psychologically, socially and culturally. In this way, a child extends their abilities to engage in increasingly meaningful transactions with the deep structures of language and thought as they are represented in written language.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Young children come to school with a variety of experiences with stories. They have heard stories told to them and read to them. They have heard stories from books and stories from personal experience. They have heard real stories and they have heard fantasy stories. And they have made their own stories; in pictures, in words, and in their imaginations. This study is based on the knowledge that children have about stories. Specifically, this study addresses the question of how teachers can affirm what children know about stories as well as how to support the development of their literary knowledge. It is the hypothesis of this study that reading selected books and practicing specific teacher interaction behaviors will increase the range of responses that children make to stories during group storytime.

3.2 The Research Question

Will kindergarten children who have group storybook reading experiences guided by specific teacher behaviors and using selected books elicit more frequent critical responses during group storyreading than kindergarten children who have had nonspecific teacher guided storybook reading experiences with random books?
3.3 **Hypotheses**

There were three null hypotheses arising from the general research question:

3.3.1 **Hypothesis I:**

There will be no statistically significant difference in the number of interpretative responses as measured on an author adapted test of literary knowledge, regardless of the kind of book read and regardless of the kinds of teacher interaction behaviors practiced.

3.3.2 **Hypothesis II:**

There will be no statistically significant difference in the number of evaluative responses as measured on an author adapted test of literary knowledge, regardless of the kind of book read and regardless of the kinds of teacher interaction behaviors practiced.

3.3.3 **Hypothesis III:**

There will be no interaction between the two variables, book and treatment.

3.4 **Design**

The method used in this study was a pretest-posttest nonequivalent control group quasi experimental design. This design is depicted by Wiersma (1986, p. 143).

\[ G_1 \longrightarrow O_1 \longrightarrow X \longrightarrow O_2 \]

\[ G_2 \longrightarrow O_3 \longrightarrow \longrightarrow O_4 \]

G=Group

O=Observation

X=Treatment Variable

The independent variable for this study was the use or nonuse of selected books along with the use or nonuse of specific teacher interaction behaviors during
group storytime. The dependent variable was the frequency of interpretative and evaluative responses expressed by a group as measured by the pretest posttest differences.

3.5 Subjects

Both groups of subjects came from upper middle class professional families and were enrolled in either the morning or afternoon kindergarten class of their neighborhood school in Vancouver, British Columbia. These groupings were chosen to minimize differences between the groups in terms of socioeconomic status, attitudes towards school, educational background experiences (e.g. preschool, home literacy activities), classroom environments and experiences (one teacher planned and executed the same activities and used the same materials for both groups), teacher style and personality, and classroom behavioral expectations.

There was a total of 54 subjects in the two groups. The morning class, the nontreatment group, consisted of 27 subjects, 13 boys and 14 girls with a mean age of 5.7 years. The afternoon class, the treatment group, consisted of 27 subjects, 14 boys and 13 girls with a mean age of 5.6 years. There was one English as a Second Language child in the control group and three English as a Second Language child in the treatment group. Statistical analysis, using t-test measures, of the District Elementary Assessment Program scores (administered at the beginning of the school year to predict reading performance) prior to the treatment showed that the groups were not different (Appendix 6).
3.6 The Testing Instrument of Literary Knowledge

A matrix adapted from Fillion (1981), composed of seven literary elements and four levels of knowledge, was chosen as the testing instrument (Appendix 1). The purpose of this instrument was to organize the data as it was received, not to test the children in the true sense of the word. The literary elements and a definition of each element as they were used in the study follow:

**Events, Plot:** the plan of action in a story.

**Characters, Relationships:** the people or animals who carry out the plot, directly or indirectly.

**Setting, Mood, Atmosphere:** the geographic location and time in which story takes place.

**Images:** the illustrations in the book.

**Ideas, Themes:** the underlying idea that ties the plot, characterization and setting together into a meaningful whole.

**Language, Style, Structure:** the way(s) in which an author uses words and sentences to develop a story.

The ways of understanding these elements—i.e. types of knowledge—are as follows:

**Factual:** knowledge which identifies literal information about a story.

**Personal Associations and Significance:** knowledge which relates the reader’s (or listener’s) feelings or experiences to emotions or events in a story.

**Interpretative:** knowledge which indicates awareness of the literary elements to make sense of the story beyond the literal level. This includes inferring meaning, predicting or anticipating outcomes and perceiving emotional reactions of characters.


**Evaluative**: knowledge which extends the ability to interpret literary elements into the ability to form an opinion on the use of the literary elements and to apply knowledge of literary elements in general to increase comprehension of a particular story. This does not mean that the knowledge has to refer to a literary element by name, but rather that it refer to an element by linking it to the same element in another story, or by explaining the author’s use of the elements and their relationships within the context of the particular story. In sum, evaluative knowledge reflects analysis and synthesis.

This matrix was chosen because of its conventional categories of both literary structures and critical thinking. The literary elements and levels of knowledge about these elements are representative of both the goals of traditional literature education as well as conventional measures of literary knowledge. Normally, an understanding of literature based on these elements is not included in the curriculum until the later elementary grades. However, experts in the field of literature education (Applebee, 1978; Hardy, 1979; Rosen, 1983; Wells, 1983) believe that young children possess some implicit knowledge about these aspects of literature by virtue of their experiences with stories.

The testing instrument for this study was originally designed as a possible guide for teachers of an inquiry approach to literature (Fillion, 1985). For this investigation, the instrument was adapted in the following ways: to a group rather than to individuals, to kindergarten children rather than to older students, and within a class storytime context where the children are listeners rather than readers. The modified directions for use were to categorize the spontaneous responses of the group, as expressed during class storytime, according to the elements and types of knowledge represented in the matrix. The storytimes were videotaped then transcribed thus providing a complete record of all responses.
3.7 Testing Procedures

Both groups' responses were examined in a pretest and a posttest period. Pretest and posttest periods consisted of the classroom teacher reading three different selected books, one book per day over a period of three consecutive days per test. Thus the total number of pretest and posttest storytimes was six. The classroom teacher conducted these six storytimes in her usual manner within the context of the already established group storytimes. These storytimes were videotaped and transcribed for data analysis. Responses were classified according to the literary categories and types of knowledge on the testing instrument.

Every effort was made to insure the naturalness of the testing sessions in order that responses be as uninhibited and spontaneous as possible. As mentioned before, storytime was part of the daily routine. No changes were made to the time of day, seating arrangements, behavioral expectations, storyreader (the classroom teacher) or storytelling style. The teacher was given the pretest and posttest books in advance as it was her style to be familiar with the text before reading it to the class.

The video camera was the only intrusion into this part of the classroom program. The camera was set up at the side of the group to be as unobtrusive as possible. The person doing the filming had taught young children for several years, and had extensive experience doing video recording as part of her job and in her own research. Her experience and sensitivity helped to insure that the normal course of class events and dynamics would be maintained despite the camera. In order to minimize the possibility that the camera would be a distracting presence, before the pretest, several storytimes were videotaped in order that the children would get used to the equipment.
3.8 Treatment and Nontreatment Group Procedures

Both groups continued to have their storytimes at the usual time and in the usual place. However, the researcher rather than the classroom teacher conducted the storytimes. The researcher had been practicing the kinds of interactions directed to eliciting critical response from children in her own classroom for many years, and was of the opinion that there would not be enough time to train the classroom teacher to conduct the treatment storytimes in this manner. Since the thesis of this study was that the development of the children's critical response to literature is influenced by reading selected books as well as by practicing specific teacher interaction behaviors, it was necessary to insure both factors were in operation.

For a period of ten consecutive days, the researcher read selected books and practiced specific interaction behaviors with the treatment group. The selected books illustrated the three literary structures which the three pretest and three posttest books highlighted: genre, form and motif.

For the same ten days, the researcher read random books and did not practice specific interaction behaviors with the nontreatment group. The researcher had observed the classroom teacher prior to the study, as well as on the pretest videos, in order to maintain a similar format and style to the teacher in her interactions with the nontreatment group.

In the nontreatment group, the researcher did not make the same kind of effort to extend and enrich the children's responses as she did with the treatment group. Instead, the stories were read in a straightforward but friendly manner. Storytime was not structured toward substantiative question asking or
dialogue. Rather, responses tended to be acknowledged on a factual or confirmational level. Interaction tended to center around the immediate text relating either to story information ("I know what is going to happen." . "You do? Let's see.") or personal significance("I know this story— I had it from the library." . "Did you like it?")

In the treatment group, the researcher tried to channel the children's responses into opportunities for interpretative and evaluative thinking. For example, when one child expressed surprise at what he felt to be a sudden ending of one story, instead of simply acknowledging his surprise or confirming that yes, indeed, that was the end, the researcher asked for the child's idea of a more satisfying ending. (He responded with both an original ending and a reason for his version.)

As well as extending thinking based on the text at hand, the researcher introduced a variety of resources to stimulate the children's interest, pleasure, and knowledge about literature in general. For example, the researcher modeled enthusiasm for discovering similarities between stories, finding other legends at home or at the library, making connections between the outside world and literature and feeling the joy of being a storymaker. In all aspects of their experiences with literature, the children in the treatment group were encouraged to share their questions and comments at home and at school through a variety of mediums such as story retellings, drawing, interpretative gesturing, music (recording of wolf cries) and special objects related to the literature (such as the "loon coin" with The Loon's Necklace).

During each treatment period, the classroom teacher attended to other jobs and was either out of the room or in the back of the large L shaped room in a
position from which she could not observe. It was important that she remain as neutral as possible during the treatment phase of the study to minimize the possibility of changing her behaviors during the posttest.

All ten of both the treatment and nontreatment group sessions were videotaped. During this phase of the study, the camera was set up on a tripod, focused on the researcher and the children closest to her, then switched on automatic. The data from these tapes was used for a qualitative analysis of children’s response to literature. As well, data from these tapes provided insights into how to improve a study of this nature and suggested areas for further study.

3.9 Materials

Six illustrated storybooks were selected for the pretest and posttest readings. The books were chosen on the bases of the following criteria: imaginative appeal, clarity of literary elements (as described by the matrix instrument), and suitability of length (the researcher observed the class prior to the study in order to judge the groups’ attention spans). The pretest and posttest books corresponded to the three literary structures which formed the core of the treatment literature. These literary structures were genre (legend), form (cumulative tale) and motif (related theme). (Appendix 2 and Appendix 4)

3.10 Scoring

The pretest and posttest storytimes were videotaped then transcribed for analysis by the researcher. All responses were first categorized according to
literary element then classified according to type of knowledge. Thus, frequency of critical response was determined by the matrix. Examples of the categorized responses are included in the appendix (Appendix 5).

In the process of categorizing the pretest responses, the researcher noted patterns of responses which were not contained in the original matrix. Therefore, three other categories of literary elements were added: format, story and personal knowledge. Responses which did not fit into any of the ten categories of literary elements were not counted. However, fewer than 5% did not fit. Out of an average of 70 responses per story for each group, an average of three responses were labelled "idiosyncratic" and not considered for classification. The majority of responses fit clearly into one category or another.

Upon examination of the data, the author saw the need for developing precise definitions and descriptions of the categorizations of response. This was particularly true regarding the interpretative and evaluative levels of thinking. For example, interpretative responses indicated thought beyond the surface structure of the text. Evaluative responses indicated thinking at the most critical level by being able to explain the interpretative responses in such ways as linking past inferences to new insights and noting similarities and differences with other texts. To insure accuracy of the coding, two trained assistants—one experienced primary grade teacher and one Masters of English Education student—categorized two-thirds of the data. There was an interrater reliability of .85.
3.11 Statistical Design and Analysis

Group responses were hand coded then translated to computer usable codes. This process was necessary for them to be machine scored by the computer program **Biomedical Data Package** (University of California, 1981).

The responses were first divided into the treatment and nontreatment groups. Using the Vancouver School Board District Elementary Assessment (DRP) scores, t-tests were conducted to insure that the groups were not different (Appendix 6). The groups were found not different at the .05 level of significance.

Next, the responses from the group were divided into four categories: 1) factual, those responses echoing the details in the story; 2) personal significance, those responses indicating an emotional or experiential relationship to the emotions or events in the story; 3) interpretative, those responses signifying awareness of literary structures found in the story; and 4) evaluative, those responses using knowledge of literary structures in general to comprehend the story.

Of particular interest in this study were the interpretative and evaluative responses. For purposes of analysis, these variables were transformed into percentage scores by expressing each score as a percentage of all scores combined:

\[
\text{Interpretative} = \frac{\text{Interpretative}}{(\text{Factual} + \text{Interpretative} + \text{Personal} + \text{Evaluative})} \times 100
\]
\[
\text{Evaluative} = \frac{\text{Evaluative}}{(\text{Factual} + \text{Interpretative} + \text{Personal} + \text{Evaluative})} \times 100
\]
Following this transformation, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using treatment/nontreatment grouping (GROUP) and Pretest/Posttest grouping (STORY) as the independent variables, and the interpretative (INTPER) and evaluative (EVALPER) response scores attained on the critical response matrix instrument as the dependent variables (Table 1). The treatment/nontreatment grouping (GROUP) is defined as the morning group versus the afternoon group. The Pretest/Posttest grouping (STORY) is defined as the three pretest stories versus the three posttest stories. Another design was tried by adding a grouping (ITEM) to the existing GROUP and STORY groupings. ITEM is comprised of the ten categories of literary elements on the matrix instrument. Although this design generated some statistically significant results, the results are questionable as there were only three responses per cell.

Finally, the groups were measured to see if it made any difference which group (GROUP) worked with which story (STORY).

Table 1

2x2 ANOVA Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>Nontreatment</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group (O)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STORY</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 0=Observations |

37
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

4.1 Summary of the Problem

This investigation was carried out in an attempt to explore the effect of selected books and teacher interaction behaviors on kindergarten children's ability to critically respond to a story during group storyreading. The independent variable was the use or nonuse of selected books along with the use or nonuse of specific teacher interaction behaviors (STORY and GROUP). The dependent variables were the percentages of interpretative (INTPER) and evaluative (EVALPER) responses as defined on an author adapted matrix of critical response. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the significance of differences in scores.

4.2 Statistical Results

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the data using the computer program, Biomedical Data Package (University of California, 1983) running on the AMDAHL V8 mainframe computer at the University of British Columbia.

An analysis of variance was used to determine whether or not there was a statistically significant difference (at .05 level) between the percentage of interpretative (INTPER) and evaluative (EVALPER) responses of the nontreatment group and the treatment group (GROUP), and between the pretest and posttest (STORY) scores.
4.3 Tests of Hypothesis 1:

4.3.1 Null Hypothesis:

There will be no statistically significant difference in the number of interpretative responses as measured on the author adapted test of literary knowledge, regardless of the kind of text read or the kinds of teacher interaction behaviors practiced.

Based on the findings in Table 2, the first null hypothesis related to treatment effect was accepted. Interpretative response scores between pretest and posttest and between nontreatment group and treatment group were not affected by the experimental treatment.

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Dependent Variable—INTPER (percentage of interpretative responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sums of squares</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>205.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>205.33</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>169.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>169.01</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.G.</td>
<td>983.99</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>983.99</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>119936.34</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1153.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05
4.4 Tests of Hypothesis II:

4.4.1 Null Hypothesis:

There will be no statistically significant difference in the number of evaluative responses as measured by an author adapted test of literary knowledge, regardless of the kind of text read or the kinds of teacher interaction behaviors practiced.

As can be seen in Table 3, the observed level of .0500 was equal to the critical value at the chosen .05 level of significance at the GROUP level. Evaluative response scores between the control and the experimental groups were affected by the treatment, favoring the treatment group over the nontreatment group. The null hypothesis was accepted at the STORY level and rejected at the GROUP level.

Table 3

Analysis of Variance for Dependent Variable—EVALPER (percentage of evaluative responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sums of squares</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1487.47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1487.47</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.G.</td>
<td>361.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>361.66</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>39339.67</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>378.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < .05
4.5 Tests of Hypothesis III:

4.5.1 Null Hypothesis:

There will be no interaction between the two variables GROUP (treatment and nontreatment groups) and STORY (pretest and posttest groups).

As seen in Table 2 and Table 3, the STORY/GROUP (S/G) interaction was not significant for both dependent variables. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was accepted.

4.6 Qualitative Findings

A purely statistical reading of the data arising from this study would result in an incomplete record of the findings. Other studies show that determining response in young children can be more of a qualitative process than a quantitative one. Fillion (1981) regarded his problem-finding matrix as a guide to assessing the other more subjective component of critical reading—reflection. "The assessment of students' development as problem-finders in literature is essentially a more focused elaboration of the procedures we might use to determine the growth of reflectiveness" (p. 43). Young children are particularly difficult to assess; ". . . their responses to literature may indeed be lively, discriminating, and complex, but it will be no help to them to attempt to formulate those responses" (Britton, 1968, p. 5). Thus, there is a need to include a report of the behaviors related to critical response which were observed during the course of this study, but which are not indicated on the testing instrument.

Most of the content for the following qualitative findings of this investigation come from observations and video recordings of the treatment
sessions, rather than from the posttest sessions. The schedule of the posttest stories was followed as planned, regardless of the questions and comments from the previous day. In contrast, the order of treatment stories was not fixed. The researcher had a large store of selected literature related to the focal themes of legend, common motif and cumulative pattern (Appendix 4). As stories were read to the class or shared with interested individuals, they remained available to anyone either during school and/or for taking home overnight. The specific order of the treatment stories evolved based on the children's response. An integral part of the treatment was this very fluidity which allowed for such variables as personal contributions, time to extend ideas, opportunities to reflect on the story, to hear it again, and to discuss it with classmates and family. Thus the nature of the treatment sessions permitted a gathering of data most conducive to a qualitative analysis of the topic.

4.7 Observations of the Response Process

Informal observations during the pretest, treatment and posttest storytimes indicated that the initial personal and emotional response to the story seemed to set the stage for later intellectual response. Squire (1964) also found a relationship between students' personal response to a story and their intellectual understanding of it. The researcher observed that the children in this study made more responses after the storyreading than during the storygroup. Many responses came during the free play period following the story, the next day, and even up to the last day of the study as the children applied their past knowledge to new understandings. The researcher tried to establish either an intellectual or emotional (including imaginative or personal) stance towards the literary form or story content as part of the introduction to the treatment stories. The three
literary forms used in the study—legend, cumulative pattern, and common motif—were frequently pointed out to the children as part of the introduction to a story and as a way of focusing response as they listened to the story. Likewise, the researcher directed the children's attention to meaningful connections with the content of a story; suggesting the possibility of comparable personal experiences, invoking questions about the setting or the intentions of a character, or querying if anyone knew other stories with similar content.

**Examples of Imaginative Stance:** The researcher introduced legends to the treatment group by evoking a personal and imaginative listening context. To help remove the children's dependency on the book as an artifact, and to emphasize the power of the story and story making, the researcher encouraged the children to visualize about the beginnings of things. "Close your eyes and see the blackness of the sky without the sun and the moon and the stars . . . but how did they get there?" "Close your eyes and hear the silence of the forest . . . how did the cries and songs of the animals come to be?" "Close your eyes and feel the coldness of the world without heat . . . how did man get fire?"

**Examples of Intellectual Stance:** As the children became familiar with the concept of legend, the researcher would say "Listen to the story and see why this story is a legend;" or when emphasizing language structures, "Listen to how this story is like *This is the House that Jack Built;" or when focusing on the concept of related themes, "Listen to hear how this story is like any other story you know."

Children in both groups spontaneously generated visual and oral responses to the pretest books. The classroom teacher had not initiated any suggestions for follow up activities to the pretest stories which she read, but during free
choice time, several children did paintings and drawings of the whale and swan theme (first and second pretest books). After the first treatment story, *The Dancing Stars*, several children came the next day with their own ideas for legend questions. "Where did flowers come from?", "Where did dinosaurs come from?", "When was the first transformer?" Obviously, it was the concept of sources of legends rather than the accuracy of specific ideas that were important.

The quantity and quality of response developed rapidly in the treatment group. Children reported knowing other legend stories, described them and some brought the books in. One child told two stories her grandmother told her at her cottage. This was an opportunity to establish the agelessness of legends. We talked about how when the stories were first told there was no reading and writing and ways to record the stories. One boy said that he had seen pictures in a book about how people used to draw animal stories on the walls of caves. The researcher then introduced the children to the concept of the constellations as one of the first ways of finding and telling stories. On a large sky map, the children easily found familiar shapes such as Orion, Ursa Major and the Seven Sisters. But no one knew that Orion was a heroic character in an old story. After hearing about one of his adventures from the researcher, some children wanted to know if there was a book of Orion's story so they could take it home. The researcher answered that she did not have that particular "sky story", but she had another one about the Seven Sisters. In fact, she had two different storybooks about that constellation. She then read the group *The Dancing Stars* and afterwards, showed them a beautifully illustrated Northwest Coast version of the story. Both books were taken home that day.
The researcher explained that there are so many old stories and not very many of them got written down. And in fact the one that C's grandmother told is one of those. C. suggested that she and her grandmother could be the first to make that story into a book.

Building on these responses, that not all stories are in books, the researcher told rather than read a story the next day. No one seemed disturbed by the lack of illustrations as they listened and visualized How Raven Stole the Moon. An obvious follow up to the telling was to invite the children to represent the best part of the story. The researcher invited the children to draw their responses. As they finished and told the researcher about which part of the story they drew, they were asked to put their completed page in one of three piles representing either the beginning, middle or end of the story. The next day they were bursting with enthusiasm to see the assembled book. One boy had even independently designed a cover at home which he fitted to the book before the researcher read it to the class.

Responses continued to increase. One boy said he knew a different story about how the moon got in the sky. The researcher read two different African stories with this same theme. The children responded with the knowledge that now they knew four stories about how the moon got in the sky. One child predicted that there are "probably 100,000 moon stories."

One child said those stories "weren't true—that God made everything." The children discussed the issue of truth or accuracy and concluded that legend stories are so old that no one is alive today from the time when they were first told, so no one knows for sure about their authenticity (this explanation was later given by one child in answer to another child's concern about the
reality of the posttest story *Half-a-Ball-of-Kenki*).

During the treatment period, the researcher observed an evolving pattern of meaning construction in the children's behaviors and responses towards the stories, stories selected both by the teacher and by the children. In general, literary experiences during the treatment were of a recursive reflective nature rather than a linear, sequential one. The children constantly returned to the stories for pleasure and for confirming their understanding. The responses of the first readings would reoccur within new dimensions as the children had more opportunities to explore, reflect and refine their primary responses. For example, as the treatment group became familiar and comfortable with the concept of legend, they increasingly offered personal knowledge, thoughts and opinions about their understanding of legends. Referring back to stories shared in class, connecting past literary experiences with known legends, and simply spending time sharing legends read at home with peers and adults at school appeared to be a way of reinforcing and conceptualizing aesthetic experiences with literature.

4.8 Observations of the Use of the Research Instrument

Analysis of the pretest responses show that the fewest responses were in the following categories of literary elements: language/literary structures (except for *One Monday Morning*), ideas/themes and setting/mood/atmosphere (except for teacher directed responses to *One Monday Morning*). The most frequent responses at the pretest level were in the plot/events and imagery categories. These pretest observations were consistent with the time and energy spent by the teacher guiding the children's thinking in these literary elements. ("Let's see what happens" . . . "Look at what's happening here" . . . Look at the pictures and see

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In categorizing the pretest responses, it became necessary to develop three other categories of literary elements: format, story, and personal knowledge. Rather than discounting responses which did not fit the original matrix, the researcher decided to acknowledge some of the other ways the children were using to make the story meaningful.

Format included responses dealing with book title, name of author, name of illustrator, dedication, story divisions and layout of the pages. Story referred to responses that went beyond the literary work; more holistic responses than those related to the other more specific elements. For example, "I know that story" or "I had the story on a tape" fit into the personal level of this category. Expressing familiarity with the plot of the story was considered a factual response in the story category. For example, when *Half-a-Ball-of-Kenki* was introduced, one child responded, "Oh, how the leopard got its spots." An evaluative response in the story category is indicated by the child who responded "It's a legend story....... nobody's alive to tell if it's true or not."

Personal knowledge responses were those which did not relate directly to a literary element. Instead, they were responses which reflected the child's personal knowledge outside the story experience. For example, one girl's response to the metaphor "mad as a hornet" was a narrative about how her family once had a hornet's nest on their roof and her father sprayed it at night. Rather than dealing with the literary metaphor itself, this response was interpreted as personal knowledge outside the story. These responses were not judged to be invalid, but rather were acknowledged as a means of enhancing the story experience for the child. It was sometimes difficult to distinguish responses of pure personal
knowledge and those which could be classified as "personal significance/association" of a literary element. For example, "my student comes from Japan" was interpreted as reflecting the personal significance of the setting for that child. On the other hand, "my mom and dad speak Japanese" did not contribute directly to the child's knowledge of a particular literary element but did appear to enhance the child's personal experience with the story.

Information comprising the format category (e.g. title, dedication, author, illustrator, story divisions) was regularly included by the classroom teacher as part of the story experience. Although this is not part of the deep structures of the literary experience, this knowledge is part of a literary education and it should be introduced to the children. However, during the treatment sessions, the authors and illustrators were not regularly mentioned. A reason for knowing the author, illustrator, title, etc. arose spontaneously from the children as they gained control in formulating the story experience; offering their own endings, illustrating a story which hadn't been written down before, or adding books to the storytime library. Individuals asked questions ("Who wrote that?") and commented ("Hey, that's the same story except different people made the pictures" referring to *Sunflight* by McDermott and *Daedalus and Icarus* by Farmer) as the need for more knowledge grew. When categorizing this range of responses on the posttest, it became apparent that there could also be subsets within each category. However, although this was noted, the researcher felt finer degrees of classification would be too complicated for analysis in this study. An explanation of this possible subsetting process and some examples follow.

The interpretative category could include a range of responses. Many kinds of responses demonstrate inferential thinking to make meaning from the story. Some children can express their reasoning more articulately. For example, one
child predicted a way to resolve a problem with a character's plan to get married by using other events in the story. ("They should wear both—the gold and the dirty mattress" after seeing that either one on its own didn't seem to work). Another child had an equally valid idea about the solution, but was not as explicit in his verbal presentation of this thought. ("I know what's going to happen.") Likewise, the responses "Frog is a scaredy cat," "He's jealous" and "He wants to attract people" are ways that some children can articulate their insight into the motivation of a character whereas other responses interpret a character's actions more broadly. ("That's not nice.")

Likewise, the evaluative level of response could be seen as covering a range of ways that children can articulate their knowledge in this category. Whereas some children acknowledged likenesses within and between stories, others were able to explain differences. For example, the children who responded to Dawn "I knew it, I knew it was the same as the swan story" were evaluating the story by seeing the similarity of the plot with another story. Another child explained, "It's just like the swan story except backwards because she's bleeding at the first." It is important to note that children varied in their ability to articulate their understanding. Even individuals were not consistently either explanatory or declarative in their responses. That is, even within one storytime, an individual might explain a response more completely one time, and at another time might respond with a one word opinion ("That's good.")

4.9 Summary of Descriptive Results

Observations of the process of response showed that more responses occurred after the storyreading time than during that time. There appeared to be
a relationship between the imaginative or intellectual context in which the children first heard a story, and the later responses to a particular story, as well as to later responses to other stories. In other words, responses appeared to develop to individual stories as well as between stories within the original framework set by researcher. What Rosen (1983) refers to as "intertextuality" appeared to be a factor in bringing past literary experiences to new ones. The process of building upon responses was constant and interwoven with past story experiences. Responses were also interwoven between the individual and the group. Responses took a variety of behavioral forms, both oral and nonverbal. Finally, the development of literary knowledge was indicated by the increase in number of questions asked; comments made; offerings of personal knowledge; and representations of feelings and thoughts in such forms as drawing, gesture and music.

Observations of the use of the research instrument revealed that the majority of responses during the pretest were in the plot and imagery categories as consistent with the teacher's time and energy spent guiding children's thinking to these elements. Plot appeared to be the most salient element during one of the posttest stories as the children discovered similarities to the plots in several treatment books. During the treatment, the researcher had directed the children's responses to all of the literary elements, as well as encouraged them to express their knowledge in interpretative and evaluative, along with factual and personal ways.

It became necessary to include three new categories of literary elements—story, format and personal knowledge—in order to classify responses outside the categories of the original matrix. In listening to the children's responses, it became apparent that children expressed their ideas in various
degrees of oral explanation. Finally, there appeared to be a difference between child initiated responses about literary elements and children’s later independent use of the knowledge to understand.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of teacher interaction and quality of books upon critical response. The specific question posed in this study was, does a teacher reading selected texts and practicing specific teacher interaction behaviors during group storytime increase the frequency of critical responses children make about literary structures?

A review of the literature provides strong evidence of the relationship between interactive storyreading experiences and the development of literacy. Much of the research which led to these conclusions focused on the naturalistic behaviors of parents to affirm and extend the child’s literary knowledge during one-to-one storyreading interactions in the home. This had led to difficulties in how to interpret and apply these findings to the teacher–group storyreading interactions in a classroom setting. Results of this study suggest that response–based interactions about stories in a community setting can facilitate children’s knowledge about literature. Furthermore, it appears that the choice of book that the interaction centers around has implications for the kind and complexity of literary knowledge which the child will develop. In many ways, this study represents an interpretation and evaluation of one possible way of applying and combining the findings of one-to-one storybook interaction research and the factor of literature selection to a group’s ability to construct meaning from books.
Statistical results showed no significant difference of interpretative responses at either the treatment/nontreatment or pretest/posttest group level. The results of the difference in evaluative responses were divided at the treatment/nontreatment and pretest/posttest levels with a statistically significant (p < .05) difference in the treatment/nontreatment grouping. Finally, there was no statistically significant difference between the interaction of the two groupings.

Behaviors which were reported in the descriptive analysis indicated that the children actively and independently sought ways of constructing meaning from the stories. These constructions took a variety of forms, not necessarily all oral, and not limited to the storytime event. The children in the treatment group initiated, sustained and carried through responses which indicated that they drew on at least four different kinds of knowledge about literature—factual, personal, interpretative, and evaluative. The number and diversity of responses suggested that 1) the stories were aesthetically engaging to the extent that the children independently sought to extend their understanding of them outside the immediate context of storytime and 2) the interactions at storytime were effective to the degree of security and confidence the children felt in expressing their responses over time, as original thoughts, and as something worth sharing socially. In sum, observations from the nonempirical data suggest that young children are motivated to respond to literature in more various and thoughtful ways when the teacher reads selected books and interacts with the group in ways which facilitate the child's independent ability to understand stories.
5.2 Discussion of Statistical Findings

A statistically significant difference between the groups in evaluative responses, favoring the group which heard selected books and experienced specific teacher-storygroup interactions, was found to exist at the conclusion of the study. Analysis of the data showed that 75% of the treatment group's total number of posttest evaluative responses referred to their knowledge of a similar theme contained in several of the pretest, treatment and posttest books. The increase in evaluative responses given by the treatment group on the posttest needs to be examined in light of the specific story and the specific category in which they were coded. Of the 43 evaluative level responses elicited by the treatment group on the posttest, 27 were from the story, *Dawn*. Of these 27, 24 were in the plot/event category. Plot appears to be the strongest literary element as the children's responses in this category are based on recognition of the plot in *Dawn* being related to the plots in the treatment stories *The Crane Maiden* and *The Crane Wife*, as well as to the pretest story, *The Painted Swans*. In other words, repeated experiences with a specific plot structure appeared to positively affect knowledge about that element in other stories. Furthermore, repeated experiences also seemed to influence the degree to which children expressed what they knew about plot. Not only did the treatment group readily grasp the similarity of plots between the three stories, but they were able to articulate comparisons and contrasts.

No statistically significant difference was found between the groups in interpretative responses as a result of hearing selected books and experiencing specific teacher interactions during storytime. Both groups decreased their frequency of interpretative responses from the pretest to the posttest stories.
Observations from the descriptive analysis suggest that the factor of time may explain the lack of statistically significant differences of interpretative responses. If the study had been conducted over a longer period of time, the children could have had more opportunities to build their literary knowledge through frequent and repeated experiences with literature, as well as regular occasions to form their responses.

There were fewer teacher directed responses and more child initiated responses during the posttest than during the pretest. The teacher herself seemed to be more responsive to the power of the story and let it flow as a whole more so than she did with the pretest stories. Perhaps she was responding to the children's deep attention to the story. Listening is not a passive activity. Critical interaction with the text begins at a subjective level. Articulation of that interaction will most probably occur over time.

5.3 Discussion of Descriptive Findings

5.3.1 Introduction

Qualitative analysis of the study, particularly of the treatment period, lead to several interpretations, which concur with recent findings in the field. These interpretations relate to the formation of storyreading constructs for reading comprehension, the place of print or text awareness in literacy development, the relationship of narrative form to oral language, the value of repeated readings, and the interaction behaviors between adults and child which develop the child's ability to attend to increasingly complex thought and language structures. In addition, comments about storytelling, imaging and the value of literature as related to the findings in this study are included in the following discussion.
The dynamics of interaction are different in group storyreading than during parent-child storyreading in that children are more distant from the actual book when they are part of a large group. The nature of these dynamics demand that the child draw on different resources to construct meaning from the story than if the child could manipulate the book and attend to the printed words. As an active listener in a group, the child apprehends the story as a whole. In this way, the child experiences the fusion of language and thought structures of literature. In other words, listening to stories in a group facilitates the child's aesthetic response to the literary experience. There are several interpretations about the connections between literature and literacy from observing literacy development in this context.

5.4 Discussion

During the treatment period, the children in the treatment group drew, commented, questioned, retold the stories, looked at the selected books in school, took the books home, and shared objects and experiences as ways of making sense of the stories. In other words, they appeared to need to explore and reconstruct the parts of the story which were separate from the actual print. During the storyreading, no child appeared to need to see the written words in order to comprehend the story. Furthermore, the process of meaning construction was not limited to the formal storytime period. Instead, understanding appeared to be an ongoing, continually evolving process integrating prior knowledge and present context. It appeared that the children were making meaning with the story in ways that were not dependent upon attention to the print and that these ways involved using time outside the storyreading group.
During the treatment period, the children in the treatment group responded more frequently and more imaginatively (both intellectually and emotionally) to the stories than did the children in the nontreatment group. There could be several reasons for this difference of response. First, the type of books which were read to the treatment group were chosen partly for their clear narrative form. Narrative theorists identify written narrative as the form of written language closest to oral language (Hardy, 1979; Rosen, 1983; Wells, 1983). Thus, it is possible that the children who heard these clearly formed narrative books were able to express more knowledge about the stories because narrative is closest to speech and is a structure children use to make sense of their experiences. In this way, the structure of written narrative facilitates the child's understanding of literature. This hypothesis is supported by studies of story grammar and comprehension. (Stein and Trabassco, 1982; Golden, 1982).

Another possible reason why the treatment group responded more during the treatment period than did the nontreatment group is because the researcher conducted the storygroup in ways that were directed to increasing the quantity and quality of the interactions around the stories between teacher and children, between children and books, and between children. These interactions often extended to between children, home, and stories.

All these forms of interactions represent challenges and demands to construct meaning from the story—i.e. challenges to become a critical reader. Research has identified relationships between the level of demands that a parent uses during storybook interactions and their child's level of literacy development (Ferreiro and Teberosky, 1982). One of the theoretical assumptions of this study is that teacher interaction behaviors during group storytime is a factor in the child's understanding of the story. The researcher practiced interaction behaviors
with the treatment group that would guide the children in how to make meaning with the story in such ways as predicting, asking questions, drawing inferences and making connections.

The researcher observed that the teacher frequently used the expression "Let's see what happens" throughout the story reading. Since the primary pull of a good story is the plot, or what happens, it seems natural for the teacher to direct her interactions towards the linear course of events. However, there are means of allowing the children to use the other literary elements to build their predictive interpretations. Referring to character dispositions, settings which evoke possible actions, and language structure clues permit a deeper, more cohesive understanding of the story. For example, when one child responded "That was the end?" to *Dawn* the teacher could help the child reflect back on the story in order to guide the child to formulate what kind of ending he expected. What kind of world did Dawn live in? What kind of choices did she have? What kind of story would it be if she could find a new mother? In other words, what kind of ending would be most consistent with the development of the story?

Story interactions occur in numerous forms. The children's questions ("Who made the first book?" "Is that story a book yet?" "Is there another story for how the wolf got its sound?"), actions (paintings, drawings, volunteer trips to the library), and offerings (books from home, a loon coin in response to *The Loon's Necklace*, a collection of paper cranes in response to *The Crane Maiden* indicated informed and motivated learners. These were the responses which were not recorded for statistical analysis and remained at the periphery of the study. However, these are the responses which constitute the foundation of critical reading.
The significance of interaction in the development of critical reading also supports the theoretical assumptions of reading as transaction. Some current reading methodology practices seem to adhere to a rigid text model. On the other hand, theories of literary criticism and transactional reading view the reader and the text as interactive participants in the creation of the literary event. Thus, it appears that there is a relationship between the dynamics and focus of interactive storygroup behaviors and reading as transaction. By practicing behavioral interactions which encourage the child to become a participant in the construction of the story, the teacher enables the child to transfer these behaviors to his own interactions with stories.

Informal observations also made it clear that experiences with literature such as those described enabled the children not only to develop knowledge about literature, but to develop sensitivity to the meaning and purpose of literature. For example, they became increasingly enthusiastic about discovering related plots and themes. The more the children discovered, the more they began to evolve an understanding that there are a finite number of literary themes, themes which are important across time and across cultures, and that the infinite ways of presenting these themes in language. In other words, the children's experiences with literature appeared to lead them to believe that there are many plausible answers to a few questions.

The children concluded that "truth" came down to a matter of personal beliefs. They appeared to infer that all people are constantly in the process of forming and making decisions about our beliefs. Although this concept was only touched upon during the treatment, the point is that it did arise from the children's responses to literature. In other words, the experiences of the children in this study indicated that literature can be a means of self-knowledge as well
as social and cultural knowledge.

Conducting the treatment sessions resulted in insights about the process of literature education, the role of storytelling, and the importance of image-making activities. The treatment was constantly being created in response to the children. Inflexible use of time and resources didn’t have a place in the growing dynamics between the children and the ideas and knowledge generated from the stories. The original plan for the treatment had to be altered to allow the kind of spontaneous and fluid interactions between children and stories. Providing, inviting, waiting, trusting, responding to their responses—putting the control of the process with the child while providing means to access their knowledge describes the nature of the treatment. The shared stories were a springboard for a multitude of dialogues of confirmation, exploration and discovery.

Reading a story aloud is different than telling a story, whether improvising on a text or simply telling a story with no text. Listening to a story being told is a meaningful way for children to experience the sense of freedom to interact with a text. As well, listening to a story emphasizes the role of the listener as a cocreator of the literary experience. In other words, the art of storytelling could have implications for reading as transaction.

Oral storytelling depends on the words and gestures of the storyteller to elicit images in individual listeners. However, as beautiful as many picture books are, they do not create the same challenge for the mind in terms of image-making as does storytelling. It is easy to refer to and come to depend on the artist’s illustrations. When the researcher read or told stories to the treatment group, she placed little emphasis, compared to the classroom teacher, on illustrations. Accordingly, she found that the children did not depend on
illustrations to qualify and support their responses—something they were frequently prompted to do by the classroom teacher. It appears that children do not need as much support from illustrations as the amount of teacher direction assumes. Indeed, if literature as experience is to be taken seriously in the classroom, then children must be allowed opportunities to create their own images from listening to the text.

When invited by the researcher to represent their own images after the story telling, or when they chose to draw or paint images from the stories during free choice time, only one child referred back to the original illustrations, and for only one story (Sunflight). In general, there were strong stylistic likenesses between their own drawings and the book's illustrations. Again, the treatment books were selected books, selected for text as well as quality of illustrations. So it makes sense that a powerful image would be influential. No one appeared to feel intimidated by the quality of the illustrations; everyone took equal pride in his or her drawing. When the class stories were compiled into books and read to the class, the group looked and listened as attentively and "seriously" as they did to a trade book.

Closely tied to the image making responses of the children to the story is their understanding of the relationship of the setting or mood to the rest of the story. Young readers need time to experience this relatively abstract literary element. This category elicited very few responses, probably because of its intangible nature. This is where text and images combine to create a distinct impression of the setting of the story—past, distant, future, light, dark, tense, enchanted etc. (as in The Blue Bird, "This is a frozen land"). All of these impressions are just those because they are so inextricably tied to individual associations. It is primarily through image making activities and later associations
with other literary experiences, rather than through oral response, that a teacher can evaluate the young child's awareness of particular moods, atmospheres and settings.

To summarize, findings from the statistical data, and particularly from the descriptive data, strongly suggest that both book selection and teacher interaction during storygroup had a positive effect on the frequency and diversity of critical response behaviors of kindergarten children to stories.

5.5 Recommendations for Practice

It appears that a response-based literature approach to literacy is one way children can learn to apply personal knowledge and experiences to the process of reading and understanding stories. The theory behind this approach is based on research and knowledge from the social and cognitive sciences, as well as research and knowledge from the arts. This study was undertaken to explore possible ways of synthesizing some of the theories of literature, literature education and literacy development within the context of transactional learning theory. Ultimately, this study serves as a possible framework for a pilot project for existing kindergarten programs which incorporates recent research and theory on a practical level.

Based on the findings and interpretations of this investigation, several recommendations for linking literature and literacy in a response-based program follow. These recommendations fall into two general categories—creating a response-based environment, and using literature more effectively.

1. When children have frequent and regular opportunities to engage in responsive interactions with literature, they are able to increase their
knowledge of literary structures. In turn, expanding knowledge and experiences with literature enables the child to make sense of a variety and diversity, as well as more complex, literary forms. Literature which evokes aesthetic response should be a primary vehicle for developing literary knowledge and form the core of the literacy program.

2. Fitting knowledge and experiences to a story is the key to meaning making. When children have opportunities to formulate and extend their personal, social, and cultural knowledge and experiences, they can participate in increasingly meaningful literary events.

3. The agenda of literature education needs to move from an assumptive, prescriptive, goal oriented nature to one which is trusting, focusing and enriching. The sensitive combination of setting the stage for awareness of the literary elements and allowing the children to initiate questions about what they need to know in order for the story to make sense to them increases the possibilities of learning that is meaningful to the individual.

4. Teachers need to be aware of and have facility in the two components of response-based teaching: eliciting response and analyzing response. Eliciting response can be described as the behaviors which draw out children’s questions and comments about stories. Analyzing response is the teacher’s ability to affirm and interpret the children’s existing understanding and then to help them extend their responses.

5. Teachers set the stage for the level of response they expect the children to make. Interactions which encourage inference, analysis and synthesis build on the child’s resources of prior knowledge and present context. Teachers should guide the child to critical response by engaging in interactions which lead the child to question, make and confirm predictions, draw inferences and connect ideas while involved in literature. Interactions
should encourage specific, rather than global, responses.

6. Teachers need to insure that children participate freely in meaningful personal and social interactions with stories. The classroom should be a safe and stimulating community of learners where responses can be given, listened to, and probed by individual children, teachers and the class as a whole.

7. Literacy learning is a recursive process and children must be given the time to reflect and form responses, as well as access to and acknowledgement of the multiple possibilities of response. Teachers need to be alert to the numerous forms of response. To finish the reading of a story is not to finish the experience of the story.

8. Teachers need to remember that a child’s understanding of a story is based on more than a knowledge of the traditional elements of Western literature. When a teacher observes children’s responses carefully and thoughtfully, she will be better able to help children develop their abilities to understand the thought and language structures of literature.

9. Teachers need to be aware that young children do not necessarily articulate all they know about a story. Children need to make responses in a variety of forms. Representational activities such as art, writing, music, movement and drama need to be an integral component of a response based program. Children need to know that language, in all its many forms, is a powerful resource for their own learning.

10. Teachers need to inform children when and how they have made associations between elements within a story, between two or more stories, and between stories and experiences in order that they become aware, and take control, of their own meaning making.

11. Teachers should give careful thought to the literature they read. The content
should invite aesthetic response in terms of imaginative and/or intellectual response. The story structure should be clearly formed to encourage comprehension. Literature grouped by theme—i.e. by similarity of literary structures—appears to positively influence meaning making.

12. A broad range of appropriate and suitable literary structures be introduced to the children over time. Pattern books appear useful for building confidence at one level of the reading process. However, teachers must be careful not to limit the possibilities of literary experiences to the simplistic and highly predictable textual encounters in pattern books. It is important to remember that children's receptive abilities are more developed than their oral expressive abilities.

13. Teachers need to know and love children's literature. They need to know how to make it come alive through storytelling, sharing their enthusiasm and inviting original and personal response. The real value of literature should always come first. Storytime should be a time for discovery, learning, insight and knowledge.

14. Children in this study responded to literature in ways other than aesthetically. Children constantly extended their responses beyond the literature curriculum. Teachers should enhance the connections children seek and find between literature and life. By extending literary responses into the entire curriculum, children will be enlarge as well as refine the meanings they make with literature.
5.6 Suggestions for Further Study

This study was an attempt to begin to explore the general question relating literature education and literacy. There is a growing body of knowledge about literacy development, and there is new interest in literature education in the early years.

The research problem in this study focused on the guided use of literature to develop critical response. Critical thinking appears to be increasingly significant to the development of comprehension strategies as students advance through school. Findings from the statistical analysis of this study are ambiguous regarding any link between literary knowledge and literacy. Findings from the informal observations of the treatment indicate the possibility of relationships between literature and literacy. However, such a connection at this point appears too expansive and complex for any one focus of research to be conclusive. Findings from this investigation have led to several suggestions for further study. These suggestions are directed to the goal of clarifying possible relationships between literature and literacy.

1. The effect of selected books and teacher interaction needs to be explored in depth, using subjects with a wide range of backgrounds.

2. The effect of selected books and teacher interaction needs to be explored over a longer period of time. An investigation could be conducted with several different groups of beginning readers over the course of a school year.

3. A qualitative design would allow for the inclusion of a wider range of behaviors that young children are more likely to demonstrate than oral responses in a limited context.
4. A more tightly controlled design would control extraneous variables. Tightening the design would also permit separate examination of the variables—selected text and teacher interaction—in order to determine the relative effect of each.

5. It appears that teacher interaction behaviors during storygroup have a strong influence on not only the development of comprehension strategies, but on the perspective that the child develops of the reading process. More studies need to be done to identify the teacher interaction behaviors which best assist the child within a group setting in the development of these aspects of literacy.

6. Interactions between peers is another way children have of formulating and extending their responses. How can young children be guided to structure their interactions with each other in ways that one-to-one interactions make explicit what was previously implicit? Put another way, investigations need to be done about how to implicate the benefits of one-to-one storyreading in classroom settings so that the control of the learning rests in what the child needs to know.

7. Research suggests strong relationships between what children read and how children write. Studies need to be done over a longitudinal basis to describe and identify the nature of this transaction.

8. This study focused on the aesthetic response to literature. More information is needed on the various behaviors that indicate aesthetic response in young children. Also, research needs to be directed to the particular relationship between aesthetic response and literacy development.

9. Do literary experiences evoke only aesthetic response? What, if any, are the broader possibilities of using literature to develop a wider range of responses, say, for example responses which prompt the child to seek
factual information related his understanding of the story?

10. The effect of a literature-literacy program on different socioeconomic groups needs to be studied. Do different cultural or socioeconomic groups respond in the same manner to the selected books? Can teacher interaction behaviors be standardized or are they culture specific?

11. The variable of book appears to be a significant factor in literature-literacy programs for several reasons—as a transition form between oral to written language, as a source of motivation and as a model of literary structures. An examination of students' responses to a variety of books should be made to determine useful criteria for books in a literature-literacy program.

12. This study indicated a relationship between critical response and literacy development. Does an increase in critical response behaviors contribute to the development of literacy? What is the nature of this relationship?
REFERENCES


69
Britton, J. (1979). The role of fantasy: The third area where we are most ourselves. In M. Meek (Ed.) *The cool web* (pp. 40–48). London: Bodley Head.


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APPENDIX 1: MATRIX OF LITERARY KNOWLEDGE

<table>
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<th>Questions and Comments</th>
<th>Literary Elements</th>
<th>Factual</th>
<th>Interpretative</th>
<th>Personal associations and significance</th>
<th>Evaluative</th>
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<td>Personal Knowledge</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 2: PRETEST AND POSTTEST BOOKS

Pretest Books:


Posttest Books:


APPENDIX 3: BOOKS READ TO THE CONTROL GROUP

(Books listed in order of which they were read to the group)


Simon, I., illustrated by, (1979). This is the House that Jack Built. Dandelion Books.


APPENDIX 4: BOOKS READ TO THE TREATMENT GROUP

(Books listed in order in which they were read to the group.)


Luzzato, P. C. (1980). Long Ago When the Earth was Flat. N.Y.: Collins.


Story which was Told:
"How Raven Stole the Light"

Some Stories which were Read and/or Available during the Treatment:
Stories include books read to the children by the researcher as treatment books and books which came to comprise a mini library which were available for the children to look at during free time and to take home overnight.

Legends:


Related Themes

**Lonely Couple Wanting a Child of Their Own:**


**Cinderella Based Theme:**


**Bird Transformation:** (Raven, Crane, Swan, Goose)


**Weaving and Transformation:**


**Cumulative Pattern:**


**Poetry/Verse:**


APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLES OF RESPONSE CATEGORIES

PLOT

Factual:
Fly followed him out. And the two went on. At length, they arrived in another town.
C: It's going to be the same thing.
T: You know this story. It must be a favorite of yours.

Personal:
Half-a-Ball-of-Kenki said, "It is already early in the evening. If we are going to fight, let us make a fire first." So they broke wood and set it alight in the middle of the path.
C: I hope Leopard gets killed.
C: Me too.

Interpretative:
Then Teiji sold his house and paintings. He kept only his brushes, his paints, and several rolls of paper. And he started back to the lake.
C: I know he's going to paint the swans.
The tortoise held up the storm clouds on his back, and all their fury faded away. The Enchantress spread her wings and flew at the tortoise.
C: I bet the turtle goes into the shell then she . . . Boing!

Evaluative:
Then Teiji flew away to join his brothers. Together they rose majestic against the gray sky.
C: I knew he was going to turn into a swan.
C: So did I.

C: So I knew the end.

Time went by. One morning a young woman came into the yard and asked if I
needed a sailmaker. She was dressed very oddly, with a heavy brown cloak over
a dress as pink as your cheeks. She had a long, slender neck and tiny teeth,
delicate and pink. She had a scar on her arm. I noticed it when she took off
her cloak. How could I know where it was from?
C: The swan! It's the swan!

T: Think so?

C: Yea, it's just like the crane story. Except that it's going backwards.

T: How is it going backwards?

C: Cause it doesn't have a scar. In the last one, when she got shot with an
arrow, the other one didn't have a scar.

C: It's almost like the crane except there's no peeking.

CHARACTER:

Factual:

On Saturday morning the king, the queen, the little prince, the knight, a royal
guard, the royal cook, the royal barber, and the royal jester came to visit me.
C: Mrs. M., the jester's somebody who entertains the king and queen. And he
makes jokes.

Interpretation:

Leopard turned away in disgust.

C: I wonder why?

. . Leopard went flying kuputu, kuputu, kuputu, kuputu out the gate.

C: Without Fly. Cause Fly was too small.
Whale chased Salmon up the river. Frog was afraid. He called to Raven.

C: Frog is a scaredy cat.

**Evaluative:**

C: (continuing response of child above) They're doing it because they think it's mean and the fly isn't mean.

She told me it might be the death of her, but I didn't believe her. How beautiful she was then, with her round black eyes and her black, black hair: Before we began, she asked me one thing: never to come into the room while she was weaving the sails. I promised I never would.

C: Me and Tiffany think she's the Canada goose.

C: Me too. Cause the scar is the bullet.

**IMAGES**

**Factual:**

C: The picture looks mostly blue.

He did not see Frog on the bank of the river.

C: I saw Frog.

**Personal:**

C: So beautiful!

C: I like the colors.
Interpretative:

C: Maybe the snow is swans.
C: The mountains are the swans.

When the Enchantress saw the bird in the cage, her eyes lit up.
C: She’s a bird herself!
C: She looks like one of those hawks.

. . . One by one, they flew away. Chiang Ti and Jade Lotus watched in amazement as the whole palace disappeared.
C: It was made of birds, it was made of birds!
C: A tower of birds.

Evaluative:

The blue bird inside his cage flew up and down shaking his wings as if trying to escape.
"If I set him free perhaps he will sing again, too," said Jade Lotus. So she opened the cage door, and they watched him as he flew away. Suddenly they heard him singing a song.
"Tui, tui." Over and over again he sang the song.
"Tui, tui." It echoed through the countryside.
"Tui, tui."

T: Notice the difference now. Have a look and see what’s happened in the pictures.

C: Blue is all the evil.
SETTING MOOD

Factual:
He was numbed by the icy cold, but when at last he saw the swans, he felt warm.

C: That's a really cold place.

Personal:
In a village in Japan, there once lived a painter named Teiji who was loved by all the world...

C: My student comes from Japan. Japan is the land of the rising sun and Canada is the land of the setting sun.

Interpretative:
... But all I heard was the slow thumping. I went back to bed, and when I woke up the next morning, I could still hear the loom.

C: (Making rhythmic sound effects of loom working)
Then Chiang Ti and Jade Lotus saw the Enchantress—and suddenly they were almost frozen with fear.

C: Because that's a frozen palace, I think.

C: I think when you step on that stuff, you get frozen.

Evaluative:
And I was home. So the little prince said, "We just dropped in to say hello."

T: Where did the story take place?

C: No, he was just a puppet.

C: He was just puppeting.
Factual:

C: Japanese saying (pointing to script).

C: One sign of Japanese means a word—one of their letters makes a word.

As Fly was slipping them off, Leopard plucked a long creeper. He grabbed hold of Fly and bound him to a palm tree—winding the creeper, kpung, kpung, kpung. Then he hid himself nearby.

C: What's a creeper?

Personal:

"Kye, kye, kye," laughed Leopard. "We shall see!" Then he bathed and oiled his fur.

C: They talk pirate talk!

T: Maybe that's because we've been talking about pirates.

Interpretation:

C: Half-a-ball-of-kenki, half-a-ball-of-kenki (said as a chant in response to character's name).

T: It's fun to say that, isn't it?

... The goose turned and looked at me and shuddered.

C: What's shuddered?

C: She died.

C: Shot.

C: Sort of shook.

C: Like when you're cold.

C: Like shivering.
Evaluative:
The cat climbed on to his back.
"Where are you going?" asked the cat.
"We are going to see the Enchantress," they said.
"Then I will come too."
And he curled around Chiang Ti's neck, and fell asleep.
C: It's almost like the other story of the king lion—like the mosquito story who
did the thing to the monkey's baby—the owl that got killed. It sounds like that.

THEME

Factual:
Then suddenly Half-a-Ball-of-Kenki gathered all her strength, lifted up Leopard
and threw him kabat into the fire!
C: He got spots!

Interpretative:
Then Teiji flew away to join his brothers. Together they rose, majestic against
the gray sky.
C: So they were all men and there was one swan who turned into one.

Evaluative:
C: The rain dragon turned all the evil away, then the birds were free.

STORY

Factual:
The Ashanti storyteller says: I do not mean, I do not really mean that this
story is true.
C: Is it true?
C: I know this book. I have this book on tape.

**Personal:**
C: It tells on the book if it's true and some people think it's true and get scared like my baby brother.

**Interpretative:**
The palace was high, and towered above them. The roofs and walls were covered with stone birds. Everything was very quiet. They opened the door and went inside.
C: Hey, maybe this is the Chinese Wizard of Oz.

**Evaluvative:**
C: It's a legend. Nobody's alive to tell us.

**FORMAT**

**Personal:**
T: This book is called Dawn. The author is Molly Bang.
C: I have a godmother named Molly.

**Interpretative:**
T (reading the dedication): For the photographer Teiji Saga, whom I don't know, and for the painter Rudo Krivos, my friend.
C: Why does he say "I don't know?" if he's giving the book to him?
T: (introducing book). The author is Ann Siberell. Because it doesn't have an illustrator listed, what does that make you think? Who did the pictures?
C: She.
C: The same person.
PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

So the little prince said, "In that case, we shall return on Sunday."

C: I go to church on Sunday.

The man left, mad as a hornet.

C: We once had a nest of hornets on our roof.

C: My mommy got stung by a hornet.
## APPENDIX 6: T-TEST ANALYSIS OF DRP SCORES

Table 4

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>AM Group (N=25)</th>
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Critical value of $t=2.02$ ($p < .05$)

**Key to Test Measures**

**Test 1** - Peabody Picture Test measuring receptive vocabulary on an age equivalent basis.

**Test 2** - Recognition Discrimination measuring ability to perceive identical and similar shapes.

**Test 3** - Beery Visual Motor Inventory measuring visual fine motor integration skills.

**Test 4** - Alphabet Recitation measuring familiarity with alphabet.