DEVELOPING AN ARTS-INTEGRATED READING COMPREHENSION PROGRAM FOR LESS PROFICIENT GRADE 3 AND 4 STUDENTS

by

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Abstract

This study investigates the efficacy of using arts integrated programming as a way to teach and evaluate global reading comprehension strategies among less proficient readers. The project was undertaken with twelve less proficient third and fourth grade readers in a West Vancouver suburban public school for a total of seven months.

The study consisted of three phases. First the students were nominated, observed and interviewed. Pre-program progress interviews, which included arts-integrated evaluations, were also conducted. In the second phase, students were taught five reading comprehension strategies. Students learned about and practiced these strategies through nine arts-integrated lessons. Additionally, informal interviews with the two teachers and post-program interviews took place during this second phase. The third phase concluded by performing what had been learned throughout the sessions, conducting group delayed-program progress interviews, and completing student reflection sheets.

The research findings revealed that all twelve of the less proficient students in the study generally improved their reading skills. When given opportunities to construct and express their understandings through arts-integration, they seemed to become more fluent decoders and appeared to strengthen their employment of global/interpretive comprehension strategies when reading printed texts.

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I. Introduction

I used to like video games and think reading was boring. Now I see that reading is like video games. I found out that reading is never boring. It tells you lots of stuff. I can imagine books different now. Like, I can imagine myself in different places and as different characters every time I read. That is how it seems like video games. I also can understand movies better too. Like with the movie Harry Potter, before I didn't know what was happening sometimes. But now I just watch and imagine myself as the characters being inside the movie. Learning to read taught me that.

Nathan (a grade four student who participated in this study)

1.1   Identification of the Problem

People have widely varying understandings of what it means to be literate. For some, literacy is narrowly defined as simply the decoding/encoding and processing of print-based texts. For others, literacy means having the ability to negotiate meaning, make connections, and transact across a range of texts (e.g. print-based, computer/web-based, performance-based, language-based, media-based). In this way, being literate can be defined as the comprehending/composing of any mode of representation that makes meaning possible. Despite their variety, the different definitions of literacy all have one component in common: meaning making is at the core of literacy (Eisner, 1998; Smith, 1994). As humans we read, write, speak and represent to make sense of the worlds in which we live in.

Across the spectrum of literacies I situate myself within the broader framework, but as a teacher I also know the significance that schools place on print-based literacies. I realize that contemporary Western societies continue to privilege written texts, and I have seen first-hand what research demonstrates: children who can not access print-based literacies are given fewer opportunities and endure greater struggles in school and in earning professional success than their proficient reading and writing peers (Adams, 1990; National Research Council, 1998). Other researchers add to these findings, noting that people who are unable to capitalize on the resources of print-based literacies also feel inadequate or that they don't belong (See e.g. Purcell-Gates, 1995; Tovani, 2000). Indeed, our technological and informational society requires that

humans have the ability to competently read, write, and especially compose meanings from printed text.

Many children never acquire this ability to negotiate meanings from print-based texts. They struggle in school and often fall substantially behind. These struggling students can come to despise the written word, leading them to read less and less. The gap widens as effective readers continue to gain wisdom and expertise from print-based texts, while struggling readers find themselves unable or unwilling to access critical knowledge and skills. For instance, in British Columbia in 2001, 23% of grade four students who participated (95%) in the British Columbia Foundational Skills assessment were not yet within provincial expectations (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/results/2003/prov04.pdf). The large number of students who are not meeting these standards indicates that there is a problem worth examining.

This study is a response to this percentage of students who struggle with reading comprehension, offering arts-integrated approaches as a potential bridge to help them become more strategic and better able to construct global/interpretive meaning from print-based texts.

1.2   Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the efficacy of using arts-integrated programming as a way to teach and evaluate global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies among less proficient readers. Research in drama already demonstrates that students' reading comprehension is strengthened when there is a context for collaboration, active meaning making, multi-modal expression and reflection (Booth, 1994; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Rogers, O'Neill & Jasinski, 1995). This study hopes to reveal that, for the same reasons (because they also provide collaborative, active, multi-modal, and reflective contexts), music and visual art will also be seen as valuable tools for furthering students' reading comprehension.

I created an original program which used arts-integrated techniques, specifically drama, music, and visual art, to teach and evaluate comprehension strategies to struggling grade three and four readers. This program was used in a "pull-out" setting: small groups of children were brought to a separate, resource classroom (or library). The intent of this program was to get children to develop deeper understandings of literary texts.

My program included both reading comprehension and response to literature strategies including: (a) recognizing the setting portrayed; (b) engaging with and visualizing the story narrative, (c) bringing background knowledge and experience to the text; (d) sequencing story events; and (e) understanding the underlying themes and gist of the story. I selected these five after examining some of the research on how to make readers more strategic when comprehending and when responding to literature (e.g. Allington, 2001; Duffy, 2003; Duke & Pearson, 2003; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Tovani, 2000; Wilhelm, 1997). Although there are other strategies (e.g. story framing, critical reading, monitoring understanding), I chose these five because I felt that they were central to narrative comprehension and because I thought they could be taught and evaluated through arts-integration.

1.3   Significance of the Study

This research is significant in several ways. First, only a few research studies (Berghoff, Egawa, Harste, & Hoonan, 2000; Enciso, 1992; Mantione & Smead, 2003; Rose, Parks, Androes, & McMahon, 2000; Short, K.G, Kauffman, G. & Kahn, L.H., 2000; Siegel, 1984; Wilhelm, 1997) have been done on the efficacy of teaching reading comprehension strategies and literary understanding through arts-integration. Second, it investigated the use of global/interpretive comprehension strategies across a range of print-based (fables, poetry, short stories, picturebooks) and performance-based texts (e.g. drama, art, music). Third, it provided readers with experiences that could help them draw connections from and engage with the story's narrative. Fourth, this research invited other researchers and educators to imagine new ways of helping less proficient readers find the joys of literacy. Fifth, this study illustrated that all children, even reluctant and struggling readers, have the potential to feel successful when literature and arts-integration are offered in the curriculum.

One of the benefits of drama-integration is that it makes the imaginary feel tangible (Morgan & Saxton, 1987; Purves, Rogers & Soter, 1995). This idea can be extended to visual art and music, as they also enable students to experience narratives more concretely. An arts-integrated program, in this way, helps to build or activate the necessary background experience that readers need to comprehend across a range of texts. By providing arts-integrated bridges that connect students both cognitively and affectively to the written word, this approach holds promise to

bring less proficient readers and print-based texts together. Then, bolstered by this sense of success, students can be guided to recognize their inner self-confidence, which can be channeled into a willingness to participate. It is my hope that this unique approach to learning reading comprehension will encourage children to be less reluctant as readers and to enjoy the journey of what different literacies have to offer.

1.4   Definition of Terms

Within the literature there is a range of definitions of reading comprehension. On the one hand, reading comprehension refers to the act of making sense of the words and sentences. On the other hand, it also means implementing global strategies which help readers construct deeper meanings of an entire narrative—getting beyond the content by interpreting, engaging and making rich connections within and across texts. I will define from both forms of comprehension.

<u>Local or Literal Comprehension</u>

- Local comprehension refers to the student's ability to understand a text on a literal level–the ability to understand the sentences of a passage by drawing on local context. Although their decoding and retelling skills may range from adequate to good, "local comprehenders' do not go beyond the text. They seem to lack the strategies needed to make personal interpretations and meaningful connections. When given multiple choice or fill in the blank type assessments—which ask students to extract information from a passage—they have the potential to receive a high score (getting the facts right), making it appear as though they are good comprehenders.

<u>Global/Interpretive Comprehension</u>

- Global/interpretive comprehension, on the other hand, calls upon the students' capacities to understand individual words and sentences, but more importantly to focus on the larger process of interpreting and transacting with an entire narrative text. In addition to understanding sentences and drawing upon local context, "global/interpretive comprehenders" also have the ability to call upon a repertoire of strategies, enabling them to make rich connections with a text, to understand its implications and go beyond its literal meaning. They actively interpret, visualize, engage and connect with the ideas

within and across texts, all the while also monitoring their understandings about what they have read. Moreover, students transact with the text—bringing ideas, perspectives, and feelings to the text and taking from it a revised set of ideas, perspectives and feelings. Because their understanding is broader, they are able to score highly on local assessments as well as demonstrate rich global understandings through discussion, or performance.

Other significant concepts

- "Less proficient readers" or "Non-strategic readers": readers identified by teachers who are displaying difficulties transacting with texts. These readers may be using unsuccessful strategies like only reading the text's symbols or expecting others to help them make meaning from the text. Or they may also have a limited repertoire of comprehension strategies which they have to resort to over and over again.

- "Arts-integrated" or "Arts-integrated techniques": reading comprehension strategies presented through fine arts-integrated activities, specifically from the disciplines of visual art, drama, and music. These techniques engage readers actively and multi-modally (e.g. acting out the problem of the story, creating clay sculpture of the story's setting, or making a rap song about what happened in the story's narrative).

- "Pull out" or "Resource room setting": small groups of low readers pulled out of their regular classroom and brought to a separate classroom to be taught direct literacy strategies.

- "Texts": Although any type of message that can be perceived and comprehended could be considered a "text," in this study text refers to the printed narrative (unless stated otherwise). Any text that is not in the printed form I will refer to as a "performance text." Some examples of performance texts include a drawn picture, a collage, a piece of music, a play, a choreographed dance.

1.5 Overview of the Upcoming Chapters

Four chapters follow this introduction. Chapter two summarizes the literature on reading comprehension and the implementation of strategies, outlining the importance of schema theory, reader response theory and constructivist theory, as well as the influence of multiple literacy or multi-modal pedagogies in this project. This literature review also poses the question, "Can arts-integration be used to benefit less proficient readers?" Chapter three presents the research

questions. Here I will address the methodology of the study, explaining the rationale for its design and giving descriptions of how I collected and analyzed the data. This chapter also provides details about the participants, the setting of the study and the lessons taught. Chapter four summarizes the findings of the study. I present three sample arts-integrated lessons and three case studies of students as a way to demonstrate some of the rich contextual understandings that students were constructing. Finally, in chapter five I discuss the findings further and call attention to some of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

II. Literature Review

Understanding, or comprehension is the basis of reading and of learning to read.
What is the point of any activity if there is no understanding?

Frank Smith

The complex process of reading printed texts encompasses many separate but layered skills. For instance, proficient readers must: recognize graphemes; produce, segment and blend phonemes; retrieve vocabulary; interpret phrases and sentences; develop fluency; and finally construct global meaning. Of these skills, many theorists and researchers agree that the latter, creating meaning from texts, is the most significant (e.g. Booth, 2001; Pearson, 2003; Pressley, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1978; Sipe, 2000; Smith, 1994; Wells, 1986; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Meaning-making is the ultimate reason why educators teach the other reading skills. We teach decoding not because we want students to simply be better decoders, but because we want children to connect and engage with the text, constructing understanding and interpreting the ideas that are written.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine notions of what reading comprehension means today. I will briefly discuss four theories: schema theory, reader response theory, sociocognitive constructivist theory, and multiple literacy/multiliteracies theory. I will point to the ways they have informed reading comprehension research and practice, and to how these theories relate to this study. Then I will investigate what proficient and less proficient readers are doing when they comprehend printed texts. Next I will outline ways reading comprehension is taught and assessed in today's schools. Finally I will consider the contribution of arts-integration, positing that it can be used as an effective way to evaluate and strengthen readers' abilities to comprehend texts.

2.1   Perspectives That Have Informed Today's Notions of Reading Comprehension

As we enter the Twenty-first Century, our ideas about what constitutes literacy and being literate have expanded. In early western civilizations, being literate meant understanding the mechanics of decoding and encoding handwritten texts; by the middle of the Twentieth Century, literacy began to be regarded as a process of thinking and an ability to extract meaning from

printed text; today, the dominant interpretation of literacy refers to the reader's faculty to construct meaning from a range of texts (Heath, 1996).

Over the last three decades, researchers have come to agree that meaning from printed texts can not simply be transmitted to a reader (e.g. Anderson, 1977; Block & Pressley, 2002; Rosenblatt, 1978; Wells, 1996). Thanks to psychologists, reading researchers, reader response theorists, semioticians, and educators, we have come to know that without a reader's interpretation of meaning, printed texts are just symbols on the page. True comprehension can only be attained when there is a convergence of meaning drawn from both the reader's prior knowledge or experience and the text itself. I will now outline the contributions which inform this shift in perspective about reading comprehension.

Schema Theory and Reading Researchers

To understand the mind's knowledge structures and the ways in which information is processed, cognitive psychologists including Bartlett (1932), Ausubel (1963), Rumelhart (1975) and Anderson (1977) began to examine the notion of *schema* (pl. schemata)—how humans organize and construct meanings in their heads (cf. Anderson & Pearson, 1984 for an historical overview of the schema-theoretic view). While Bartlett first introduced this term in 1932, defining it as the "active organization of past reactions or past experience", the concept lay dormant for nearly fifty years (cited in Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 257). It wasn't until the mid-1970s that schema theory began to be re-developed through research (Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Pichert & Anderson, 1977) and through new understandings of human thinking processes derived partly from computer simulations of human cognition (Minsky, 1975 and Winograd, 1975, both cited in Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1977, 1980; Pichert & Anderson, 1977).

Rumelhart (1980) re-defined a schema as a "data structure for representing the generic concepts stored in memory" (p. 34). I think of schemata as being like a series of filing cabinets in the mind, where information is organized, assimilated, and stored. According to Anderson (1977), when this information is easily filed and retrieved it is able to be "readily learned, perhaps with little mental effort" (p. 248).

These theories were then expanded and applied to other fields like language and reading (Anderson, 1977). More specifically, this theory migrated into the field of reading

comprehension as scholars began to believe that meaning from texts was not found in the words themselves, but formed in the organizing structures of the reader's mind (Anderson and Pearson, 1984). Seeing how these theories were also relevant in the classroom—getting readers to activate background knowledge and connect what they gain from texts to what they already knew about the world—reading researchers like Durkin (1978-1979), Pearson (1986), and Tierney & Cunningham (1984) posited that reading comprehension could be directly taught in classroom settings.

Several researchers draw on the strategies that ultimately grew out of schema theory and schema research (e.g. Block & Pressley, 2002; Duffy, 2002; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; National Research Council, 1998). These strategies continue to inform reading comprehension instruction and evaluation today. Some of these strategies are also featured in my study, including: bringing personal knowledge to the text, story mapping or sequencing the story events, and understanding the gist of the story.

2.2 Reader Response Theory and Response to Literature Theorists

At around the same time that schema theory was being developed (the late 1970's and into the 1980's) reader response theories emerged from postmodernism (cf. Tompkins, 1980). Louise Rosenblatt, based on her previous work in 1938 (*Literature as Exploration*) argued for a transactional theory where readers were placed in the centre of reading. Rosenblatt further developed this theory in her 1978 book, *The Reader, The Text, The Poem*, in which she posited that readers read along a continuum of efferent and aesthetic reading. First, the efferent stance is one that focuses on outside information, such as reading a news article or a recipe. "By 'screen[ing] out all but the needed end result or residue', this reader concentrates on extracting a solution, information, or directions for action from the text" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 43). And second, the aesthetic stance is more of an inward process. Here, the reader, has a "lived-through" experience with a text, as if it were a "poem", that is not complete until a reader brings meaning to it (Rosenblatt, 1978).

Reader response theories reminded us that comprehending literature was not only a cognitive practice but also an interpretive, aesthetic, literary process. Like schema theory, reader response held that meaning in reading was not found in the printed symbols themselves, but in the meaning that readers brought to the text. Rather, it involved the reader's ability—based on

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the text itself and his/her "reservoir of past experiences with language, literature, and life"—to evoke responses, thoughts, feelings and images in the mind's eye (Cox & Many, 1992, p. 66).

In her book *The Reader, the text, the poem* (1978), Rosenblatt rejected the idea that there was only one single meaning that readers could derive from literature. Instead, her reader response theory asserted that readers could construct multiple meanings when focusing on a text. So instead of simply extracting knowledge from the text or discovering its inherent meaning, readers could construct their own understanding of what was happening in the literature by coming to the text with a given set of ideas, feelings, values and attitudes about the world; interpreting and building new knowledge from the print; and then leaving the text with greater understandings of how the world worked. Rosenblatt named this process "transacting—a reciprocal relationship where giving and taking each conditions the other" (Rosenblatt in Karolides, 1999, p. 160). In literacy, the term "transaction" emphasizes the back and forth relationship between a reader and a text. Moreover, a reader brings to the written word a unique set of linguistic and life encounters, and takes from it a set of new and personal experiences.

This transactional process is a creative and dynamic event. For although the text may be the same, different readers construct with each experience different "mental models" and meaning from the text (Narvaez cited in Block & Pressley, 2002, p. 159). At the precise moment this construction is formed there is, Rosenblatt explained, a "negotiation" between the author and the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). This negotiation is based on what the reader already knows and brings to the text.

Rosenblatt's work, along with that of other reader response critics and response to literature researchers such as Iser (1978); Bleich (1978), Fish (1980), Benton (1992), Holland (1975), Rogers and Soter (1997) influenced a number of researchers in the response to literature field (for an overview of contributors to this field cf. Farrell & Squire, 1990 and Marshall, 2000). This research, taken together, established links between literature and readers' personal responses to it inside language arts and English classrooms. Further, it emphasized the reader's literary engagement and interpretation as key aspects of narrative comprehension.

It has been argued that when an instructional approach such as response to literature is used within schools, students are more motivated and have additional opportunities to expand their experiential backgrounds and vocabularies (Morrow & Gambrell, 2000). Literature (including such things as picturebooks, poetry, song lyrics, plays, etc.) is created to be heard, looked at,

enjoyed, and creatively responded to (Purves et al., 1995). And as Fish (1980) pointed out, response-based reading instruction creates an "interpretive community of readers", in which all students in the classroom work together to make meaning from texts.

For these above reasons, I made the conscious choice to use literature as the pre-text for the lessons in this program (See Table 2, p. 40) for the list of narratives used in this study). Additionally, I drew upon reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) and its subsequent research (Beach, 1990; Benton, 1992; Rogers, 1990; Sipe 2000; Wilhelm, 1997) as I incorporated the following reader-response strategies into this study: engaging with and visualizing the narrative, bringing prior experiences to the text, recognizing the setting of the story, and understanding the story's themes.

Contemporary researchers are coming closer to developing a unified theory to blend the cognitive psychologists' and reading researcher's notion of *schema*—the way humans organize and construct meanings in their minds—and reading response theorists' notion of *transactions*—complex response processes that can be aesthetic, emotional, social, cultural and cognitive.

Two other theories, sociocognitive constructivist and multiple literacy/multiliteracies, have informed this study and influenced today's notions of reading comprehension, and its instruction/evaluation. I discuss these below.

Sociocognitive Constructivist Theories and Theorists

Through the work of developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (1983), we began to understand that knowledge is not innate but rather actively constructed inside the mind. His cognitive constructivist theory showed us that children progress at their own pace, always building on what they already know. He believed that cognitive development in children stemmed directly from their active involvement with their tangible surroundings—through the "assimilation and accommodation" of the world around them (Chapman, 1997, p. 43). Piaget's cognitive constructivist theory significantly altered people's views of education and instruction by emphasizing the role of the learner.

Although Vygotsky (1978) also believed that learning was the act of building on what was known, he diverged from Piaget's cognitive model, asserting that learning is also inherently social and dependent on language (Smith, 1994). In *Thought and Language* (1986), Vygotsky

argued that language is the tool that makes higher mental functions possible, for it serves as a way of organizing and recalling experiences and also as a way of communicating the internal thinking processes. His theory emphasized that language plays an active role in children's development because thought and language are not developed separate from each other, but that they are inextricably connected. Walkerdine (1982) added "language, thinking and context are not separate systems but are jointly related to a basic human need to know how signs of all kinds are interpreted" (cited in Smith, 1994, p. 290). Vygotsky believed that language promotes thought, and that collaborative experiences and interaction with others, especially with those in mentor roles, both reinforce learning.

Sociocognitive constructivist theory combined the contributions of both social and cognitive constructivist perspectives, for "learning is constructed through transactions between the individual and the community, between the personal and the social" (Chapman, 1997, p. 44). In this study, the act of comprehending texts was seen as both a cognitively and socially constructed process: one that was integrated with various forms of thought representation (e.g. oral language, image, gesture, etc.), active in nature, and situated within social contexts. Students were given opportunities to actively manipulate their physical environments through imagination and arts-integrated programming as well as being able to construct knowledge from the collaborative experience. They moved away from a reading curriculum which emphasized facts and isolated skills, towards one that highlighted collaborative contexts, and active learning–one that involved complex thought and interpretation.

Multiple Literacies/ Multiliteracies Theory and Theorists

As I mentioned above, the notion of what it takes to be considered literate has broadened in recent years. Where once the concept of literacy exclusively meant decoding/encoding, or comprehending/composing printed texts in isolation, scholars and educators now realize that literacy is also connected with today's changing socio-cultural contexts (cf. Rogers & Soter, 1997). Nowadays, definitions of literacy have extended beyond print and have moved outside of the classroom. Current conceptions of literacy have become more multiple, shifting the term from literacy to literacies. Similar to languages or cultures, which are always changing, literacies are becoming increasingly dynamic and multi-modal (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2000; Jewitt & Kress, 2003). Not only are today's children being asked to negotiate meanings from more varied types of print (e.g. through internet use, books, non-fiction texts, magazines,

advertising, newspapers, picturebooks), they are also required to transact across a variety of contexts, for example through film, web-based texts, television, music, oral narratives, graphs, numeracy, performance, and many others. Merely having the ability to comprehend and compose the printed word is no longer adequate. In this way, multiple literacies are also becoming increasingly muli-demensional.

Multiliteracies pedagogy emerged from the theoretical traditions of semiotics, literary criticism, communication theory, arts-integration and language research (Hobbs, 1997). It includes the ability to create meaningful messages from symbols, despite the form of expression. These messages relied on "modes of representation much larger than language alone" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). including other forms of perception and communication (e.g. "reading" and "composing" signs, gestures, graphics, musical scores, performances, media, etc.).

Multiple literacy pedagogies directly informed this project. Students were encouraged to read and compose representations that were print-based, and performance-based through literature, as well as through drama, visual art and music. Negotiations of meaning and rich transactions with varied texts lay at the core of this study.

2.3   What do Proficient Readers Do When They Read?

Like Frank Smith (1994), I believe that the most significant aspect of reading is meaning-making. Yet it is not surprising that so many students are falling through the cracks when it comes to negotiating meaning from printed texts: reading comprehension is a complicated and multi-layered process. Besides decoding and knowing the literal content of the story, students must also construct rich global meanings by recognizing settings and characters; calling upon their prior background knowledge and experiences; engaging with and visualizing the narrative's action, sequencing events; and understanding the underlying themes and gist, all the while monitoring their understandings from the entirety of the narrative.

Teacher/researcher Jeffery Wilhelm (1997) took the time to closely examine what engaged readers did when they read narrative texts. Wilhelm presented case studies of nine adolescents, which included: detailed field notes, surveys, interviews with students and class discussions, His findings demonstrate that engaged readers had the ability to get "inside the text" (pp. 46-47). They could enter the literature with a given set of assumptions about the world, react to what

they were reading, and then exit the text, taking with them a new perception of the world based on what they just experienced (pp. 46-47). It was this ability—to enter into the story world and "transact" with it—that research has shown deepened one's understanding of narrative (Fish, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1978; Sipe, 2000; Wells, 1986; Wilhelm, 1997).

According to Iser (1978) competent readers have the ability to fill in the "gaps" left by an author. Wilhelm extended this notion, concluding that proficient readers also have the metacognitive ability to step into and out of the story world, to evaluate the author's agenda or their own reading process and relate these to their personal identities. "This ability", said Wilhelm, "gave proficient readers a distinct advantage in reading comprehension" (p. 47).

Other researchers took a different stance on interpreting the characteristics of proficient readers. For instance, Paris, Wasik, & Turner (1991) stated that skillful readers had the ability to comprehend on two levels; understanding locally (e.g. the words and sentences that the author has written) and globally (e.g. using cognitive tools to interpret beyond the text, relating with the entirety of the text). Pressley (1999) suggested that proficient readers were also able to make prior predictions about the content of the text, monitor its sensibility while reading it, and then reflect on their own constructed interpretations following the experience.

Pearson and Fielding (1994) argue that expert readers are strategic. Identifying the main themes or gist of a piece (e.g. Allington, 2001; Rogers, 1990; Williams, 2002), visualizing and engaging with the text (e.g. Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Wilhelm, 1997), activating background knowledge and experience (Duke & Pearson, 2003; Tovani, 2000) making predictions and inferences about the meaning of the text (e.g. Duke & Pearson, 2003; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997; National Research Council, 1998), sequencing or using story grammars (Allington, 2001), asking questions while reading (e.g. Duffy, 2003; Keene & Zimmerman; Wilhelm & Edminston, 1998), thinking meta-cognitively about texts (e.g. Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Wilhelm, 1997), and monitoring comprehension (e.g. Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; National Research Council, 1998) were examples of some of the strategies that proficient readers were able to implement while engaging with print. Paris et al. (1991) noted that "strategic reading [was] a prime characteristic of expert readers because it is woven into the fabric of children's cognitive development and is necessary for success in school" (p. 609). I speak more about this strategic approach to reading in the instruction and evaluation sections following.

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2.4   What do Less Proficient Readers Do When They Read?

As noted above, cognitive, reader response, and constructivist theorists all contribute to the idea that meaning-making is an active process (e.g. Adams, 1990; Duke & Pearson, 2003; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Pearson, 2003; Piaget 1983; Rosenblatt, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; Wells, 1986; Wilhelm, 1997). Believing that this was also true for struggling readers, Wilhelm delved further. In both *You Gotta Be The Book* (1997) and then in his follow-up *Imagining to Learn* (1998), co-authored with Brian Edmiston , he asked the question "What *are* less proficient readers doing when they read?" He discovered after several months of research in the classroom that the struggling readers were indeed *active*, but were actively busy with unsuccessful strategies.

Some were reading literally. Although they could actively retell the story, they could not interact with it. They looked for the secondary world in the print and could not see beyond the text itself (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). These non-strategic readers wanted the text to tell them what to think about, and were, as Wilhelm (1997) discovered, unable to "construct a meaningful experience with the text" (p. 96). The following example is taken from Wilhelm's *You Gotta Be The Book* and precisely demonstrates this:

> Wilhelm: What does Mrs. Oakes look like?
>
> Kevin: It doesn't say.
>
> Wilhelm: But what do we know about her?
>
> Kevin: Well, it says she's middle-aged…she cleans and cooks…sort of a maid… she lives down the road with her husband…
>
> Wilhelm: So, what might she look like? What clothes will she wear to the house? What color hair?…
>
> Kevin: It doesn't SAY.

Other students were diligently trying to understand on a basic, decoding level. Likewise, Paris et al. (1991) found that:

> Novice readers in contrast [to expert readers], often focus on decoding single words, fail to adjust their reading for different purposes, and seldom look ahead or back in text to monitor and improve comprehension… In addition, older yet poor readers may have motivational handicaps, such as low expectations for success, anxiety about their reading, and unwillingness to persevere in the face of difficulty (p. 609).

Wilhelm (1997) contributed similar findings. For example, one student busied himself with the symbols of the text. Instead of participating in the secondary world and constructing personal meaning as engaged students do, this less proficient reader exerted immense effort simply decoding and pronouncing the words. Other students in Wilhelm's (1997) study were able to decode quite well; they could visualize characters and settings in particular kinds of books, but they could not transact with unfamiliar texts. One student in particular demonstrated that she was unable to connect the world of the text with her own personal experience (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 96). Pressley (2002), citing Williams (1993) also notes that some less proficient readers can activate their prior knowledge and experiences when reading, but only those readers who remotely relate to the text.

Finally, Wilhelm (1997) noted that the struggling readers he worked with lacked motivation and failed to monitor their comprehension. Likewise, Paris et al. (1991) stated that novice readers lack important meta-cognition strategies like monitoring and regulating comprehension during reading. Although the students may have believed that they are understanding the text, "[t]hey often proceed[ed] on 'automatic pilot' oblivious [of their] comprehension difficulties (Duffy & Roehler, 1987 cited in Paris et al., 1991).

2.5   Instruction in Reading Comprehension

Durkin (1975) asserted in her classic observational study that very little time was spent in classrooms on explicit reading comprehension instruction (only 45 minutes out of 11,587 minutes in total) (cited in Durkin, 1984). She found that much of the time devoted to reading instruction went to giving and checking written assignments or filling in workbooks and ditto sheets, with the assumption that readers would simply discover the inherent meaning in printed texts and then transmit this knowledge to their mind (Durkin, 1984). Smith (1994) in his book *Understanding Reading* explains, "[t]he text could be regarded as a transmitter, the reader as a receiver, and the visual system as a communication channel" (p. 246).

Researchers in the 1980's such as Anderson and Pearson (1984), Durkin, (1984), and Tierney and Cunningham, (1984) provided evidence that, in contrast, students' cultural and personal backgrounds were intricately connected to how students read and understood written texts. They argued that simply writing answers in workbooks or transmitting information from

one from text to another did not acknowledge the complicated processes students were undergoing when they comprehended written text. Smith (1994) added:

> ...information theory has severe limitations, with respect to texts and readers. It can measure 'information'... but it can do nothing about meaning. It cannot say how meaningful a text is, or how much understanding there might be.... Information theory loses its utility once we get inside the head (p. 247).

Gordon Wells (1996), a language and literacy researcher, also argued that this transmission model of learning was " a mistaken one", saying that it forced children to be "passive recipients of information" (p. 218). In his book *The Meaning Makers,* he explained that he came to find out through a 15-year longitudinal research study of 32 students that it was not possible for students to fully understand or know a text simply by having the teacher or author transmit ideas. He wrote that "Knowledge cannot be transmitted" because it is impossible for the student to have the same knowledge that is in the mind of the teacher or author; rather, understanding and knowledge must be "constructed by individual knowers" (p. 218). Similarly, Wilhelm (1997) provided evidence from his research that a transmission approach to comprehension actively "reinforce[d] negative attitudes" and "disenfranchise[d]" readers (p. 10). He added that when students are required to comprehend a text only for information it blocked them from experiencing the world of the story.

As demonstrated in the above examples, traditional methods of reading instruction were not successful. Workbooks, ditto sheets and other "cookie cutter" forms of instruction that were taught in isolation and did not consider what children brought to and took away from texts, did not work for all students, and especially not for those who struggled with literacy (Allington & McGill-Frazen, 1989).

Within the last twenty-five years we have diverged from this transmission model of instruction. Increasingly researchers and educators recognized the need for an innovative model of instruction that would encourage diverse students to actively construct global meaning from the printed word—one that will get students to engage with and experience texts, interpret messages, relate meaning back to their own mental constructions of the world, and monitor their understandings. By the end of the Twentieth Century, more flexible and individualized notions of reading comprehension instruction seeped into classrooms as educators undertook the task of integrating theories and research with practice (e.g. Booth, 2001; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000;

Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Purves et. al, 1995; Wilhelm, 1997, 2001). These newer approaches to instruction, which drew on strategic approaches to global/interpretive comprehension of texts, collaborative learning, and guided practice, supported the unique and diverse groups of learners inside classrooms.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, one prominent change was that researchers and educators, including Duffy (2003), Harvey and Goudvis (2000), Keene and Zimmerman (1997), Pearson (2003), Pearson and Dole (1987), Wilhelm (2001), among others moved from a skill-based approach to a broader instructional model which focused on the teaching of strategies. Here, Duffy (2003) distinguishes the differences between skills and strategies:

> A skill is something you do automatically without thought. You do it the same way every time. Tying your shoes is an example of a skill... A strategy, in contrast is a plan. You are thoughtful when you do it, and you often adjust the plan as you go along to fit the situation... Good readers use many strategies (pp. 21-22).

Beyond the transmission model or skill-based approaches to reading, instruction in strategic reading comprehension gave students the tools they needed to interpret and strengthen their global understandings of a variety of texts (Beck, 1984). For example, by helping students see how strategies could intersect and be implemented, strategic instruction moved readers from basic literal levels of comprehension to spaces where they could globally construct and reflect upon the meaningful encounters they have with printed ideas (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Likewise, Wilhelm (2001) argued that strategic reading models offered students opportunities to connect with the written ideas, activating personal knowledge and experiences, and to individually transact with and make sense of a broad range of texts. As Graves wrote: "We've seen the anatomy of reading comprehension in one taxonomy after another. What we need is the physiology, the actual working parts as a reader interacts with lively text" (cited in Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

From the research of Anderson and Pearson (1984), Benton (1992), Enciso (1992), Harvey and Goudvis (2000), Keene and Zimmermann (1997), National Research Council (1998), Paris et al. (1996), Pearson (2003), Rogers (1990), Tierney and Cunningham (1984), and Wilhelm (1997), I discovered six strategies that were discussed most frequently: (1) bringing prior experience or cognitive schemas to the text, connecting the known to the new; (2) visualizing the story, using sensory images to enhance comprehension, or seeing the action of the story

unfolding in the mind's eye; (3) active meaning-making, transacting and engaging with the text, making predictions and inferences about the text's meaning; (4) sequencing or story mapping, summarizing texts by identifying important ideas and putting them in a meaningful order; (5) understanding the gist or themes of the story, analyzing what lies beneath the surface of the text; and (6) monitoring understanding, meta-cognitively reflecting and regulating comprehension. These were the primary strategies that I called upon in my study.

Instruction in today's classrooms has changed in other ways, too. For example, literacy instruction is becoming more collaborative. Fish (1980) wrote of creating "interpretive learning communities", where members shared "not only an approach to literary meaning-making, but also "the learned perceptual habits, the humanly constructed models for making sense of the world" (Cox, 1992). In this way, readers begin to see reading as a social event, like a conversation with an author, with the characters, or with other readers, where they are given opportunities to share their responses about texts. Wilhelm (2001) also discussed this idea:

> Vygotsky posited that two can do together what neither can do alone... In sharing with peers and teachers, students see that reading is an enjoyable social pursuit through which they can relate to one another about texts and ideas... This reflection helps students learn and use strategies on a self-conscious level (p. 34).

Likewise, Duffy (2002) stated that by interacting with others—and especially those who implement strategies—poorer readers gain more "metacognitive control," the ability to consciously direct their own inferential reasoning processes before, during, and following reading activities .

Finally, today's instruction in reading comprehension has changed to include more guided practice. Pearson and Gallagher (1983) proposed that strategy instruction be explicit in the beginning, perhaps modeled by a more proficient reader; then, through a "gradual release of responsibility," students should gain more expertise and be capable of more independent practice. (For a visual model of this explicit approach see Pearson & Fielding, 1991). This gradual release model was similar to Vygotsky's (1978) construct of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Bruner's (1986) scaffolding model also portrayed this idea: that an individual gradually attained more independence, and that proficiency in learning was strengthened when students had opportunities to practice their skills with the assistance of a more experienced teacher or peer. Similarly, Duffy (2002) maintained that "modeling mental

processes" are key when educators were trying to get less proficient readers to become more strategic. By watching expert comprehenders physically model what they did when they read, less proficient readers developed an understanding of the process of reading. Hence they could move beyond literal comprehension and feel more empowered when they attended to the printed text. Given more opportunities to see how strategies were incorporated, students soon realized they, too, could call upon particular strategies to help them make meaning of particular text types (Wilhelm, 2001).

2.6   Evaluation in Reading Comprehension

In the same way that reading instruction was once based on a transmission model, traditional comprehension evaluations were also teacher or author-directed (Cairney, 1990; Smith, 1994). For example, students would read from print-based texts and then answer questions about what they had read. If the student could produce an accurate plot summary and answers that closely matched those of the judge (a teacher), it was inferred that the child had accurately comprehended the text.

Now, however, with more strategic models for comprehension instruction and more flexible classroom practices, these traditional approaches to measuring comprehension are no longer sufficient (Valencia & Pearson, 1987). What is needed are evaluation tools that assess and support students' abilities to use a range of strategies to comprehend and interpret text. For instance, in our own evaluative case study of an intermediate literacy project that includes 13 urban schools, Rogers, Bryan and Winters (2003) note that unlike the writing assessment in the project, which tended to be more situated and informal, reading comprehension continues to be assessed with standardized, pre-packaged tests:

> At that point, the reading component of the project was being assessed with a standardized test. This test, however, was not yielding similar engagement by the teachers in understanding students' reading abilities and the role of teaching reading strategies in the curriculum. We recognized the need for a reading comprehension strategies measure that was less formal and addressed the situated needs of the teachers [and students]. At that point we undertook the collaborative development of an informal reading inventory of strategies (IRIS) to support and enhance the project goals (NRC 2003).

Wilhelm (1997) also found that standardized tests were the norm for his school district. He transcribed a staff meeting he attended where he debated the use of these formalized tests:

> Not only does this rigid, one-correct-answer perspective limit the potential learning that could be examined within classrooms, it "assumes that such tests measure real-world reading processes, rather than test-taking abilities" (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 479). They also tell little about the student's ability to make sense of, interpret, analyze, connect to, transact with, or think critically about a text. As Rosenblatt said in an interview, traditional approaches to assessment lead students to be "insecure" readers who "have learned to treat literature as a body of knowledge rather than a potential expert assessment, not the faceless tyranny of testing companies!... [O]ne kid fills in circle B because he is guessing and it turns out to be right, and the next kid fills in circle C because she has several reasons to believe it and she turns out to be wrong, and you mean to tell me that you believe we learned something about what students know, how they think and how they learn? (pp. 147-148)

I agree with Wilhelm: pre-packaged and standardized tests that emphasize question/answer approaches suggest there is only one way of comprehending texts. If we want children to learn to go beyond literal comprehension, we must offer broader assessment tools that measure students' abilities to implement strategies and to construct meaning. Standardized tests, multiple choice, and fill in the blank assessments merely measure whether students are getting the facts right.

Can we separate reading comprehension assessment from a reader's context and culture? Of course not. Traditional assessment methods isolated the skill from the person, as if they were two separate entities. These standardized and pre-packaged tests "fail[ed] to recognize the incredible range, diversity, and complexity of readers' responses" (Beach & Hynds, 1991, p. 479). In this way, linguistically and culturally different learners tried to fit into a standardized mold of assessment. In other words, educators were not measuring what children were comprehending, but were evaluating the students' expertise in aligning themselves with the judge's criterion. As Tierney (1998) argued, tests can not be separated from culture:

> The term 'culture-free tests' seems an oxymoron. I suspect that it is well nigh impossible, and certainly questionable, to extract cultural influences from any test or measure of someone's literacy. Literacy, your own and my own, is inextricably connected to cultural background and life experiences. Culture-free assessments afford, at best, a partial and perhaps distorted understanding of the student. In

other words, assessments that do not build upon the nature and nuances of each individual's experience should be viewed as limited and perhaps flawed. (p. 381)

In the same way that teachers ask students to call upon their prior knowledge and experience as a way to develop richer understandings of printed text, assessment too should recognize and value cultural and contextual diversities.

This brings me to another point about assessment: the core of e-*valu*-ation is to "value" (Leggo, 2003). Comprehension assessment that emphasizes set responses that could be simply extracted from texts, limit the value that is placed on the learner's ability to compose information. In Wilhelm's (1997) words, "those who name[d] and define[d] what education was" (i.e. government administrations and testing companies) were the ones who were validated (p. 149). As researchers and educators working with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds who want to know how students are making sense of their world, we have to ask, do we want assessments that encourage uniformity? Paris et al. (1991) stated that most reading tests followed a "surprisingly uniform" format, requiring students to read brief paragraphs and answer multiple-choice questions about them. Comprehension testing is supposed to measure students' meaningful constructions of text and to value the learning connections they are making. Yet traditional assessment practices do not demonstrate the individual's constructed meaning-making nor do they offer opportunities for students to reflect upon why certain aspects of the text are meaningful to them. Authentic assessment has the potential to empower students, to break down boundaries, begin discussions, and encourage independent learning. Instead of looking for one right answer, we need to value the diverse constructions of meaning that students bring to the text.

Finally, standardized forms of assessment are definitive and "product-based." Educators ask the questions, and students produce the answers. When thinking about assessment, one has to ask, what is its purpose? Is it not to monitor where children are, so that educators can further their future learning explorations and constructions of meaning? As educators, we teach children, not literacy. These students are dynamic, like the "ever-changing nature of [their] learning" (Tierney, 1998, p. 386). From a constructivist point of view, children are always building on what they know; there is no fixed, definitive agenda. Tierney (1998) writes:

> Indeed, pre-packaged assessments are apt to be the antithesis of what should be developed. Unfortunately, teachers, students and caregivers may have been enculturated to view assessment as predetermined rather than emergent and as

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having a look and feel quite different from more direct and classroom derived assessments (p. 378).

We need assessments that are process-oriented and more situated, that look beyond notions of *what is being produced* and into the realms of *where students are in their learning* and *how we can take them further.*

As mentioned above, comprehension is a complex process. Traditional assessments underestimate this complexity. As Valencia and Pearson (1987) wrote, comprehension is not an "assembly line" where a reader merely "picks up a new skill at each station" until all the parts are assembled. They added that this view has "serious consequences" for classrooms: it gives students a false sense of security as they equate high test scores with skilled reading, it is insensitive to changes in strategic comprehension instruction and hence does not promote further thinking in the field, and it gives teachers the impression that standardized or pre-packaged tests are more trustworthy than the data they collected daily in the classrooms (p. 728).

Newer forms of assessment need to be more aligned with the strategic models of instruction present in today's classrooms. Moreover, they need to be authentic, empowering, process-focused and interactive, recognizing on all levels (e.g. within systems of education, classrooms, and individuals) that different learners come to texts with different perceptions, ideas, feelings, and experiences; that they interpret, construct meaning and reflect on their learning in unique ways; and then leave the encounter with a wealth of new knowledge and experience.

Tierney (1998) and Pearson (2003) argue that assessment should not be "something we do to kids", but "something we do with kids" to strengthen and further their learning. Ultimately, assessment should be something the children do for themselves. In this way, they suggested that students engage in rich discussions about texts both with their teacher and their peers. These conversations could become a part of classroom instruction; they could be directly based on a piece of writing or they could refer to portfolios created as responses to texts. Tierney (1998) stated that "[s]cores and grades only give the illusion of accuracy and authority," whereas "conversations connected to portfolios or other forms of more direct assessment unmask the basis for decision making and spur the conversation toward a consideration of evidence, an appreciation of assumptions and the negotiations of goals" (p. 378).

Sipe (2000) proposed similar strategies for measuring children's constructions of meaning. The research for Sipe's article was based on seven months of free and open literary discussions

within a first/second grade classroom. The focus of these discussions was on the comprehension of picture story-books that were read aloud. Sipe's findings showed that children's responses, both traditional (e.g. answering questions, discussing the text) and non-traditional (e.g. spontaneously acting out a piece of literature during recess, reacting to and shouting out at characters in the book "No, he can't do that!" or "Watch out!") demonstrated that all students, even young ones, were capable of complex literary understanding. According to Sipe, children constructed meaning in the context of their social settings; this study suggested that talk about texts, observational notes, and being open to the connections that children come up with were excellent ways to measure comprehension (Sipe, 2000). This suggestion echoed the work of Marie Clay (1991), creator of a successful reading recovery program. Her belief is that educators need to pay attention to the meaningful language that even young children bring to stories. She added that story-sharing gives students power over their learning tasks and is directly related to the progress in reading.

Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) suggested that student "inquiry" may also be an alternate way to evaluate comprehension. Coaxing children (not teachers) to create and answer questions about the texts they read not only clarified for students what they had read, it also showed teachers and researchers what the readers were thinking about (Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998). Pressley and Woloshyn (1995) also found that student-generated questions, especially those which required "integration over parts of text (e.g. What did the author describe previously ...?)" and those that focused on ideas, may be effective ways of getting children to comprehend the written word (p. 69). They asserted that it makes readers more active while reading. They added that these "inquiry approaches" to comprehension might highlight problems the children are having with specific passages. Finally, it may be helpful for children to come to greater literary understandings if, when they are finished reading, they went back and answered their own questions.

2.7 Can the arts-integration be used effectively to teach and evaluate reading comprehension?

Using the arts to explicitly teach and evaluate comprehension strategies is perhaps another overlooked solution. Teachers already instinctively include aspects of the arts when teaching

general literacy skills, such as having children sing the alphabet song, look at the illustrations in a picture book, or perform readers' theatre pieces.

One can posit several reasons why the arts might also specifically benefit reading comprehension instruction and evaluation. First, unlike pre-packaged programs and assessments, arts-integration is authentic. Valencia and Pearson (1987) argue that "the best possible [instruction and] assessment of reading would seem to occur when teachers observe and interact with students as they read authentic texts for genuine purposes" (p. 728).

Instead of feeling like they are reading useless passages and being asked to answer insignificant questions that do not relate to their learning, students using arts-integrated reading instruction and evaluation could read real pieces of literature with the purpose of integrating and building their own meaningful constructions of knowledge. Hobbs (1997), referring to Sizer (1984), writes:

> When learning is authentic, the content of classroom discourse is meaningful and relevant to students...students learn through direct experience with tasks they themselves value, with intellectual stimulation from teachers who ask thoughtful questions and provide supportive coaching (p. 11).

Arts-integrated evaluations may include interviews, portfolios or work samples, discussions, and performances (e.g. student produced movies, drama presentations, dances, songs, etc.). These evaluations demonstrate students' abilities to make meaningful constructions of texts in authentic situations. Unlike standardized or pre-packaged tests, which can feel artificial and stressful for children, arts-integrated assessments occur within natural contexts and are process-based. In this way, for most children, arts-integrated evaluations may not feel like assessments at all.

Second, arts-integrated activities are active. For instance, Rogers, O'Neill, and Jasinski, 1995, while working with a group of ninth grade students on a novel study, found that like literature, drama enabled readers "to enter, experience, and explore" imagined contexts in active and meaningful ways (p. 41). Similarly, David Booth (2001) found that drama supports learners' comprehension by allowing students to "live through" the text in their minds and to actively draw upon former experiences and previous knowledge (p. 102).[1] These echo the research of

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[1] I would argue that, like drama, other sign systems such as music and visual art can also activate students' prior knowledge and evoke lived-through experiences—for the arts are all tools which support the composition and expression of meaning.

Wells (1986) and Wilhelm (1997) who state that proficient readers have the capacity, based on their prior knowledge and experiences, to construct an imaginary world from the language of the text and then get inside that world to glean an insider's perspective. According to Wells, allowing students to become "active meaning makers" is the "best way in which adults can help [students] learn..." (Wells, 1986, p. 215). Whether you are creating a rhythm, a role drama, an interpretive dance, a sculpture, or a tableau, the very nature of arts-integration demands active meaning-making. "When children create, they are [actively] making sense of the world" (Alexander cited in Cornett & Smithrim, 2001, p. 32). I added the word "actively" to this quote because, as theorists like Piaget (1973) demonstrated, making sense of the world—which is the core of learning—means actively building on what is known. Wilhelm (1997) furthers this idea, saying that "active participatory experiences... such as those incorporated in the creation of drama and visual art, create a context for more sophisticated comprehension and the creation of elaborated meanings made with the text because background schemata are necessarily activated, a foundational aspect of proficient reading" (p. 91).

Third, arts-integration is motivating for both skilled and developing readers (Berghoff et al, 2000). The importance of motivating students to initiate and sustain literacy activities is not a new idea: motivation has been mentioned by several researchers and is an included topic of much research in the field (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Gambrell & Marniak, 1997; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; National Research Council, 1998; Sipe, 2000; Wells, 1986). Turner (1995) argues that intrinsic motivation is the key to engaging students in reading. Likewise, others found that when students are motivated to engage in reading they frequently improve their reading ability , and comprehension of texts (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). According to Morrow andTracey (1997), students are most motivated to learn when they feel valued and challenged, and when they are given opportunities to choose and to collaborate with others. Classrooms that integrate the arts create this type of motivational environment. They challenge students to think in original ways, and offer endless choices. They also promote interactive and dynamic kinds of classroom participation (Rogers et al., 1995).

Wolf (1997) extends this idea, stating that in integrated classrooms there is a reciprocal flow of information between the teacher and the student:

> In addition to dispensing knowledge to students and coaching students' gathering of knowledge, the teacher can also turn to students as a source of knowledge. In other words the classroom can be structured so that information flows equally, or

nearly equally, between the students and the teacher, so that the students and the teacher share the responsibility of educating one another, each providing information the other needs but does not have (p. 68).

In this reciprocal way, art, drama, and music become the vehicles for inquiry and meaning-making. Furthermore, individuals in arts-integrated classrooms can challenge themselves and construct multiple representations of meaning that are applauded rather than rejected. (Gallas, 1994). In sum, the arts, when merged with reading comprehension provide students with motivating tools and experiences to "think with, talk about, and share" (Wilhelm, 1997, 141).

Fourth, arts-integration allows students to compose and express meaning in multiple ways. Eisner (1998), a well-known advocate of the arts, also believes that, in addition to language, children need multi-modal ways of constructing and communicating the ideas that are represented in books:

> We cannot know through language [alone] what we cannot imagine. The image—visual, tactile, auditory—plays a crucial role in the construction of meaning through text. Those who cannot imagine can not read (p. 15).

Stein (2003) adds to this notion, arguing that multi-modal pedagogies have the possibility of broadening the base of representation in the classrooms by privileging additional modes of communication other than those that are spoken and written (p. 85). In this way, instruction and evaluation that use arts-integrated activities have the potential to empower even the least proficient readers; students can construe and express meaning in ways that work best for them (e.g. visually, kinesthetically, graphically). Then (if need be) they can transfer their ideas back to the printed text. Arts-integration provides a bridge for constructing and expressing alternate representations of meaning; Harste (2000) terms this ability to move between sign systems "transmediation." Here he describes this process:

> Transmediation is an instance of metaphor, yet more... Because each sign system is unique and best suited to a particular perspective of the world, there is often no direct equivalencies. It is difficult to express horror in mathematical symbols, and love is expressed quite differently in art than in language. Moving from sign system to sign system is like turning an artifact so that we suddenly see a new facet that was previously hidden from our view (p. 3).

Harste (2000) and others (Berghoff et al., 2000; Eisner, 1998; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Stein, 2003) all acknowledge that different sign systems have different potentials for meaning-making.

Therefore, when we borrow diverse modes of representation we also borrow diverse ways of thinking (Eisner, 1998). Through the process of layering various signs and their meanings and by bridging printed texts and performance texts, students have the opportunity to 1) transcend the linguistic mode, 2) construct and express messages in more diverse and personally, meaningful ways, and 3) think more flexibly.

Fifth, arts-integration provides process-oriented instruction and evaluation. In discussing evaluation, Wittrock (1987) states that assessments should go beyond criterion referenced instruments and should provide instructionally relevant information about individual student's comprehension strategies and thought processes (p. 734). Likewise, Valencia and Pearson (1987) argue that the assessment score is not a true 'measure' of a student's abilities, but an index of the type and amount of support required to advance learning. They go on to suggest that the "ideal" assessment would be fully integrated with instruction—"[a] scenario in which there is no difference between reading instruction and assessment" (Valencia & Pearson, 1987, p. 729). In this ideal scenario, teachers cultivate evaluations that are more consistent with their strategic instructional practices. This is the possibility I envision for arts-integrated instruction and evaluation. Comprehension instruction would be reflected upon through response to texts, collaboration and arts-integrated evaluations. These reflections would in turn inform classroom instruction. In this way, instruction and assessment could merge as each shapes the other.

Finally, an arts-integrated approach to reading is reflective. Research demonstrates the importance of meta-cognition during reading—the process where students think about their learning as they make meaning from texts (Baker & Brown, 1984; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Wilhelm, 2001; Tovani, 2000). Proficient readers think not only about the literal content of the story, but they evaluate their understandings of the text and their learning situations. In addition, these strategic readers are "self-regulatory", meaning that as they read and are able to monitor and repair comprehension when there is a problem (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p. 18). Because reading and thinking are inextricably connected we want to teach children to gain what Duffy (2003) calls "metacognive control"—the management a child has over his/her own thinking.

Arts-integration enables students to reflect on their reading/thinking process in two different ways. First it represents cognition. Sign systems such as art, music, and drama shape random sensory stimuli into more organized thoughts. For example, many students have the ability to see the action in their mind's eye when they read. By bringing the ideas they glean from the page

into a cohesive picture, it is as if they are calling upon the form of visual art as a way to think about what is happening in the text. This implementation of the visualizing strategy then in turn improves students' abilities to predict, infer, and remember meaning (Wilhelm, 1997 citing Gambrell, 1981; Rose et. al, 2000). Second, it serves as a mediator of thought. As students reflect on their reading they can call upon arts-integrated activities to help them articulate their ideas. This reflection may be performed individually (e.g. drawing reactions to story events, think-alouds) or in a collaborative setting (e.g. role drama, discussions). And third, it generates new thoughts, especially when students discuss their artist representations to their peers and teachers. Wilhelm (1997) transcribes a conversation he had with a colleague about arts-integration and meta-cognition:

> This artwork is as sweet a piece of metacognition as you can imagine. The kids are seeing how they think and seeing how other kids' minds work. They can actually let me into their heads and see what others see when they read (p. 142).

2.8 Conclusion

Making meaning is central to reading. Although decoding, word recognition, and fluency are important, we do not learn to read just to be good decoders. Having literary understandings of texts is a complex and complicated task for young readers, yet most children, when given direct and formal instruction in reading, accomplish it with relatively few problems. But many others, even of normal intelligence, struggle with great difficulty to comprehend texts.

Is this significant problem partly due to our definitions and understandings of what making meaning is? Are children struggling because of the instructional models and assessment tools we use to explain and measure comprehension? I think so. It seems to me that as we move away from the idea that comprehension is the act of passively transmitting knowledge and begin to think of reading as the active process of constructing meaning, we must face these new inquiries: What makes reading valid for students? If a child constructs meaning from a text but it can't communicate his/her understanding through language alone or if this literary understanding can not be measured in standardized ways, are we saying that these children are incapable of globally comprehending narratives? Will new approaches and assessments, perhaps even arts-integrated ones, may be used to help discern the depth of children's literary understandings? What unique aspects of arts-integration engage children in reading and offer opportunities to be better comprehenders?

I have not found any arguments for *not* using arts in teaching reading. More commonly, I see there is less understanding of how to use them as powerful tools for teaching literacy. The arts are not mere frills, nor are they simply about presenting separate subjects in the curriculum which are exclusively performed for an audience. Nor do they have to be completely child-directed and meant for a free-play environment. Instead the arts can be incorporated into the curriculum as interactive and creative strategies that help students construct literary understandings. According to Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998) "[the arts, when used with learning] harness students' imaginations, allowing them to "breathe life into the concepts and content of the curriculum" (p. 5).

III. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

In the literature review I have examined the topic of reading comprehension and posed the question, "Can arts-integration be used as an effective way to teach and evaluate reading comprehension?" Through this investigation I have come to believe that the arts can indeed be powerful and motivating tools for literacy. But can we prove that integration of the arts can advance the less proficient reader's ability to comprehend across a range of texts? It's frequently asserted that the arts boost academic scores and facilitate the instruction of reading . But when I explored this field further, examining articles and books (e.g. Berghoff et al., 2000; Cornett & Smithrim, 2001; Hamblen, 1993; Harp, 1988; Kersten, 1996: Kolb, 1996; Luftig, 1993; 1995; Mantione & Smead, 2003; Wilhelm & Edmiston, 1998; Booth, 2001) and by analyzing Eisner's study (1998) "Does Experience in the Arts Boost Academic Achievement?" I found that much of the evidence was merely anecdotal (e.g. Booth, 2001; Harp, 1988; Hamblen, 1993; Kersten, 1996: Kolb, 1996; Luftig, 1993). There appears to be little empirical research on this topic.

I pose these specific research questions:

- Can less proficient (grade three and four) readers improve their comprehension of written narratives by participating in a program that uses arts-integrated, global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies? Five comprehension strategies will be addressed: (a) recognizing the setting portrayed, (b) engaging with and visualizing the story narrative, (c) bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text, (d) sequencing story events, and (e) understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story.

- Can arts-integration be used as an effective tool for both instructing and evaluating students' comprehension of narrative texts?

3.2 Research Justification

From the beginning of this project, I was interested in an inductive research study—specifically, one that would begin with the observation of children in their school environments. I wanted to (1) gain new insights into how arts-integrated techniques

(performance texts) could be employed to benefit these less proficient readers, and (2) develop a research-based program that teachers could use when instructing or evaluating reading comprehension. As Mason notes, "Qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data" (Mason, 1996, p. 4). For these reasons, I chose a qualitative multi-case methodology (Merriam, 1998).

My hope was that this qualitative approach would allow me to understand more fully what strategies these reluctant students were already implementing when they read, how students negotiated meaning across texts and also whether art-based techniques could be used as a tool to strengthen and evaluate students' reading comprehension.

I created an original, arts-integrated reading comprehension program, taught the program, and then analyzed how this program influenced individual readers. This research was exploratory and evaluative. Exploratory, in that I "gained familiarity with or achieved new insights" into the students' reading comprehension processes, uncovering the specific strategies they used to make meaning from printed texts and then discovered with the children how successfully fine arts techniques could be integrated into the reading curriculum (Palys, 1997, p. 77). Evaluative, in that I assessed the students' successes in reading comprehension at all stages of the program (beginning, during, and following). This methodology corresponded directly with my research questions which, to recap, were to explore the effectiveness of using arts-integrated global/interpretive strategies with less proficient readers as they comprehend narrative texts, and to further understand whether arts-integration might be considered a useful instruction and evaluation tool. [2]

3.3 Research Environment

The research was conducted from January 2003 through June 2003 at Chapter Elementary School[3]. Two hundred and sixty-eight students attended this medium sized school during this time, ranging in age from 5 to 13 years. Situated in an affluent area in West Vancouver,

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[2] I chose narrative texts for two reasons. First, narrative texts tell stories, similarly so do art, music, and drama. In this way narrative easily lends itself to being represented in a variety of ways. Second, I personally enjoy children's narratives; therefore I wanted to include them in my study.

[3] (The name of the school has been changed.) Personal contacts led me to this school.

Chartwell is well known both for its amazing view of the harbour and for its high academic standards.

Chartwell's population included students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Korean, Persian, Iranian, Mexican, Brazilian, German, and Chinese. In total, over 25 nations were represented. Yet only 10.5% of these culturally diverse students were learning English as their second language.

In my first meeting with the grade three and four teachers (4 in total) I proposed the research that I was hoping to complete in their school. The teachers openly asked questions and were given the choice of whether they would like to participate. Two teachers, one teaching grade 3 and another teaching grade 4 expressed an interest.

My original intent was to work with one combined-grade group (about 5-8 children) for twenty-four sessions (including the pre-, post-, and delayed interviews), teaching them strategic reading comprehension through drama, visual art, and music, and then evaluating their progress. However, the teachers asked that I not work with the grade 3 and 4 students together. Their concern stemmed from previous experiences where the parents of the fourth graders disapproved of their children being put into groups with the third grade students. I assured them that I would be able to work with each group separately. This suggestion changed the original design of the research. Instead of teaching and evaluating a smaller group of combined grade 3 and 4 students (5-8) for a longer period of time (18 instructional 45-minute sessions and 6 evaluation sessions), I would now be working with more students (12 in total) for fewer sessions (9 instructional 60-minute sessions and 9 evaluation sessions).

3.4   Research Subjects

I chose to work with children in grades three and four for several reasons. First, in these grades it becomes more obvious which children are having difficulties with reading comprehension. Second, because I would not be teaching decoding, I was looking for children who could already decode the words. Unlike many six and seven-year olds, by age eight and nine many students have figured out how to decode even difficult words with fluency. In addition, children who are eight and nine are at a higher cognitive level and have larger vocabularies than six and seven year old students; this is important as I wanted the students to be able to participate

in discussions about their personal comprehension processes. Finally, in grades three and four it is not too late to set children on a path of being lifelong readers and learners, even with minimal resources.

Each teacher was asked to nominate 5-8 students who they felt could decode words but who might benefit from additional reading comprehension assistance. I gave only three criteria to the selectors who nominated the children for this study. First, students needed to be in either grade three or four. Second, students would have to be able to decode English text fluently but could be struggling and require assistance in implementing reading global/interpretive comprehension strategies. And third, they had to have the permission of their parents and teachers to participate in the program.

The grade three group included 7 students (four boys and three girls). Three of these seven students spoke English as a second language. The grade four group was smaller in size, containing only 5 students (all boys). Three of these five students spoke English as a second language. It should be mentioned, however, that all of these ESL students were able to fluently decode English words in printed texts.

3.5   Research Design

The research study that I conducted lasted for a total of seven months within the school, from January, 2002 to June, 2003. It consisted of three phases:

Phase I	—	January – mid February, 2003
Phase II	—	mid February – mid May, 2003
Phase III	—	June, 2003

Phase I

Table 1: Schedule of Phase I–Observations, Discussions, and Pre-Progress Interviews

Date	Research Conducted
January 8, 2003	• Observed students in their classroom settings • Discussed with teachers the students' strengths and limitations in reading comprehension
January 15, 2003	• Observed students in their classroom settings • Discussed with students their interests, strengths and limitations in reading comprehension
January 22, 2003	• Completed stage 1 and 2 of the pre-progress interviews (e.g.

	miscue analysis, decoding and fluency, local/literal comprehension)
January 29, 2003	• Began stage 3 of the pre-progress interviews (e.g. collaboratively read story, observed students' arts-integrated representations and interviewed students)
February 5, 2003	• Continued with stage 3 of the pre-progress interviews (e.g. observed students' arts-integrated representations and interviewed students)
February 7, 2003	• Completed stage 3 of the pre-progress interviews (e.g. observed remaining students' arts-integrated representation and interviewed students)

Observations and Discussions:

Starting at the beginning of January (see Table 1 for a schedule of Phase I), I began observing each group of teacher-nominated children within their own classroom settings (for 60 minutes per group per research session). This observation time gave me an opportunity to determine which pieces of literature I would use for the pre- and post-progress interviews and throughout the instructional sessions. During the first week (January 8, 2003) I spoke to the teachers about each individual and looked carefully at their previous school work. Because of confidentiality issues, I was not able to look at each child's provincial and school-wide reading comprehension scores (BC Ministry of Education's Foundational Skills Test, Jerry Johns, CAT). However, I did speak to both teachers, specifically about informal tests the students had recently completed and about how they felt their students were doing in reading comprehension. Here is a segment from one of these conversations:

K: What can you tell me about Heidi's reading?

T: Heidi is very thoughtful. She is in the ESL program here at the school. She came here from Korea last year.

K: Do you think her struggles with reading are because she doesn't speak English as her first language?

T: It is hard to say. She seems to make connections with some stories she's familiar with, but not with others...

The second week's observation (January 15, 2003) offered a chance to engage in conversations with the children to better understand their interests, their reading processes and struggles, and their collaborative group skills. These conversations gave me a better understanding of each individual's reading profile and provided hints as to what each child needed to improve his/her reading comprehension skills.

I was grateful for this phase of the research as it gave me time to begin forming relationships with all of the students. It was important to me that they felt comfortable enough to tell me about their reading processes and difficulties. These two weeks also gave me opportunities to see how insecure some of the students felt within their class during reading time. When asked questions, many would give simple one-word answers and, when asked if they would like to read aloud to the class, some declined.

Overview of the pre-progress interview

Throughout the rest of January and into February, I conducted the pre-program progress interviews with each of the students I would be working with. I will now provide an overview of the progress interviews, discussing how they were performed and how I measured student progress, and elucidate the methodological choices I made.

I wanted students to understand the printed texts at a deeper, global level; therefore they needed to be able to decode, recognize words, and move fluently through the printed text at an automatic pace so that they could construct a message. In this way decoding and fluency are integral parts of comprehension. Realizing that proficient readers are able to decode fluently, as well as literally and globally comprehend texts, I decided the pre-progress interview would be divided into three stages: 1) decoding and fluency, 2) local/literal comprehension, and 3) global/interpretive comprehension.

1) Stage 1–Decoding and fluency:

Students were first asked to read a grade-leveled passage out loud. These passages came from Wilma Miller's books (1993; 1995). As the students read, I timed them and marked down any mistakes they made. I used the miscue analysis technique to evaluate these decoding miscues (pioneered by Goodman, 1965). In other words, I noted any miscues, distinguishing any errors the students made (e.g., substitutions, omissions, insertions, or repetitions). My intent for these tasks was to accurately measure each individual's decoding skills and fluency.

2) Stage 2–Literal/Local Comprehension:

Next, I went through the text, reading it as they did (errors and all); this information allowed me to understand more fully which sentences made semantic sense. It also provided me with

insights into each student's understanding on a sentence level and their capacity to call upon context when reading a narrative.

Included with each passage were specific, local comprehension questions that gave me valuable information about each student's ability to make meaning on a basic literal level, and showed me the student's skill of extracting details from the passage. For example, a question might be "Who did John want to spend the summer with?" or "In what formation do geese fly?" These passages with basic comprehension questions also furthered my understanding of how some students were struggling to comprehend even the most basic questions.

3) Stage 3–Global/Interpretive Comprehension:

To decipher the students' use of global comprehension strategies, I asked the students to: (A) collaboratively read a piece of narrative writing, (B) individually represent it through artistic modes, and (C) put their artistic interpretations of the story and the strategies they had implemented back into words.

A. Collaboratively reading the story:

First, I chose one fable (see Appendix A: Aesop's *The Greedy Dog* manuscript) that was rated at the grade 3 reading level (cf. Fountas).[4] I copied this piece so that each child could have the printed text in front of him/her and could read along. I then asked all of the children to participate in a reading circle, where each child read one section of the story aloud. If a child did not want to read, I read their section for them (one child in the pre-progress interview chose not to read aloud). Or, if they struggled to decode, I assisted by providing them with the difficult words and phrases. The versions of the fables I chose, included only one picture. This was intentional, as I wanted students to actively visualize the setting and story events and to perform the story without relying wholly on the illustrators' vision.

B. Artistically representing the narrative:

Second, an intermediary step was offered in which the children could represent their understandings of the text multi-modally. Although the students were

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[4] For the pre-progress interviews I chose the   Aseop's (1994) *The Greedy Dog* and for the post-progress interviews I chose Aesop's (1994) *The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf.*

offered various ways to perform their stories (artistically, dramatically, or musically), all of the students said they felt most comfortable using visual art. Thus, I called upon two visual art techniques: sequential picture cards and Enciso's (1992) symbolic story representation approach (SRI).[5]

- Sequential Picture Cards: Students were given four index cards. On these cards, students were asked to draw four of the most important story events. On the back of the cards the students were asked to write down sentences that described what they had drawn. The students then sequenced the cards. The sequential picture cards provided opportunities for me to see how they could synthesize information and sequence story events.

- Symbolic Representation Interview (SRI): This strategy was borrowed from Patricia Enciso (1992). (However, instead of using cardboard cut-outs as Enciso recommended the students created their own personalized settings and characters out of clay. I chose to use clay instead of cut-outs because it provided more information about the student's thoughts about the narrative such as how tall or muscular the characters were, or how the trees looked, etc.). In brief, this method involved asking the students to retell/replay a narrative using created clay action figures. Students first created figures representing both the characters in the story and the student him/herself. Some students also created settings. After the clay figures and settings had been created, the students individually met with me. Using the clay figures as puppets, the students dramatically retold the story. As mentioned, an important and unique part of this story retelling strategy was that students also placed within their dramatization a clay figure that represented themselves as readers. This technique provided information about their personal connections and engagement with the story and its characters. I also had the ability to observe how the child envisioned the imaginary space and sequenced the story events.

C. Putting what they know about the story back into words:

Immediately following the artistic representations, I conducted interviews with each child. The sequential picture cards were set out in front of the student and the

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[5] These interviews took place in a separate section of the room so that I could ensure that the children were not looking at their peers' performance texts and so that I could video and audio tape each performance.

videoed SRI presentations were played back for the child to watch.[6] The students not only enjoyed seeing themselves on television, they mentioned that the tapes really helped them to experience or envision the story's narrative. "Just seeing myself tell the story helps me to remember what I imagined when you read it out loud," said one. After replaying their arts-integrated narrative representations, I asked each child pre-prepared questions about the comprehension strategies they were employing (see Appendix B-Global/Interpretive Comprehension Questionnaire). I wrote their answers in the corresponding blank spaces.[7] If the answers did not reflect the questions asked or their artistic performance I probed further using oral questions. I also took informal notes on each child's intonation, gestures, and facial expressions.

I then created a rubric that directly related to the global/interpretive comprehension questionnaire (see Appendix C-Global/Interpretive Comprehension Rubric). This rubric was used as a measurement for both the pre- (and post-) progress interviews. It helped me determine student growth in global reading comprehension over time.

Phase II

Table 2: Schedule of Phase II–Instruction, Discussions, and Post-Progress Interviews

Date/Dates	Research Conducted
February 12, 2003-	• Taught 9 arts-integrated reading comprehension lessons

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[6] I filmed the second and third steps of the pre-program progress interviews. Making these recordings was necessary for four reasons. First, when performing or when creating, children act differently if they believe someone is judging their work (their performance or creation is then more "staged"). By using a camera and not a notepad they did not see me "judging them." I believe that by mounting a video recorder on a tripod in the corner of the room, or by placing an audio recorder on the table, I was able to accurately capture them in the act of interpreting the text, obtaining data in less obtrusive ways. I am not interested in a staged performance; instead I wanted to see their thinking processes and investigate their literary understandings. Second, because I was interacting with the children—by communicating or playing with them—I was not always able to make anecdotal notes. Also, because performance texts can occur quickly and vital understandings represented by facial expressions, glances, bodily movements, and proximity can be missed in observational notes, I think these modes of recording (video recording, photographing and audio recording) actively captured the verbal and nonverbal dynamics of their retellings. Finally, I was able return to the data at any time in the following months to transcribe lessons and look for student progress.

[7] Although I believe that their performance texts clearly demonstrated understandings of the narratives, school systems rely more heavily on language-based forms of communication. For this reason translating their understandings back into an oral or written form was crucial—I wanted the students to be able to demonstrate success in their classrooms, to discuss texts and meet grade leveled reading expectations.

April 30, 2003	• Met informally with teachers throughout the semester to discuss student progress
May 7, 2003	• Completed stage 1 and 2 of the post-progress interviews (e.g. miscue analysis, decoding and fluency, local/literal comprehension)
May 14, 2003	• Began stage 3 of the post-progress interviews (e.g. collaboratively read story, observed students' arts-integrated representations and interviewed students)
May 16, 2003	• Completed stage 3 of the post-progress interviews (e.g. observed remaining students' arts-integrated representation and interviewed students) • Met with teachers to discuss student progress

Instruction

The bulk of my in-class research took place over the next four months, from the middle of February through to the middle of May, 2003 (see Table 2 for a schedule of Phase II). Once a week during this time I met with the two groups of students (5-7 children per group). In total 9 arts-integrated reading comprehension lessons were taught (three from visual art, three from drama and three from music). However, because some of the arts-integrated techniques were more complex or time-consuming than I anticipated (e.g. musical gist, role drama) they ended up being carried over to the next sixty-minute session (see Table 3 for an outline of lessons taught).

Table 3: Outline of lessons taught

Date	Lesson number	Narrative	Arts-integrated technique	Comprehension strategy employed
February 12	Review	The Hen and the Tree	Visual art: Sequential Picture Cards and SRI	• Review and discussion of the pre-progress interview techniques and reading comprehension strategies
February 19	Lesson 1	The Camel Dances	Music: Musical Gist	• Background knowledge/experience • Gist or theme
February 21	Lesson 1 cont.	When Vegetables Go Bad	Music: Musical Gist cont.	• Background knowledge/experience • Gist or theme
February 26	Lesson 2	Hey Little Ant	Drama: Role Drama	• Recognizing the Setting • Engaging With / Visualizing the story
March 5	Lesson 2 cont.	Hey Little Ant	Drama: Role Drama continued	• Recognizing the Setting • Engaging With and Visualizing the story
March 7	Lesson 3	The Salamander Room	Visual art: Visual Poetry	• Background knowledge/experience • Gist or theme
March 12	Lesson 4	The Salamander Room	Visual art: Draw Over	• Engaging with/Visualizing the story • Recognizing the setting

March 26	Lesson 5	I Want to Be	Visual art: Picture Mapping Collage	• Gist or theme • Engaging with/ Visualizing the story
April 2	Lesson 6	Jeffrey's Wor(l)ds	Drama: Sequencing Tableaux	• Sequencing • Recognizing the setting
April 16	Lesson 7	Where the Wild Things Are.	Drama: Inside/Outside Circle	• Background knowledge/experience • Sequencing
April 23	Lesson 8	The Pony Man	Music: Lyric Dancing/Drawinig	• Recognizing the Setting • Engaging with / Visualizing the story
April 30	Lesson 9	The Lizard and the Snake	Music: Sound Effects	• Sequencing • Background knowledge/experience

Each art-based lesson focused on two (of the five) reading comprehension strategies: (a) recognizing the setting portrayed, (b) engaging with and visualizing the story narrative, (c) bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text, (d) sequencing story events, and (e) understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story. So over the course of the semester each of these comprehension strategies was taught at least three times.

I will now describe in a general way what the teaching sessions looked like. Each week during the teaching sessions I would begin by introducing the children to a printed text (usually a picture book, but sometimes a short story or fable, musical lyrics or a prose poem) by either reading it aloud or having the children participate in a reading circle. Next we would target difficult words and discuss our literal understandings of the text. If the students still did not locally comprehend the text, we would sometimes draw or dramatize specific story events.

When I was sure that each child locally understood the content of the story, I began explicitly teaching and modeling the global/interpretive comprehension strategies that good readers use to understand narratives. As mentioned above, each week I would teach and employ two reading comprehension strategies. For example, if my emphasis was on recognizing the setting and bringing background knowledge or experience to the text, I might discuss with the children sections of the narrative that talked about the setting. I might also talk about my prior experiences and what I know about similar settings. I would encourage students to talk amongst themselves, and to tell their personal stories or tell any ideas they had that related to the settings in the text. Finally, I might draw a semantic web of how I related to the setting or a picture of what the setting might look like to me. All of these comprehension strategies were modeled and discussed before the children were asked to independently employ them.

Next we engaged in an arts-integrated technique. These arts-integrated techniques were merged with the global/interpretive comprehension strategies. Below are descriptions of each of

the arts-integrated activities (performance texts) I created or adapted, the disciplines which they evolved from, and the comprehension strategies on which they are intended to work.

- Draw over/paint over (visual art): Much like a voice over, where an unseen narrator told his/her thoughts about a story. Students were read to or collectively read a narrative text. When they had personal thoughts or feelings about the narrative, they drew or painted what they were envisioning. When they completed their artwork we discussed each individual's picture. This approach was a type of think-aloud strategy which allowed me to witness how each individual was engaging and visualizing the narrative and how they were recognizing the setting. The discussions that followed this exercise also demonstrated the personal connections and background knowledge the students brought to the text.

- Picture mapping collage (visual art): After reading a prose poem, students created collages that reminded them of the narrative's themes, and events. Like a map, it was a visual representation of the story. When placed beside the text, this technique helped students visualize where the poem took place and what it was about. It also enabled them to recall the theme or gist of the story.

- Visual Poetry (visual art): Sometimes called a "concrete poetry" or "shaped poetry" (Leggo, 2003), this strategy can be implemented in isolation or after reading a story. Here we read a picturebook, carefully listening to the words and looking at the illustrations. The students then created cartoon-like drawings of a character from the text and brainstormed a list of everything they knew about that character. Next, a sheet of tracing paper was placed over the original drawing. The brainstormed information was transferred (using very small letters) onto the lines of the drawing. From a distance the drawing of the character could be seen, but a closer look revealed the written poetry. This approach emphasized each student's understanding of the story's underlying gist or themes. In addition, the details a student remembered revealed how her background influenced the connections she made to the story.

- Role drama (drama): This is a well researched technique that goes beyond simply acting out the story (O'Neill & Lambert, 1982; Tarlington & Verriour, 1991; Booth, 1994; Verriour, 1994; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; O'Neill, 1995). Here students had the opportunity to enter into the imaginary world the story using improvisational and teacher-in-role strategies (Rogers et al., 1995). The literature was only the starting place. From

the narrative we constructed "a self-contained imaginative universe" and then moved within it (O'Neill, 1995, p. 45). We improvised the text's missing scenes, conducted interviews or group meetings where everyone including the teacher was in role, created tableaux, and moved back and forth through the time of the narrative. Engaging and visualizing were natural outcomes of this technique. This role-playing enabled the children to experience the mood and the details of the story. It activated student's prior knowledge and experience as they made cognitive and affective connections between what they brought to the drama and the text itself (Wilhelm, 1997). Moreover, it aided the students' abilities to infer the theme and gist of the story.

- Sequenced tableaux (drama): When creating tableaux, students used their own bodies to crystallize significant moments, themes, ideas in a narrative (Rogers et al., 1995, Toronto Board of Education, 1997). In this exercise, students broke down the narrative into its important events. Students then practiced creating still images (either as individuals or in small groups) to represent these events. Next, the students accurately placed each tableau into its proper sequential order according to the text, while the teacher provided a voice-over narration. This exercise highlighted the students' ability to sequence a story, especially the situations which constituted the introduction, the rising action, the crisis, and the resolution. Sequenced tableaux was also very effective in helping children recognize story settings and visualize or engage with story narratives.

- Inside/outside circle (drama): This strategy required equal numbers of people to form two concentric circles, one inside the other. The inside circle looked outward while the outside circle looked inward. In this way, everyone was partnered. The teacher directed the person in the inside circle to pretend to be one character in the story and the person in the outside circle to become another character. For example, when we used the picturebook, *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak (1963), the child in the inside circle became Max and the child in the outside circle became the Wild Thing. The students, in role, then began to express their assigned characters' inner thoughts and feelings through movement and language. The teacher became a conductor of the action and could give other directions (e.g. "inner circle, now you freeze while the outer circle increases its volume," or "Freeze. Now rotate"). The teacher moved through the story sequentially, highlighting the important moments of the story. This strategy was advantageous for helping students activate their prior knowledge and experience and to enable them to better understand the story's sequence, gist and themes.

- Musical interludes (music): Based on the Orff-Schulwerk (www.mtlassenaosa.org/page2.html) approach to music education, this strategy can also be transformed to enhance literacy and especially comprehension skills. Here students individually read the same story repeatedly until they had a good sense of what was happening within its narrative. Next, each child was taught short musical chants, rhythms, or songs that related directly to the story (akin to the "leitmotif" of classical music, a short musical theme associated with a specific character or situation). For example in Lobel's fable (1980), "The Camel Who Could Not Dance", one child was taught a song about the intentions of the protagonist: "Dancing is what I will do. I love the parade. I'll practice and work very hard all through the day." Another student was given a chant which represents the gist of the story, or unspoken thoughts of the other characters: "She cannot dance, she cannot dance, she cannot dance at all" or "she's humpy and bumpy and just plain frumpy." Next, as the story was read by one of the students, all of these interludes were inserted at different places into the story narrative. Although we did not do this, other musical instruments like drums, xylophones, guitars, or other percussion instruments could have been added. Overall, this ensemble technique furthered the students' abilities to engage with the characters, activating their prior knowledge and experiences to understand their character's feelings and motivations. In addition, it helped to strengthen the student's understandings of the underlying mood, gist, or themes of the story.

- Lyric dancing/ Lyric drawing (music): This technique could also be modified into a lyric drawing exercise. For this reason I will interchange the words dancing and drawing (e.g. dancing/drawing). To begin, I gave each student a written copy of musical lyrics. They read the words as I played the recorded music (we used the *Pony Man* by Gordon Lightfoot, 1988). This music had within its lyrics a narrative story. Other examples of narrative songs might include *Puff the Magic Dragon* (Peter, Paul & Mary, 1992), or *Superman's Song* (Crash Test Dummies, 1991). I asked the children to move/draw as they listened. They were free to interpret the song by pretending to be or sketching the characters in the song's narrative, by being the singer/songwriter/writing, or simply by moving/drawing to its melody. This artistic choice was up to them. I replayed the same song several times. I asked the children to take time out from dancing/drawing to re-read the lyrics and discuss their interpretations. Next, I asked the students to think of a question they had about the lyrics. Each student presented his/her question to the group. Again, we played the music and danced/drew our interpretations, this time, however, I

asked the students to focus on obtaining the answers to the questions. Following this, we discussed and answered the questions, basing our answers on our performance texts. Here the children painted a picture through movement or visual art what they now saw in the music, a technique which helped them engage with and visualize the text. The selected pieces of music had a variety of locations. For example, the pony man takes the children from their houses to the meadow, to the sky, to a ship and back home again, the students' interpretations and reflections included a lot of settings. In this way, lyric dancing/painted furthered the students' abilities to recognize the settings.

- Sound Effects: For this strategy, I read a narrative to the students (in this case it was a fable created by myself entitled *The Lizard and The Snake*). During this time the students were asked to think about a soundscape for the text. Following the story we brainstormed some ideas about what sounds might be like in the story's environment. Working together we sequenced the story deciding, as we went, on the sound effects that would accent the text. These effects were then performed as the narrator (another child) read the story aloud. Sequencing and bringing knowledge and experience to the text were the main outcomes of this technique.

I should note that the intent of this research was not to compare the nine performance texts, nor was it to determine which technique worked best with each child. Rather, I tried to take a holistic look at all the arts-integrated activities to determine if their elements could be used as tools for strengthening and evaluating readers' comprehension capabilities.

Post-Progress Interviews

As noted in Table 2 (p. 39), the program was followed by three more sessions which allowed me to complete the post-program progress interviews. The stages in pre-progress interviews were identical to those in the post-program progress interviews, with the exception of the fable being changed (in the post-progress interviews I used Aesop's fable "The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf").

Discussions

In addition to ongoing informal discussions with the teachers throughout Phase II, I had a final (more formal) meeting with each teacher to discuss how the children were using the strategies they had learned from our sessions in their regular classrooms. For example, during

these interviews the grade four teacher noted that Nathan seemed to be making more connections in the novel study and was employing higher order thinking skills in his language arts and science classes and that Tate was participating more during read-alouds and demonstrating more confidence with literacy tasks. We also discussed what types of progress I was seeing with the students. For instance, I mentioned Boris' recent willingness to read aloud and engage with the narratives.

Phase III

Table 4: Schedule of Phase III–Presentation, Delayed-Progress Interviews, Reflections

Date/Dates	Research Conducted
June 11, 2003	• Informally presented some of our arts-integrated techniques to the grade three class (the grade 4 class was on a field trip) • Completed the delayed-progress interviews with the grade three class • Completed reflection questionnaires with the grade three class
June 16, 2003	• Completed the delayed-progress interviews with the grade four class • Completed reflection questionnaires with the grade three class

I returned to the school in the June to perform a delayed interview with each group. I worked with the grade three class on June 11, 2003 and the grade four class on June 16, 2003.

Presentation

The grade three teacher asked to see some of the global/interpretive comprehension strategies and arts-activities we had been working on. The presentation ended up being 60 minutes long. We had a two-hour class that day (June 11) because the grade four group was on a field trip.

I quickly met with the students to discuss our presentation, asking them what they wanted to perform or do. They decided to show the musical gist and draw-over activities. I spoke briefly to the class about the global/interpretive comprehension strategies I wanted them to employ. Next, the whole class participated in the arts-integrated activities.

The less proficient students were viewed as leaders who taught their peers the musical inserts. All of the students seemed to benefit from this presentation—the more proficient readers

were reminded of strategies they should use when they read, and the less proficient readers were able to consolidate and apply their learning as well as feel valued within their classroom.

The grade four teacher opted out of the presentation for her class. She felt that with the testing that she had to complete and the amount of "extra" activities there were at the end of the school year (e.g. field trips, concerts, presentations, science fairs), there was not enough time to add anything else to the schedule.

Delayed-Progress Interviews and Reflections

These interviews were different from the pre-and post-progress interviews; they were group interviews in which students did not complete decoding and fluency, local/literal comprehension or global/interpretive comprehension tasks, but rather discussed their learning in a collaborative setting (see Appendix D: Delayed-Progress Interview Questionnaire). I chose to do these delayed interviews in this way partly because there was not enough time before the end of the school year to re-create yet another post-program progress interview, but also because I wanted to gain different information: I wanted to know how the students felt about the program, and whether they felt that their understandings of printed text had improved by using the arts-integrated comprehension strategies. These final interviews gave me further information about their perceptions of the program, their reading processes, and about their progress throughout the program. Although I had set interview questions prepared, these group interviews were semi-structured and followed the conversation of the students. Finally, each student filled out a reflection sheet which deepened my understandings of their process, their interests, and their limitations (see Appendix E: Student Reflection Questionnaire)

3.6 Data Collection

Several types of data were collected during this study including: (a) observational field notes (based on informal interviews with students or teachers, classroom observations, and arts-integrated lessons); (b) visual art and writing samples (c) miscue analyses and fluency times (based on each child's orally reading); (d) semantic sentence analyses and local reading comprehension scores; (e) global/Interpretive comprehension scores and responses; (f) recordings of performance texts (video or audio); (g) delayed interview notes; and reflection questionnaires.

3.7 Data Analyses

Observational Field Notes and Visual Art and Writing Samples

The field notes and samples were used in three different ways. First, I examined the field notes and samples throughout the program, looking for individual progress and significant moments of student growth in reading comprehension. Second, these field notes and samples were called upon during the post-progress meetings with the classroom teachers (May 16, 2003). Here, we used the field notes and samples to inform our talk about student progress, strengths of the program, and opinions held by students. Third, field notes and samples were used in chapter 4 of this study as qualitative data references throughout the individual case studies and lesson analyses.

Miscue Analyses and Fluency Times

Each student performed an oral reading assessment which included a miscue analysis and fluency time. While they read aloud I noted any miscues, distinguishing any errors the students made, e.g., substitutions, omissions, insertions, or repetitions. To score these analyses I totaled the number of errors and divided it by the number of running words. I then multiplied this number by 100 and rounded it to the nearest tenth to produce a percentage. I then compared the children's scores to this oral reading measure:

Independent ⟶	98.4% to 100%	=	High Independent Range
	96.6 % to 98.4%	=	Independent Range
	95% to 96.6%	=	Low Independent Range
Instructional ⟶	93.4% to 95%	=	High Instructional Range
	91.6 % to 93.4%	=	Instructional Range
	90% to 91.6%	=	Low Instructional Range
Frustration ⟶	90% or below	=	Frustration Range

I also timed each child's oral reading, not because I wanted children to race through the text—faster is not necessarily better—but to give insights into the students' decoding processes and also to assess fluency.

Semantic Sentence Analyses and Local Reading Comprehension Scores

As a way to gain more insight into how the students were literally comprehending I semantically analyzed each sentence of their miscue analyses (cf. Rhodes & Shanklin in Valencia, et al., 1990). As they read the passage I kept track of words they said incorrectly (substitutions, insertions, repetitions). I then read through the passage exactly as the student had, marking any sentence that did not make sense. Then to score, I added the sum of semantically unacceptable sentences and then divided that number by the total number of sentences. I then multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. This score represents the percentage of sentences that had the potential to make sense.

Not all miscues were semantically unacceptable. For example, when Clyde read "In his work at *an* airport Jackpot has found many kinds of foods, plants or even birds" instead of "In his work at *the* airport Jackpot has found many kinds of foods, plants or even birds" the sentence still makes sense.[8] However when he read, "This small beagle may be wearing a green coat and walking around the *bagel*" instead of "This small beagle may be wearing a green coat and walking around the *baggage*" the meaning of the sentence was changed.

Following the running records and semantic analyses of the sentences, I asked the children five literal/local comprehension questions. These questions were directly about the content of the text. For example, after reading *The Beagle Brigade* (Miller, 1995, p. 170) about a beagle who works in the airport sniffing baggage for illegal foods and plants I might ask, "In which airport does Jackpot work?" Three of the five questions were like this one, requiring only one-word answers directly extracted from the passage. The last two questions were a little more elaborate and required more than a one word answer, for example, "If Jackpot was your dog how would you train him?" Here students are able to either draw from the passage and say something similar (e.g. like Doreen's "I would feed him some food he likes and maybe put it in an empty box") or they can call upon comprehension strategies like bringing background knowledge to the text (e.g. like Heidi's "I have a dog and we give hugs and cheer or give dog treats when he be good. If he be bad we make him go lay down. That's how I will train him"). Both answers would be considered correct.

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[8] Read from Miller, p. 170

Global/Interpretive Comprehension Scores and Responses

As mentioned above, I created an global/interpretive comprehension rubric that corresponded to the five global/interpretive strategies that were taught through arts-integration: recognizing the setting portrayed, engaging with and visualizing the story narrative, bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text, sequencing story events, and understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story (see Appendix C: Global/Interpretive Comprehension Rubric). I used this rubric to measure the students' employment of these reading comprehension strategies.

Each strategy had the potential to earn the student four points (a score of 1 meant students were only minimally meeting expectations and a score of 4 meant that students were exceeding expectations). Therefore the highest possible total score each child could receive on the pre- or post- progress interviews was 20 points (5 strategies x 4 points). Each student's global/interpretive scores (pre and post) were then organized into a table (see Appendix F: Overall Thesis Data). In addition to the five strategy scores, I inserted a total score column for each student's pre- and post- tests and another column which calculated change (i.e. the total post-strategy score minus the total pre-strategy score).

I analyzed the global/interpretive strategy data on three separate levels: 1) individually, 2) comparatively across the two classes, and 3) globally across the whole project.

1. Individually: I compared each student's decoding and fluency, literal/local comprehension, and global/interpretive scores, looking for patterns that might suggest why each student may have been less able (than proficient readers) to employ global/interpretive comprehend strategies. (e.g. Tate took over 2 minutes to read three sentences from the grade-leveled passage. This result led me to believe that his lack of automaticity was interrupting his literal/local and global/interpretive comprehension). This comparison of the student's global/interpretive scores with their decoding and fluency, and their sentence and local comprehension scores offered insights into each students' individual, comprehension process.

2. Comparatively across the two classes: To compare the two classes, I averaged each class's global/interpretive strategy scores. I contrasted the overall averages

and also the averages for each strategy. I wanted to see if arts-integration was an effective instructional and evaluative tool for students across different classrooms.

3. Overall analysis: First, I colour coded growth in each individual's strategy scores. For example, if a child improved his/her ability to employ a strategy (e.g. a recognizing the setting score was boosted from 3 on the pre-test to 4 on the post-test) I coloured this growth red, if both scores stayed the same–I coloured them orange, and if the scores decreased–I coloured them yellow. Having these data put together and coloured in this visual way allowed me to quickly see the overall patterns of change. Second, I totaled the students' global/interpretive strategy scores for the pre and post-tests . Next, I inserted another row in the overall table (in which I subtracted the pre-test totals from the post-test totals) which illustrated the overall change that occurred throughout the program (between the pre- and post- tests) and across each of the strategies. This provided insight into whether less proficient readers could improve their global reading comprehension by participating in an arts-integrated strategic program.

Recordings

Video or audio recordings were used to capture the students' artistic representations and discussions of the meanings they constructed from the text (e.g. sequential picture cards and symbolic representation interviews). These recordings were used both by the students and by myself. The students viewed the video recordings following their retellings in the pre- and post-progress interviews as a way to strengthen their understandings of the narratives. These recordings were also used as qualitative data references throughout the individual case studies and lesson analyses (chapter 4).

Delayed Interview Notes and Reflection Questionnaires

Delayed interview notes and reflection questionnaires were called upon to qualitatively demonstrate individual growth. Students wrote about their own perceptions and ideas about reading comprehension and commented on any improvements they felt they made. I call upon these notes and questionnaires throughout the individual case studies (chapter 4).

Reliability

To validate the reliability of the global/interpretive rubric, I asked one graduate student and one elementary teacher to mark the global/interpretive comprehension scores of the post-progress questionnaires. Each evaluated six different children. Out of sixty scores (12 students * 5 strategies) there were 8 disagreements, meaning that the rubric could be considered 87% reliable (52/60). We then discussed each of these points of disagreement to negotiate what the final score should be.

3.8 Overview of the Next Chapter

In the next chapter, I will begin by summarizing the overall patterns of change and the individual change between the pre- and post- progress interviews. I will do this for each of the three phases—decoding and fluency, literal comprehension, and global/interpretive comprehension sections. Then, I will compare the results between the two classes. These data will address growth in the students' global/interpretive reading comprehension. Next, I will describe three sample lessons, examining how three students interacted within the particular lessons to illustrate efficacy of arts-integration for instruction and evaluation of global/interpretive reading comprehension. Finally, I will present three individual case studies to examine the role of arts-integration and how its presence in the lessons affected the students' abilities to comprehend printed texts.

IV. Findings

The text of a poem or of a novel or of a drama is like a musical score. The artist who created the score—composer or poet—has set down notations for others, to guide them in the production of a work of art...Moreover, in the literary reading, even the keyboard on which the performer plays is himself. From the linkage of his own experiences with words from his own store of memories, he must draw the appropriate elements symbolized by the score or text, to structure a new experience, the work of art

(Rosenblatt, 1994, pp. 13-14)

4.1 Introduction to Data Findings

Decoding and fluency, literal/local comprehension, and global/interpretive comprehension all converge as the proficient reader gleans a wealth of information from the printed text. For this reason, examination of the data will be reported from these three areas: (1) decoding and fluency, (2) literal/local comprehension, and (3) global/interpretive comprehension.

4.2 Overall Findings

Overall, the pre- and post-interview data indicate that all of the students improved in their global/interpretive comprehension of written narratives by participating in a program that used arts-integrated strategies (see Appendix E: overall data). In addition, all but one of the students improved their decoding/fluency and sentence sense-making skills. Only one half of the students bettered their literal comprehension scores. These changes are discussed in the following sections.

Overall Patterns of Change in Decoding and Fluency

The pre-progress interview results (see Appendix F: Overall Thesis Data) showed that the majority of the students (10 out of 12) were decoding in the independent range (95% and above). These findings were not surprising because I had asked the teachers to nominate only children who already had an ability to decode.

Following the program, decoding skills were evaluated again. Results showed that eleven of the students decoded their grade-leveled passages within the independent range. Overall the students improved an average of 1.2% over the six month period.

The time it took for the students to read the passages ranged from 2 minutes 8 seconds up to 3 minutes 59 seconds. All but one of the students read fluently enough to make meaning from their grade-leveled passage.

Although children were asked to read aloud, working on their decoding and fluency as an intrinsic part of reading and making-meaning, these specific activities were not taught. Therefore, I suspect most of this improvement was merely developmental. The children were now ending the school year and had progressed in their decoding skills suitable to their age.

Individual Change in Decoding and Fluency

The miscue analyses from the pre-program progress interviews indicated that only one of the students had extreme difficulties decoding his grade-leveled passage. With more than 20 errors, his original score placed him in the frustration range (90% and below). To support this child, I allowed him to read from a text that was one year behind his grade level (grade 3 rather than grade 4). This change improved his pre-progress score greatly, enabling him to score in the independent range, which allowed him to continue feeling successful in the research project.

Two other students, one in grade 3 and the other in grade 4 scored perfectly on their leveled miscue analyses, sentence, and literal comprehension scores, indicating to me that they would require a higher leveled passages for the post-test. Since I specifically asked for children that were capable decoders, I am not surprised by these generous results.

The same child who struggled to decode during the pre-program progress interview had significant difficulties getting through the grade four passage again in the post-progress interview. After reading only three sentences, he made fourteen decoding errors. Seeing that the grade four passage was still too frustrating, I stopped him and asked him to read again from the third grade passage, one year behind his grade level. In contrast, the two children who scored perfectly in the pre-program progress interviews were each asked to read a passage one year above their grade level (reading passages for grades 4 and 5).

All twelve students decoded the post-progress passages within the independent range, 95% and above. From a quick glance at the scoring data it appears that of the twelve students, nine

improved, one stayed the same, and two declined. However, when I looked closer at the results of the two students whose progress appeared to decline, I realized that these were the same two who were reading a passage one year above their grade level. Therefore, it would appear that eleven students' decoding improved and one stayed the same.

Two students, Heidi and Sean, showed surprisingly strong improvement. Heidi moved from the instructional range (90-95%) into the independent range (95% and above), specifically from a score of 94.6% to 99.2%—a difference of 4.6%! What could account for this significant increase? I believe it had to do with her increased familiarity with the English language. As an ESL student, Heidi made decoding errors in her pre-progress interview with words that are seldom heard in English (e.g. beagle, brigade, and baggage). By her post-progress interview, two changes happened: first the passage read for the post-test contained less seldomly heard words, and second, Heidi had been in an English-speaking classroom for six additional months, giving her time to absorb a much larger vocabulary. Another child, Sean—while both times scoring in the independent range—moved from 96% to 100%. What could account for his marked change? Unlike Heidi, Sean was not a student learning English as a second language. One change that I did notice while examining Sean's profile was his increased fluency rate. According to the data acquired (See Appendix F: Overall Thesis Data), Sean read the pre-program passage in 2 minutes and 8 seconds, which was at least 30 seconds faster than his peers read it (but 12 seconds slower than I read it)[9]. Although this reading did not seem abnormally fast, perhaps it was too fast to allow him to read the words as accurately as he could have if he had taken his time. This was not the case in the post-program running record, where Sean took an additional minute and 13 seconds to read the passage (3 minutes, 21 seconds). Here, Sean's fluency rate is recorded as the third slowest time. However, I noticed that when he took his time with the text, calling upon context cues and phonemes, he made many more self-corrections. This indicates that perhaps his decoding improved because he was more carefully analyzing the passage's words. On the other hand, Sean also seemed to connect better with the post-progress passage, drawing on more of his background knowledge and experience. He even mentioned to me that he found the second passage more interesting; that he could relate to people in history better than he could to beagles.[10] Perhaps his motivation to read and his ability to activate background

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[9] I then timed myself reading the passage. My time was 1 min. 58 sec.

[10] Field notes from the post-progress interview, May 7, 2003

knowledge and experiences also played a factor in how well he decoded. Indeed, reading is an interconnected and complex process, where global/interpretive comprehension strategies and decoding both inform the other.

Two students struggled with the "prosodic features" of the text (Hook & Jones, 2002). Besides speed, fluency is dependent on the student's rhythm, pausing, intonation, or phrasing. When these prosodic features are off, making meaning from the text can be much more difficult. Such was the case with Drew. Although his decoding score was in the independent range (96.7%), he had problems reading the rhythms in phrases and recognizing punctuation. His sentences blended together in such a way that it was difficult for him to decipher the meaning of the text. While trying to register content, Drew was forced to pause or go back and re-read complete phrases or sentences. My notes showed that Tate, even in the post-progress interview, also continued to struggle in this way. This might also explain why he could obtained a high score in decoding (98.4%) and a high score in sentence meaning-making (94%) but only received a 3 out of 5 in local comprehension.

Overall Patterns of Change in Literal Comprehension

Sentence sense-making scores demonstrated how students used the context of the sentence to help them make literal sense of the passage. These scores ranged from 69%-100% accuracy in the pre-progress interviews and from 82%-100% accuracy in the post-program interviews. In most cases, with the exception of three (see Appendix F: Overall Thesis Data), students improved their sentence sense-making by the end of the program. Again, as in the decoding assessments, two of these three students were reading more demanding texts (one grade level higher) during the post-progress interviews.

A general pattern emerged in the data: generally students who scored a high sense-making score at the sentence level also scored in the independent or instructional ranges (5 or 4) in the literal comprehension task.

Students were also asked to answer five literal/local comprehension questions about the passage. During the pre-program progress interviews only two of the twelve students earned a

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Sean: I just thought I'd tell you. I wasn't too excited to read about beagles. This second story is a lot more interesting. It 's about people. I can relate better to people than to beagles.

perfect score (5/5), placing them in the independent literal comprehension category.[11] Two other students were placed in the instructional literal comprehension category (4/5). The remaining eight students received scores of 3 or under, placing them into the frustration literal comprehension category.

Having the majority of the kids fall into the frustration literal comprehension category is consistent with what I hypothesized for two reasons: first, I asked the teachers (who knew these students) to nominate children who had problems with reading comprehension, and second, although I am speculating, I believe that many of these students had difficulties engaging with the pre-progress text. This meant that they had trouble remembering what they read. For instance, (as mentioned above) Sean noted in a conversation[12] that he "wasn't too excited to read about beagles". Perhaps this contributed to why he scored within the instructional range (4/5) in his pre-progress interview and within the independent range (5/5) in his post-progress interview.

Following the program, students participated in the post-program progress interviews where they were asked to read a different passage and again answer literal comprehension questions about the content of the text. Most of the students (8 of the 12) showed improvement in this area. Two students fell into the independent literal comprehension category by receiving a perfect score (5/5). Seven children made only one mistake and were placed into the instructional literal comprehension category. And the three remaining students, receiving a score of 3 or under, were placed in the frustration comprehension categories.

I speculate that there are several reasons why the children improved in this area. First, many of the students increased their decoding and fluency rates in the post-test, meaning they could read with more automaticity and assimilate the information in the passage with less effort and conscious attention. According to Hook and Jones (2002) "[e]ven mild difficulties in automatic word recognition significantly affect a reader's ability to efficiently comprehend what they are reading." Second, although I did not work specifically on local comprehension skills, during the arts-integrated lessons students indirectly got a lot of practice in this area. Besides engaging in rich discussions about texts they had opportunities to understand the narratives' content in multi-

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[11] Both the comprehension questions and the scoring categories (independent, instructional, and frustration) are presented with the Miller's reading passages.

[12] Field notes from the post-progress interview, May 7, 2003

Sean: I just though I'd tell you. I wasn't too excited to read about beagles. This second story is a lot more interesting. It 's about people. I can relate better to people than to beagles.

modal ways, hence allowing them to learn about ways they might use to remember what they read. Third, the post-progress passages in both grade levels—although written by the same author and rated exactly the same—seemed more engaging and slightly easier than the pre-progress passages. Perhaps this is because the post-progress passages highlighted more commonly used English words.[13] Obviously, when children understand more words within the passage and are more engaged, they have more opportunities to remember, and grasp the meaning of, and make connections with the printed text.

Individual Change in Literal Comprehension

When children have low sense-making scores at the sentence level it follows that they may also struggle with comprehension tasks across the entirety of the text. This can be demonstrated by Tate. Because Tate's semantic sentence score was only 69% it is understandable that his literal comprehension score was in the frustration range (2/5). He was not making enough sense of the sentences to synthesize at a local level.

Vincent, on the other hand, scored a high sense-making score at the sentence level (94%) but also fell into the frustration range (3 or less) when he tried to literally comprehend the whole passage. This demonstrated to me that even a good decoder may be having trouble comprehending at a local level. Vincent seemed to have trouble remembering the pre-progress and post-progress passages when it came time to answer the questions. Although he could find the answers in the text when he had it in front of him, he could not remember the passage from memory.[14]

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[13] I did not realize this fact until I began analyzing the data While the pre-progress passages talked about words like "brigade," "beagle" or "Arkansas". The post-progress passages called upon words like "geese", "outlines" and "family". Some of the children were obviously confused about the vocabulary and themes during the pre-progress interviews; they had to focus their attention on the words and the sentence's context hence pulling attention away from their overall meaning-making.

[14] Field notes from the post-progress interview, May 7, 2003
Kari: In what formation did the geese fly?
- Vincent looks at his pencil.
- He asks, "Can I see the story?" I ask him to try to answer the question without the passage first. After a pause he replies, "I don't know."
- I put the passage in front of him. He points to the words and says, "In a 5 formation."
- He is referring to the V in V-formation as a Roman numeral.

Overall Patterns of Change in the Global /Interpretive Comprehension

The findings show that during the pre-program progress interviews the grade three students' averaged total score was 10 while the grade four students' averaged total score was 9. These relatively low scores were again consistent with my hypothesis. I expected these less proficient readers–who were nominated by their teachers because of their difficulties in reading comprehension–to earn lower scores. Also, I was asking students to apply global/interpretive comprehension strategies that they may not have used before or that they had not been explicitly taught.

The results of the post-program progress interviews reveal not only that both the grade three students and grade four students boosted their averaged total scores from 4 to 5 points (average total scores for both classes=15), but also that every child improved his/her ability to globally interpret printed texts.

These post-program findings were surprising to me. I did not expect that all of the children would improve. I was sure that some would really benefit from and become very engaged with the program, but I also considered that others might continue to struggle even when the performance element was added. My assumption was based on two ideas. First, I only met with each group once a week for 60 minutes. I wondered if this relatively small amount of time would be enough to strengthen their abilities to read strategically. Second, I knew that some children, especially those who are more solitary or those who were concerned with what others see, felt reluctant when they are asked to sing, draw, dance, and act with/in front of others. I pondered whether this type of programming might make them feel more uncomfortable and less willing to participate. Judging from their attitudes and student reflection sheets this was not the case. Their responses demonstrated that all of the students enjoyed and were actively engaged with at least one aspect of the program (e.g. reading, visual art, drama, music, etc.).

When I looked specifically at student improvement across the strategies, searching for answers as to whether arts-integration was an effective instruction and evaluation tool, two significant patterns of change emerged from the data: First, all of the students (12/12) demonstrated consistent growth in sequencing the story events, and second, most of the students (11/12) improved their ability to recognize the setting, and engage with and visualize the story narrative.

Why is it that every student became better able to sequence the narrative's main events? I suspect that three things happened. First, although I only explicitly taught this strategy three times, I speculate that this strategy might have been used (even though not explicitly taught) in most of the arts-integrated lessons; for example, during the literal comprehension sections students talked about and worked with each story's main events and progression. Indeed, the sequencing strategy (more than the other four global strategies implemented) seemed most aligned with literal comprehension and retelling—an area where most of the students improved. Second, a problem materialized that was inherent in the pre-program text: while sequencing the story events in *The Greedy Dog* (found in Aesop, 1994, see Appendix A: *The Greedy Dog* manuscript) the students had to know that the dog barked at his own reflection; this was what caused him to drop the bone. This event was important because it represented the story's main conflict. However, some of the children thought that the greedy dog encountered not his reflection but another dog. According to my rubric, if students misinterpreted ideas about the characters, including adding characters, they automatically earned a score of one. This situation occurred in three cases. On the other hand, the post-text—a more familiar narrative entitled *The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf* (found in Aesop, 1994, see Appendix A: *The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf* manuscript)—did not present this problem. Hence, these three students automatically scored higher and the data indicate that their ability to sequence the story events improved. Finally, the third reason that I suspect the students became better at sequencing was because at the time of the pre-program interview few of the students were skilled at sequencing. Proof being that only two of the twelve students had pre-program scores of three or higher. This left a lot of room for potential improvement in summarizing and ordering texts.

So why then did eleven of the twelve children improve in their ability to engage with and visualize the text and to recognize the setting? Considering that the program was based on active participation and incorporated playful art activities to help make stories more tangible, our work naturally lent itself to such improvements. We spent a lot of time making pictures (visual art) and gestures (drama, dance) that evoked images of the characters, their actions, and the story worlds in which they lived.

Other than with the sequencing tasks and the engaging with and visualizing the narrative tasks (see Appendix F-Overall Thesis Data), I saw no other overall patterns. While some children's scores improved in recognizing the setting, bringing knowledge and experience to the text, and understanding the gist, other children's scores remained unchanged in these categories.

In two instances where the students were required to understand the gist and themes, their scores decreased in this one category. Most students boosted certain strategy scores but remained the same in others; only Clyde and Boris improved their scores with every strategy.

As a way to see what comprehension strategies these students are already implementing and also as a way to see change over time, I totaled all of the global/interpretive comprehension pre-scores and then all the post-scores. The results are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Overall Growth in Global /Interpretive Comprehension Scores

	Setting	Engaging and visualizing	Bringing personal knowledge/experience	Sequencing	Theme or Gist
Pre-test Totals	25	28	27	19	23
Post-test Totals	38	40	35	36	29
Overall Change	+13	+12	+8	+17	+6

These data demonstrate that students, even before the program, were already beginning to implement global/interpretive comprehension strategies, especially those in the areas of engaging and visualizing and in bringing background knowledge and experience to the printed text. These results also confirm the speculation I made in the previous section—that the students simply were not as good at employing the sequencing the text strategy as compared to using the other global/interpretive comprehension strategies.

Table 5 also demonstrates that the least amount of growth was seen in the theme or gist category. To implement this strategy students needed to be able to simultaneously draw on sources in and beyond the text (cf. Rogers, 1990); for instance these readers needed to call upon inferences and conclusions from character motivations, events and their own experiences. They also needed to be able to express these abstract understandings. This is a complex task for first language speakers, and can be even more difficult for second language learners. Thus, it was not surprising that the two highest scores in this category during the pre-program interview were from two students who spoke English as their first language (see Appendix E -Overall Thesis Data). Unlike the other strategies, it is more difficult to convey an understanding of the underlying themes or gist without adept language skills. Where strategies like recognizing the setting, visualizing the text, or sequencing the story events could be illustrated without words

through the visual arts, and background knowledge/experience and engagement with the text could be portrayed through drama, gist/theme seemed best described when integrated with language. Therefore, students who struggled to verbally express their ideas had significant trouble with this strategy.

The answer to my first thesis question, "Can less proficient (grade three and four) readers improve their comprehension of written narratives by participating in a program that uses arts-integrated, global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies?", is yes. These data in Table 5 demonstrate that students were able to improve their understandings of narrative printed texts when arts-integrated global/interpretive comprehension strategies were implemented. The data shows growth in all 5 of the strategies taught.

Individual Change in Global/Interpretive Comprehension

Unlike literal comprehension questions, which are text specific and based on content, global/interpretive comprehension strategies can be applied across a range of texts. Reading comprehension is much broader than simply being able to answer questions correctly. To obtain high global comprehension scores, students were required to engage and make connections, to interpret, infer, analyze and synthesize, while also constructing meanings from texts. To measure students' abilities in globally comprehending texts I had them read a story, then create clay characters which they used to re-tell the story using the SRI strategy (Enciso, 1992). Next I asked the students questions from the Global/Interpretive Comprehension Questionnaire (see Appendix B–Global/Interpretive Comprehension Questionnaire), specifically how they recognized the settings, engaged with or visualized the narrative, connected to and sequenced the text, and finally how they understood the story's gist and themes. As mentioned above, I then used a custom rubric to score each student's implementation of reading comprehension strategies.

Across individuals, the total global/interpretive scores (see Appendix F-Overall Thesis Data) from the pre-program progress interviews ranged between 7 and 13 (e.g. Lisa received a total score of 9 = 3+2+2+1+1). These total global/interpretive scores were boosted during the post-progress interviews, ranging from 13-17.

Although I speculated, coming into the program, that scores would be relatively consistent across individuals, meaning that if a students received a low pre-progress score in decoding and

fluency (96.6%), and a low pre-progress score in literal comprehension (2 or 3), they might also receive a low pre-progress score in global/interpretive comprehension (between 6 and 9), this was not what happened. Instead, the pre-progress interview data show that some students were consistent across literal/local and global/interpretive comprehension (e.g. Boris and Tate) while others were not (e.g. Nathan, Lisa). One student especially stood out: Heidi, who scored the lowest of all the students in the decoding task (making 13 errors) and fell into the frustration range on the literal comprehension task (3/5), scored one of the higher total global/interpretive scores (12). Unlike Vincent, who is an excellent decoder but did not really understand what he read even on a literal level, Heidi's profile could not be explained as easily and raised more questions. How can a student whose semantic analysis showed that only 69% of her sentences made sense earn a score equal to or greater than her more able peers? I propose three possible answers to this question. First, Heidi brought to the text a wealth of strategies that compensated for her weak skills in decoding (e.g. actively listening to the other students as they made comments about the texts, talking around a topic, or asking me questions). Second, she used context cues so efficiently when decoding that it did not really matter how she decoded or pronounced the words. For example, she pronounced the word beagle as bagel, but could glean from the context of the sentence that this word represented something that worked at the airport sniffing baggage. She may have correctly formed an image of a dog but merely thought it was called a bagel. Third, because we read the story aloud using the reading circle technique, Heidi could have relied on others to do much of the decoding for her.

Sometimes when students do well in literal comprehension tasks and assessments, educators assume that they have good understandings of what they read. They may even assume that the student is efficiently employing global/interpretive comprehension strategies. Yet this study shows that this is not always the case. Clyde, for instance, answered four of the five literal comprehension questions correctly but struggled to implement global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies. His score of 7 was in fact one of the lowest scores of all the students in the global/interpretive comprehension task category. Perhaps students like Clyde were able to extract literal meaning from the print but could not make any personal connections to its content. Sometimes students do not transact with texts—they have difficulties bringing their own knowledge or ideas of the world to the text, and struggle to connect the meaning of the printed text to their personal lives. Alternately, they might leave the text with new ideas but they keep these ideas separate from their lives. Like oil and water determined not to mix, the texts they

read remain confined to one area of space in their mind while their real-life experiences and knowledge occupy a separate space. In short, Clyde's answers were likely based on naming and rote recall—in the pre-progress interview he could not effectively connect his understandings of the printed texts to his real-life experiences.

4.3   Group Findings in Global/Interpretive Comprehension

Effectiveness of the Program Across the Two Classes

Two classes participated in this project. Although the arts-integrated lesson plans and the targeted global comprehension strategies that I employed were both identical, the classes were very different from each other. The diversity of the individuals changed everything, from the performance texts to the discussions. Even the readings, from the same texts, seemed transformed as different students brought new inflections and rhythms to the words. Yet to answer my question "Can arts-integration be used as an effective tool for both instructing and evaluating students' comprehension of narrative texts?" I needed to examine how each class transacted with the program. In these tables (6, 7, & 8) class scores have been averaged .

Table 6: Class Average Scores from the Pre-Program Progress Interviews

	Setting	Engaging and visualizing	Bringing personal knowledge /experience	Sequencing	Theme or Gist	Grade Average
Grade 3 Pre-test	2.3	2.3	1.8	1.7	2.1	2.0
Grade 4 Pre-test	1.8	2.4	2.6	1.4	1.6	2.0

A score of 3.0 demonstrates an ability to appropriately implement strategies (e.g. a 3.0 in bringing background knowledge and experience in the text would mean that the class was making suitable connections with the text). As noted in Table 6, neither of the class averages in the pre-progress interview reached the appropriate 3.0 level (both classes' averages were 2.0). This indicates that these groups of children needed extra support implementing global/interpretive comprehension strategies. While the grade three group demonstrated that recognizing the setting and engaging and visualizing the printed text were their strengths, the

grade four students showed their strong points were in engaging and visualizing and also in bringing personal knowledge and experience to the narrative. As discussed in the previous section, both groups displayed that sequencing story events was their weakest strategy.

Table 7: Class Average Scores from the Post-Program Progress Interviews

	Setting	Engaging and visualizing	Bringing personal knowledge/ experience	Sequencing	Theme or Gist	Grade Average
Grade 3 Post-test	3.0	3.3	2.7	3.1	2.4	2.9
Grade 4 Post-test	3.4	3.4	3.2	2.8	2.4	3.0

During the post-progress interviews students achieved more appropriate leveled averages (both average scores were at or neared the 3.0 score). It is a coincidence that both class averages in theme/gist were exactly the same, and also that implementing this strategy proved to be the most difficult for both groups. It should be noted, however, that this gist/theme score, though the lowest average score in all the categories, is still higher than any of the grade three pre-progress interview scores.

Table 8: Class Average Growth from the Pre- to the Post-Program Progress Interviews

	Setting	Engaging and visualizing	Bringing personal knowledge/ experience	Sequencing	Theme or Gist	Grade Average
Grade 3 Growth	.7	1.0	.9	1.4	.3	.9
Grade 4 Growth	1.6	1.0	.6	1.4	.8	1.1

The third graders' highest average growth was in engaging with and visualizing the text. This is understandable as it is a strategy that lends itself to arts-integration. Also, I was not surprised that

the fourth graders' improved so significantly in the recognizing the setting strategy. In many ways, recognizing the setting is like visualizing the text; both strategies require students to "see" in their mind's eye. In the pre-progress interview this grade four group demonstrated their adept skill in implementing the visualizing strategy. Hence, I suspected that when they applied this visualizing strength to the setting strategy, they would also be able to make progress they needed to achieve a higher average.

Again the underlying themes and gist average score showed the least gain over the program. In some ways these results were puzzling because (1) this strategy was taught as many times as the other four strategies and we talked a lot about the underlying meaning of each narrative; (2) the arts-integrated activities that we participated in (drama, music, visual art) and the literature we based our lessons on (e.g. fables) all lent themselves to carrying clear thematic messages; and (3) I witnessed the children getting the gist of the performance texts in several of the lessons. Why were they not able to transfer their understandings during the post-program progress interviews? Certainly this was one of the more difficult strategies to implement using arts-integration. As mentioned above, the students needed to draw on a number of cues both inside and beyond the text. In addition, although to some extent they could depend on using performance texts to represent their understandings (e.g. collage) their answers were richer when they also could incorporate language (e.g. Drew: "[pointing to a picture in his collage] This is for the elements. There's some ice. This is the light"). In other words, as they integrated language and performance texts they were able to convey richer understandings of the narrative's underlying themes and gist.

Overall, the data in tables 6, 7, and 8 demonstrate that across these two classes, arts-integration combined with global/interpretive strategies provided effective tools for strengthening and evaluating reading comprehension.

4.4 Sample lessons

Before I delve into the individual case studies, I will describe more specifically three sample lessons—one from each of the arts-integrated disciplines, drama, music, and visual art. These samples not only show how reading comprehension was taught and evaluated through arts-integrated instruction, they give insights into what reading strategies the twelve students implemented when they read printed texts.

Outline of the lessons

- Reviewing the last lesson or the reading strategies we worked on

- Discussing the new reading strategy/strategies we were going to employ

- Reading the narrative (e.g. read aloud by me, read aloud with their eyes on the text, shared reading aloud)

- Checking for literal understanding (e.g. asking the children to re-tell sections of the story, to target difficult words, and to discuss the narrative's main events)

- Implementing an arts-integrated activity that focuses on one or two global comprehension strategies

Sample music lesson (Musical Gist)

February 9, 2003, grade three

Comprehension strategies implemented:

- Bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text,

- Understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story

As mentioned briefly in the methods section, this technique was based on the Orff-Schulwerk (www.mtlassenaosa.org/page2.html) holistic approach to music education, but instead of focusing on musical techniques (e.g. tone, melody, articulation) I shifted the focus of this strategy so it can also be transformed to enhance literacy and especially reading comprehension. Although this musical technique enabled some of the students to engage with and visualize the printed text, the strategies that I focused on for this lesson were geared to help students better understand the story's underlying themes or gist and to make connections with the text by bringing forth background knowledge and experience.

After talking briefly about the previous week's SRI technique and about how the clay helped some of the students to visualize *The Hen and the Tree,* I read aloud *The Camel Dances* (both stories by Arnold Lobel, 1980). Each student followed along with his/her own copy of the printed text.[15] In this fable a camel practices her ballet dancing for weeks and weeks before she invites her friends, family and critics to view her performance in the parade. When she dances in

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[15] Because I wanted students to make inferences about the ending of the story, the last sentences of the children's copies had been removed.

front of them they do not clap, but instead tell her she can not dance. She chooses not to listen to their advice and spends the rest of her life happily dancing for herself.

    Next, we targeted any words that the children may have found confusing:

Kari: What's lumpy mean?

Heidi: She's got a lump on her back.

Kari: What's bumpy mean?

Drew: She's got big knees...

Sean: Probably bumpy big elbows.

Lisa: [laughing] Like a speed bump.

Kari: And she is frumpy? What does frumpy mean?

Clyde: Bumpy?

Kari: She wears plain clothes that are way too big for her. You've seen those people who wear clothes and their clothes are falling off of them! [kids laugh] This is what she wears, probably a tutu that's way too big for her. We can say it like that: she's lumpy and bumpy and just plain frumpy. We can sing it like that too. You two, do you think you can sing that? Let's hear you go.

Students and Kari: [sing] She's lumpy and bumpy and frumpy and humpy...

With three of the seven students coming from an ESL background and with others first-language speakers who still struggle with diverse vocabulary, it was crucial that we took the time to target difficult words and provided examples of how the students could integrate these words into conversations. Here, I called upon Drew's word "determined" and used it in context:

Kari: So what can we say about this story?

Drew: That she is determined.

Kari: What does that mean? Does anyone know what determined means?

Drew: That she won't give up no matter what.

Kari: Yep. That she won't give up. She is determined to be a good dancer.

This conversation lead into the instruction of the global/interpretive comprehension strategy, understanding the story's gist and themes.

    "Being determined" was certainly a main theme in this fable. I wanted the children to relate this theme to their own lives so they could better understand the narrative. I asked them to tell me more about themselves and what they were determined to practice:

Kari: Heidi, what are you determined to be?

Heidi: A cello player.

Kari: A cello player! You're going to be a determined musician.

Heidi: Yes.

Kari: [To Lisa] What about you?

Lisa: To play piano.

Kari: Piano! [To Sean] What about you?

Sean: A soccer player!

Kari: You're all determined to be musicians or athletes. Doreen?

Doreen: A dancer

Kari: A dancer too! OK, let's sing the song knowing that she's determined.

The students began to recognize this theme in the story as they brought forth their background knowledge and experience. They grasped that the gist of the story was less about dancing (literal comprehension) and more about being determined and believing in yourself (global/interpretative comprehension). So although they may not have related to the idea of being a dancer, they could still connect with the protagonist and understand her determination to continue. The students' body language (e.g. more eye contact with each other and their physical proximity to me), commentary, and enthusiastic talk about their understandings showed me that they were making the connections.

When I was convinced that the children understood the theme of being determined, they were taught short musical chants, rhythms, or songs that related directly to the story. These short musical insertions provided additional information about the characters' feelings and thoughts, making the gist of the story more accessible for these less proficient readers.[16] For example, "She cannot dance, she cannot dance, she cannot dance at all" represented what the audience was thinking as the camel performed for them. Or "Dancing is what I will do. I love the parade! I'll practice and work very hard all through the day" explicitly demonstrated the protagonist's love of dancing and refusal to be deterred.

Following the musical interludes, we had another conversation where I asked the students to offer another title for the narrative. Clyde's answer "The Determined Camel" indicated that he was both figuring out the story's important ideas and that he was engaging with the lesson.

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[16] Some of these inserts were created for this lesson while others were borrowed from a   Kindermusik class that I attended in 1997 with the Toronto School Board.

Others suggested "The Camel that Dances Ballet" and "The Camel that Dances for Himself." Lisa's "The Frustrated Camel" (and her moral in the next section) demonstrated that she was still struggling to understand the story's main themes.

As mentioned at the beginning of this lesson, we activated student's background knowledge and experience to better enable the them to understand the fable's themes or gist. Here I also call upon their prior knowledge and experience in order to further their vocabulary and their comprehension of the narrative:

> Kari: [reads] "When the dance was over she made a great big bow. But there was no applause." Nobody clapped, not one person. Imagine inviting all your friends and doing a dance that you've been practicing and nobody clapped, how would you feel?
>
> Sean: I think I know why nobody clapped.
>
> Kari: Why?
>
> Sean: Because her clothes are too big and frumpy.
>
> Kari: Maybe, because she looked frumpy. How do you think she felt?
>
> Drew: Sad, angry, like kinda bad because they are supposed to clap.
>
> Kari: Yeah. She just felt kinda bad because nobody clapped. Why do you think they wouldn't clap?
>
> Clyde: She was humpy and frumpy and bumpy.
>
> Doreen: People wouldn't clap for her maybe because she doesn't look good when she's dancing.
>
> Kari: So she doesn't look good when she's dancing? I bet you're right. This is what the audience said. [reads] "I must tell you frankly," which means I am just going to tell you flat out, "said a member of the audience, as a critic and a spokesperson for this group, you are lumpy and frumpy."

In this excerpt, the students are remembering the content of the text and relating it to what they know about feelings ("[she felt] sad, angry, like kinda bad"), people's expectations at a performance ("people wouldn't clap for her maybe because she doesn't look good when she's dancing"), and commenting on social conventions ("they are supposed to clap").

Continuing to activate the prior knowledge and experience, and theme and gist strategies, I then invited the children to merge what they recently learned about the themes and gist of the story (e.g. her determination) with what they had brought to the story (e.g. their knowledge and feelings about their own determination), in order to predict a reasonable ending. :

Kari: How do you think the story ends? What could she have done when people told her she'd never be a ballet dancer?

Heidi: She could look at everyone and she could say, "Well I don't care about that" and she could ignore them.

Kari: OK, so you think she's going to keep on practicing. She's not going to care what people say. What do you think Clyde?

Clyde: Bawls. [indicates a crying gesture]

Kari: She's going to cry and that'll be the end of the story? [Clyde nods] What do you think?

Doreen: She might practice again. And she might get good. And people will realize they never even clapped at her and now she's so good...

Kari: Yeah I hear of a lot of stories like that, professional athletes are told they're never going to be good and then they become the professionals. Maybe she'll show all those critics. What do you think Sean?

Sean: Maybe ... hmm. some of her...

Kari: You said earlier that she might faint?

Sean: Maybe she might say that *they* will never become a ballet dancer because they're pretty much the same so they're pretty much hurting themselves.

Kari: So she might say, "You're hurting yourself and so you're not going to become that [a dancer] either. Because you are just like me." [to Lisa] What do you think?

Lisa: She could just feel frustrated.

Kari: She'll feel frustrated, I think so. Drew, what do you think could be an ending to this story?

Drew: She goes and practices more. And then she could be a ballet dancer.

Kari: You believe like Doreen that she's going to keep on practicing right? I'll tell you.... [reads] "You are lumpy and bumpy and you are like the rest of us camels and you'll never be a ballet dancer. Chuckling and laughing the audience moved away." They walked away from her. "How very wrong they are, said the camel. I've worked very hard." So she's very determined. "There can be no doubt that I am a good dancer. I will dance just for myself." See, just like Heidi said. "I will give myself many years of pleasure." And she did! She gave herself many years of pleasure dancing, because she believed that it was a fun thing to do.

I was impressed with the children's predictions for they all were reasonable and possible. I also felt that they explained their reasoning for their conclusions clearly and concisely.

Now the musical interludes were again added into the story. Through this layering process (beginning with the narrative text, and then adding the musical text–which explicitly mentioned the characters' thoughts and ideas) students were able to expand their knowledge and strengthen their experiential connections with the text. In other words, it furthered reinforced their understandings of the story's themes and gist as it enhanced their text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections.[17]

Following this, students were asked to create a moral for the fable,

Kari: [after story and song end] Who can tell me the moral of the story? What do you think is important about this story? I'm going to ask each of you.

Lisa: Practice makes perfect.

Drew: She never gives up.

Kari: What's good about that, what's the moral?

Drew: The other people didn't clap so she dances for herself.

Kari: Okay so she danced for herself. Right. So it doesn't matter what other people think basically?

Drew: Yes.

Kari: Great. What do you think?

Doreen: I think the fable of the story, the moral of the story, is that she is determined and don't care what other people think. Just have your own, just do it for yourself, you don't care about what other people say about you.

Heidi: I was going to say the same thing! I didn't copy her.

Kari: It's okay. You can say the same thing.

Sean: Believe in yourself.

Andy: Don't yell at people that don't have the same view.

Here, "Lisa's practice makes perfect" sounded like a text-to-world connection. Many people value hard work, believing it will get you further in life. I suspect Lisa has heard this before. Andy's text-to-text example demonstrated his understanding of performance texts, knowing that

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[17] From *Strategies that Work* (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000) Text-to-self–connections are those readers make concerning characters' thoughts, feelings, or motivations for actions. Readers bring forth personal background experience and knowledge to better understand the printed text. Readers make text-to-text–connections across all types of text including other stories, songs, performances, visual art, scripts. Readers bring forth ideas about story schema, genre, purpose for reading, and meta-cognition to better understand the printed text. Readers also make text-to-world–connections with worldly facts and societal concerns. Readers bring forth morals, facts, and community/global understandings to better understand the printed text.

when a performance is over the audience is supposed to clap. Doreen on the other hand seems to tap into the text-to-self connection, bringing forth personal understandings of not "[caring] about what other people think about you."

According to the reflection questionnaires from the delayed-progress interviews, this exercise really made an impression on these students. For example, Sean wrote, "I really remember my music words, 'She cannot dance, she cannot dance at all.'" Doreen concluded, "The music stood out in my mind cause it was really good and because it's really really fun to do." And Drew wrote, "I learned to never give up. I learned this from the dancing story." This ensemble technique seemed to further the students' abilities to make inferences about the characters' feelings and motivations, and helped to strengthen students' understandings of the underlying mood, gist, or themes of the story.

Sample Art Lesson (Picture Mapping Collage)

March 26, 2003, grade 3

Comprehension strategies implemented:

- Engaging with and Visualizing the story narrative

- Understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story

In the picture-book *I Want To Be,* by Thylias Moss (1993), a young girl is asked by her grandparents and family members what she wants to be. Unable to give a spontaneous answer she decides to tell them tomorrow. On her way home she thinks of several things she wants to be. Her answer is poetic and soaring with imagination (e.g. "I want to be old but not so old that Mars and Jupiter and Redwoods seem young. I want to be fast but not so fast that lightning seems slow. I want to be wise but not so wise that I can't learn anything" (Moss, 1993, p. 14).

The lesson began with a brief review of the previous week's lesson. We spoke about what it means to recognize the setting and visualize a story in the mind's eye. Next we participated in a book pass where we all sat in a circle, read a page of the text aloud and then passed it to our neighbour. I made a mental note of phrases that the students stumbled over and words they had difficulty pronouncing. For the most part, the students did well decoding the words and reading aloud.

We then discussed some of the more difficult phrasing and words in the text. I wanted to target unknown words and be sure the children knew the literal meanings of each page. We called upon context cues and the illustrations to better understand these some of the more difficult vocabulary:

> Kari: You know what footprints are, and you know what a mustache is. Do you know what a dandelion is?
>
> Lisa: Yeah, it's a flower.
>
> Kari: OK, what about a toupee?
>
> Two kids: No.
>
> Kari: OK. [shows illustration] She wants to make a grass bird nest toupee, and she's putting it on top of her head like that. What do you think it means?
>
> Doreen: A hat?
>
> Andy: She wants birds on her head. Or a nest.
>
> Kari: It's actually like a kind of wig. So she wants to take a nest and stick it on her head and make it into like a wig. You guys know what a magician is?
>
> Kids: [together] Yeah!
>
> Kari: OK, what else. What other words are there you might not know. How many of you guys know what double dutch is?
>
> Doreen: Double dutch?
>
> Andy: Double dutch? Double dutch dutch dutch [playing with the words]
>
> Kari: She wants to double dutch with strands of the rainbow.
>
> Sean: You mean climb on a rainbow?
>
> Kari: Maybe the picture can give you a hint.
>
> Sean: She wants to be able to come over the rainbow?
>
> Kari: Double dutch is actually when you are skipping. How many of you guys have seen skipping where they skip with two different ropes and they go like this [gestures with hands] and you have to jump really fast? So that's what she wants to do with the rainbow.

In this excerpt, students brought forth their background knowledge about language and re-integrated it with the text. Jerry Pinkney's illustrations really seemed to helped them make "text-to-text connections" (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Here, I am considering the illustrator's pictures to be a visual text and the author's words to be a verbal text. One example of this connection is when Doreen suggested a toupee is like a hat and Andy thinks it's like a bird's nest.

As mentioned above, my focus for this lesson was to guide the children's implementation of two comprehension strategies: engaging with and visualizing the narrative and understanding the themes or gist of the story through drama and the visual arts. Specifically we were going to be working on visual collages, however, as a warm up I also called upon a freeform creative movement activity as well.

As I read the story aloud, students moved/danced their understandings of the scenes in silence. Some of the children seemed to love moving their bodies and participating in the collaborative experience. They moved freely within the space. Others, stood grouped together--watching. They seemed hesitant, perhaps they felt uncomfortable being looked at or expressing themselves through gesture rather than language. I was curious which captivated their attention and helped them to better understand the meaning of the text: reading the book aloud without movement, or demonstrating their understandings through movement. Doreen, Lisa, and Andy preferred to simply read the text. Doreen reasoned that "if you don't know the words to act you don't actually have to do it in front of others. And if you don't know the words while you are reading it then maybe you can ignore[them]." Doreen is referring to unknown vocabulary. She found it difficult to act something out when she didn't fully understand the word meanings. Lisa supported Doreen's findings, mentioning that "it was easier with the reading" because she "didn't have to get up in front of the others." "If you didn't know how to do it [the acting] you wouldn't have to." Here, Lisa felt vulnerable dancing her understandings of the text because she didn't know how to express her understandings through movement. Andy took a different take on why the reading was more engaging:

> Andy: I think that the readings easier because it has more expressions.
>
> Kari: It has more expressions?
>
> Andy: Yeah. And like when you do the actions they don't really tell you them also, but when you read it, like it like when people say something.

I understood this to mean that the words spoke more to Andy, giving him clues about how the characters are feeling and their inner thoughts. Perhaps Andy felt more confident and better equipped to read printed texts over performance texts because he had been given more in-school opportunities to make meaning in this way. When I asked him later he said, "I kinda just remember the words and the look of the page, like the size of the letters and stuff. Then when someone asks me a question I just flip through the book in my mind. Sometimes with the drama stuff the other kids do I have a hard time telling what is happening."

On the other hand an equal number of students felt they could understand the text better when they used movement and drama. Sean argued that "it was easier acting it out because then you actually know what you are doing and then you know what it means." He depended on the physical "doing" of the task and also seeing the other's understandings to help him negotiate the meaning of the text:

> Kari: How did it help you understand?
>
> Sean: Because you're actually doing it so you can actually understand it, and you can look at actual actors so then you can understand it.
>
> Kari: So you can look at the other people in the class and that helps you...

For Sean, drama seems to make the literature come to life. He clearly understood the world of the story better when he was given a chance to engage with it. Clyde added to this opinion saying that "if you act it out then you usually will understand it more." Drew said that he, too, was more engaged with the story when he had the opportunity to act it out.

> Drew: When we did drama, it was a lot more fun. And when we did the movement it was fun.
>
> Kari: So it helped you understand the story better?
>
> Drew: Yeah.
>
> Kari: What do you think the story is about?
>
> Drew: Things she wants to be?

Heidi could not decide whether reading the text alone or with the drama helped her understanding more, indicating that she was able to draw on both modes of understanding equally:

> Kari: ...And what do you think Heidi?
>
> Heidi: I think I really liked the acting *and* the reading. I liked the reading because I could see [points to the pictures] what the girl was doing. And also one part about the drama is that it makes the reading fun. Its like sharing something; it's like fun when you are acting it out.

Before going into the arts-integrated technique of visual collage, I wanted to reinforce the strategy, understanding the underlying themes and gist. I believed the narrative's underlying theme or gist of the picture book is that you can be anything that you want to be, and that you are only limited by your imagination. Here we were having a discussion about this idea:

> Kari: What do you think the grandparents, and relatives think she will say when they ask her what she wants to be?

Andy: Maybe they think she'll say she wants to be a doctor?

Heidi: Yeah.

Doreen: Maybe she likes dancing, like me. Or maybe she wants to be a model cause she wants to be pretty?

Drew: And smart.

Kari: If some one asked you that question, how could you answer it? Sean, How would you answer if someone said, "What do you want to be?"

Sean: I might say that I want to be smart too, but I'd probably say something like, I want to be the fire chief.

Kari: Well, fire chiefs make some smart decisions. You could say you wanted to be both. My point is that your imagination is the only thing that limits what you can be. So, just like the book, if you want to be a smart, pretty, talented dancer, then just be it. Do you see what I mean?

Doreen: Like I can say, that I want to work with animals.

Kari: Yes, and you can say that you want to be a dancer that works with animals. You can be a vet who dances with animals.

Heidi: I see. She can be whatever she says she wants to be.

Kari: Yep.

Sean: She can be everything.

As demonstrated by this discussion, the students seemed to be thinking more about the underlying themes and gist of the narrative. Later (when they were practicing their collage making), I overheard conversations of the students talking about the story's theme–being whatever you want to be. Here are two examples:

Example 1:

Andy: She says she wants to be big. This is big

Clyde: She says she wants to be big too. So why does she want to be small?

Andy: She wants to be big sometimes and small sometimes.

Example 2:

Sean: Hey you could just glue everything.

Andy: Yeh., cause she said she wants to be like looking, touching and hearing everything.

Next, As a way to continue engaging the students with the text and helping them to visualize her thoughts, I then asked the students to create a collage by cutting magazines, drawing and writing. I told the children that they could cut out any pictures they thought represented the

story's theme. As the students cut and pasted their magazine pictures they talked openly about the protagonist's dreams and desires:

> Drew: She wants to be big and tall. And this guy is tall [gestures to photo in magazine].
>
> Kari: [talking to another student] Yep. She said she wanted to be as fast as lightning. You're right.
>
> Sean: She said NOT as fast as lightning. [reading from the book] "not to make it so that lightning is slow."
>
> Clyde: That's good for small.
>
> Sean: She wants to be small.
>
> Drew: But not, um, so small...
>
> Sean: I would cut it out.
>
> Clyde: Yeh. You need to!
>
> Andy: Yep. She said she wanted to be small.
>
> Doreen: I don't have anything that is small.
>
> Clyde: Hey look, I got one. Look!

As the students continued with this activity I noticed that they drew from the story the things that interested them most:

> Doreen: She wants to be pretty but not too pretty.
>
> Clyde: She wants to be a football player.

Here Doreen is referring to the words, "I want to be beautiful..." (Moss, p. 15). And Clyde is interpreting "I want to be strong..." (Moss, p. 13) to mean that she wants to be someone who is physically strong like a football player. This example illustrates the many ways that students interpreted the story.

The students worked on their collages for most of the remaining class time. However, before they left, they talked about and compared their collages. Some extended their ideas about the text through inquiry. For instance, the line in the text reads, "I want to be comfortable in all the elements" (Moss, 1993, p. 26) Drew questioned this idea:

> Drew: "This is for the elements. There's some water. This is the light. I wonder how you can be comfortable in all the elements? I don't think I want to be in with all the elements. Like fire? Who wants to be comfortable in fire?"

Here, other students asked questions about how they could represent this line from the text, "Sometimes I want to be invisible but not gone" (Moss, 1993, p. 25):

> Andy: [to Sean and Drew] How do you get something invisible?
>
> Sean: You could colour it white.
>
> Drew: Wow. Do you know how to write invisible? [laughs]

These questions developed into new conversations. Here, Drew discussed how he might visualize "invisible." He indicated to me a criminal line-up in his collage said, "Ms. Winters I used this because she wants to be invisible. No one wants to look at criminals. It's like they're not there". Doreen then pointed to a dotted outline of a girl in her collage, and added, "Also, I used this cause I wanted to show invisible." They represented the meaning of the text through more abstract representation (e.g. the criminal line-up) and through more concrete representations (e.g. the dotted outline, colouring a picture white).

Cecily O'Neill and Alan Lambert (1982) in their book Drama Structures talk about how drama contributes to the facilitation of language use.

> Whenever any kind of active role-play takes place, language is directly and necessarily involved. Drama can provide a powerful motivation to speech, and this speech does not occur in isolation but is embedded in context and situation where it has a crucial organizing function (pp. 17-18).

Although these authors were talking specifically about drama, I think this idea can be transformed to talk about art-making as well, for it, too, is active, and reflective. Picture mapping collage was a great way to get students engaging with texts and talking about what they were visualizing. As the students connected the environments the images represented, to the imaginary world of the story, and back to their own lives, their talk became richer and layered with meaningful contexts.

In Nathan's reflection questionnaire he mentioned that the collage activity "was difficult" for him because it "made [him] understand new words" and "pretend in [his] mind". Doreen, on the other hand thought the picture mapping collage was "really good", commenting that she wouldn't mind doing her homework if it could always be like the "pasting picture one". During the delayed-progress interview, Cliff said that the "cutting work really helped [him] connect to the way the girl feels".

Sample Drama Lesson

April 2, 2003, grade 3

Comprehension strategies implemented:

- Sequencing story events

- Recognizing the setting

Jeffery's Wor(l)ds Meet Sloth (Winters, In Press) is a story about a sloth doodle who finds himself being controlled by words and about a boy who finds a story inside himself (see Appendix G–*Jeffery's Wor(l)ds Meet Sloth* manuscript). For this lesson we employed a drama technique called sequencing tableaux. A tableau is a still picture created by actors. Here we chose the important ideas in the story, depicted them with our bodiescreating a series of tableaux, and then sequenced them. I focused on two comprehension strategies: sequencing story events, and bringing background knowledge to the text.

As a review of the previous lessons, we began our discuss by talking about some of the things that good readers do:

Kari: Tell me some things that good readers do. What do they do?

Cliff: They look at the page.

Kari: Yep, they read the words. What else?

Nathan: They write stories in their head.

Kari: Oh. Write stories in their head. That's good. I call that visualization. So sometimes when you read you can imagine what's happening in your mind. Okay. I am going to ask you to do that. That is one of the things. What else?

Tate: See in your mind.

Kari: Yep. They can see it their mind. Yep... Say at the beginning of a book. They [good readers] know what the setting is. What does setting mean?

Boris: Setting is like a background, like being somewhere.

Kari: Right, so you know where they are. And you know what else from the setting?

Boris: And what they are doing.

Kari: Yeah. What they are doing, *and* what the time is. In terms of olden days, or modern day. And also, what time of the day it is.

Nathan's words "[Good readers] write stories in their head" and Tate's "see in [their] mind" demonstrate their understanding of two important ideas that I had tried to teach in the previous lessons. The first idea was that reading and writing are very connected (cf. Tierney & Shanahan, 1991, pp. 246-281). Readers write and writers read. So whether students are reading or writing they should be composing meaningful "stories in their head." The second idea I tried to portray to the students was that good readers are active; they enter or envision a "secondary world" (Benton, 1992). They "see in [their] mind[s]" so to speak.

From here we moved into a conversation about recognizing the settings. Boris attempted to label what a setting was. He understood that a setting meant a place "like a background, like being somewhere" yet he did not remember that a setting also included information about the time (e.g. time of year, time of the day). I know that he became more aware of this strategy throughout the entirety of the sessions, because in his delayed questionnaire he wrote: "I learned about reading stories. Some of the things I learned about were when the setting took place and how to amagen [imagine] the story."

Next, I read part of the narrative, stopping after the setting was established. I asked the students to think about when they thought the story took place. All of the children agreed that the story was modern. While most of the children thought that the story was set in the afternoon, one child had his own understanding story's timeframe. When I questioned him, he brought forth background knowledge as a way to prove his belief:

> Kari: What time of the day do you think it is?
>
> Boris: I think 6:30 am.
>
> Kari: Why?
>
> Boris: Because I think that sloths are like sorta nocturnal.
>
> Kari: I don't know if sloths are nocturnal. Are sloths nocturnal? I would assume so....
>
> Boris: Yeah. And the sloth was just going to bed.

I often tell students that they can see the story any way they want, but that they should try to think about why they think their ideas. Here Boris clearly explained the "text-to-world connections" that he was making (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

The lesson continued with me reading *Jeffrey's Wor(l)ds Meet Sloth* aloud to the class. This lead into a conversation about the vocabulary of the text.

Kari: Which character is in the book?

Kids: The sloth.

Kari: The sloth. You guys know what a sloth is?

Nathan: It's like a furry mammal and it has long arms.

Tate: It always hangs upside down. And it looks like a monkey.

Kari: Yeah. It looks kinda like a monkey. It has a flat face right?

Kids: Yeah.

I realized that the students would be unable to literally understand the story if they did not know what a sloth was. While I was checking their local understanding of the text I was also asking the students to activate their prior knowledge and to tell me what they visualized about the text.

Kari: How many of you guys had a picture in your mind of what the sloth was like? Vincent, can you tell me what the sloth looked like to you?

Tate: He was very, very dirty….and he was very, very tired.

Kari: And what were you going to say?

Vincent: I imagined how he wrapped his claws around the trees.

Kari: Cliff, what did you think Jeffery looked like?

Cliff: A small little kid that is over there ….

Kari: How old do you think he was?

Cliff: 8

Kari: Why do you think that?

Cliff: Cause usually people are 8 when you are in grade 3.

Kari: Good. Good listening.

Tate: Maybe 9?

Kari: Yeah. around 8 or 9. He might have went to school early too. That's good.

I believe that students visualize narratives in different ways. Here, Tate talked about the picture he generated in his mind's eye of the sloth after he had dug to India: "He was very, very dirty …. and he was very, very tired." Tate visualized the action. Meanwhile, Vincent imagined the sloth's long arms, indicating that he may have been thinking about the character's physical appearance. Others could not describe what they pictured. Maybe this was because they didn't picture anything, or perhaps they simply couldn't put the picture in their mind's eye into words.

Certainly some pictures are impossible to describe. Isadora Dunkin, the famous dancer, quoted that "If everything could be said in words there would be no reason to dance."

As a way to bring the kids back to the recognizing the setting strategy, I showed them pages from an illustrated atlas that they had in the school library. It had pictures of China, France, the Canadian Tundras and Prairies. The students looked carefully at the book.

Next, we practiced creating tableaux. These frozen pictures of dinosaurs, airplanes, and elephants had nothing to do with the story; they were merely a way to develop trust within the group and to practice using the tableaux technique.

Following this exercise we began sequencing sections of the text. We did this in two different ways. The first time we called on two people to be in all of the tableaux. Tate volunteered to play the role of Jeffery and Boris played the role of the sloth. The rest of the students became the audience, responsible for deciding on and sequencing the important story events and also for discussing how each of the tableaux looked.

> Kari: ...Let's see what that looks like. OK, the sloth is arguing with Jeffrey. Ready? 1, 2, 3, freeze. ... Does Boris look like he's arguing?
>
> Kids: No!
>
> Kari: OK, let's do it again. Relax. Remember you're arguing. 1, 2, 3, Freeze!
>
> Kids: laugh.
>
> Kari: Good. Relax. Then what happens?
>
> Kids: They're arguing.
>
> Kari: OK, they're arguing and then he says I'm going to make you do all these things, then what does he do?
>
> Cliff: He had to dig.
>
> Kari: how does that happen though, that the sloth starts to dig?
>
> Cliff: Jeffrey's writing.

The students in the audience had the opportunity to take on different roles. For example, they became reviewers, analyzing each tableau and thinking about how the story ideas were written. They also became directors, sharing their own visions and making suggestions to the actors. And of course, they remained audience members, listening and laughing at the show presented for them.

The second way we performed these tableaux no *one* person became Jeffery or Sloth for every tableau. Rather, we sequenced the tableaux from the story together and filled in each character (with all of the students becoming either Jeffery or the sloth) as we went. As we created these story scenes, I directed the sequencing based on the story events they had already deemed most important.

The kids were really engaged with the tableaux. They enjoyed seeing the story unfold in front of them. They also loved that they were invited to participate both as audience members and as actors. This activity not only allowed them to practice sequencing the story events, it also made the story action seem more tangible (Booth, 1994).

The reflection questionnaires demonstrate that most of the children thought that the drama was "fun" or "good" or "really, really exciting". Clyde thought that drama was "hard" because it was "like doing everything at once". Sean wrote a similar comment, saying drama is "difacalt" (difficult) because "it was hard to do all the stuff at once ... to amogen the setting [and] the characters and when it took place, what the characters say and look like, [also] what they do and what time and season ...". Indeed, there are a lot of things happening on various levels when drama is integrated with reading.

4.6   Individual Case Studies

Although looking at the figures in Table 1 gives an idea of each students' profile, these numbers do not provide a holistic look at what was going on with the child throughout the process. To solve this problem (partially at least) I present three case studies, one from a student achieving at a higher level (Sean), one from a student achieving at a lower level (Tate) and one from an average achiever who demonstrated improvement over the 13 sessions (Boris). Sean, Tate and Boris were selected because of their scores and also because of their classroom performances.

<u>Sean</u>

Sean was one of the most successful students in this study. This is confirmed by the data presented in Appendix F: Overall Thesis Data. At the time of the research, Sean was in grade three. He is a Caucasian boy who thought "reading was fun when you could bring imagination to it." His favourite things to read were *Nate the Great* and non-fiction books about snakes and

alligators. He also enjoyed art and drama because "it's better than reading a story because you get to do fun stuff." He presented as an outgoing child with a good sense of humour. He seemed well liked by both his peers and his teacher. During my observation of his class, Sean attentively watched the teacher, participating with enthusiasm when he knew an answer.

Sean's pre-program progress interview showed that he was an average decoder. His score of 96% placed him at the lower end of the independent range. His fluency rate was also within the normal range; I did not notice any problems with intonation and rhythm. Judging from his semantic analysis only 69% of the sentences he read made sense; however Sean is a child who relied heavily on the context of the sentences so I think he may have mispronounced more words than he misunderstood. During the lessons, Sean confirmed my belief when he said this:

> Kari: Let's talk about some of the words that maybe we didn't understand. I think you guys got everything on the first page.

> Sean: I understood everything except there's some words that I couldn't pronounce.

His ability to comprehend on a local sentence level by drawing heavily on context was also demonstrated by his literal comprehension score (4/5) which fell into the instructional range. The one question that he did get wrong during this task related directly to his misreading a word in the passage.

> Kari: How would you train a dog like jackpot?

> Sean: I would pat it on the head and give it prayers just like how they did in the story.

Here Sean is referring to this sentence in the oral reading passage that he read, "Now instead of a reward Jackpot is given *praise* or a pat on the head when he finds something that cannot come into this country." He misread the word praise as prayers. Unfortunately for Sean, prayers directly changes the meaning of the sentence.

When given the opportunity Sean called upon any context cues that were available to him, including sentence meaning (as shown above) and picture cues. Here is one instance (also shown earlier) where Sean calls upon picture cues to help him with his literal comprehension and understanding of new vocabulary:

> Kari: She wants to double dutch with strands of the rainbow.

> Sean: You mean climb on a rainbow?

> Kari: Maybe the picture can give you a hint.

Sean: She wants to be able to come over the rainbow?

Kari: Double dutch is actually when you are skipping. How many of you guys have seen skipping where they skip with two different ones and they go like this [gestures with hands] and you have to jump really fast? So that's what she wants to do with the rainbow.

During the pre-program progress interview Sean had the most trouble implementing the bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text strategy. This surprised me because more than any child I worked with on this project, Sean could quickly and efficiently call upon his past experiences. But when I asked him, " Have you ever had an experience like the character's in the story?" he simply answered, "No." When I tried to probe this question further, "Even on TV? Have you seen dogs like that on TV?" he replied casually, "Umm, maybe."

Looking back through the program transcripts, tapes, and field notes I noticed that Sean rarely talked about "text-to-world" or "text-to-text connections" (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). Yet with that said, he was able to call upon other types of background experiences and knowledge—especially self-to-text connections—to demonstrate his accuracy in perceiving the emotions that the characters felt and their motivations for their actions. For example, here is a conversation that I had with Sean during the pre-progress interview. We are talking about the Aesop's fable (1994) *The Greedy Dog*:

Kari: How did the characters feel? How did the puppy feel?

Sean: This little one? [pointing to his clay puppy] The little one felt pretty sad, he was scared.

Kari: What about this one? [pointing to the clay greedy dog]

Sean: The greedy dog? He was probably glad he got the bone.

Kari: And what about you, how did you feel watching the story?

Sean: I was scared that the dog was getting captured by the big dog.

Kari: Why did the dog act that way?

Sean: Just really mad, and just really greedy. He's a really greedy dog! He really wanted the bone so he did it [took the bone].

Kari: What would be another title for this story?

Sean: The big, awful, mean, very bad dog.

Sean's background knowledge and experience score did improve in the post-program progress interview, moving from a two to a three. This time when he was asked, "Have you ever had an experience like the characters in the story?" Instead of saying, "No," Sean gave an

example about how his brother was like the wolf in the story, "[The wolf] was bad to the villagers, so when the wolf really did come, [the villagers] didn't want to help him... Sometimes my brother is mean to me, and after a few days he asks me to do something, and I don't do it." He also elaborately described the characters' feelings and their reasons for feeling the way they did.

One of Sean's strengths in the pre and post-progress interviews and throughout the program was his ability to engage with the text. Despite the fact that Sean had little exposure working with clay or in performance (although according to him he had painted, drawn, and "heard a lot of music") his symbolic story representation (SRI) was quite refined; his setting was very detailed, each character had their own voice, he had no trouble acting each character's part, and he even created a coin-like piece that represented the greedy dog's reflection.

During this SRI retelling in the pre-test and also in the review *The Hen and the Tree* (Lobel, 1980) lesson (where we also learned more about the SRI technique) much of what he visualized was communicated in a non-verbal way (for example, the look of the dogs—one being quite large and the other much smaller; the way Sean acted the scenes using the clay characters; their placement of the characters within the setting). Sean received a score of three during this interview; although Sean really engaged with the story, demonstrating how he visualized it, he did not actively take a perspective inside the world of the story. The clay character representing him stood between the bridge and the puppy, meaning that even when the plot took us to the bridge, Sean's character remained quite a distance from the characters.

Later, when asked, "Did the clay help you to figure [the story] out?" Sean answered, "Yeah, it helped me to imagine it so I knew what I read about, and stuff like that. Yeah."

Sean's engagement during the program continued to grow as he was given more opportunities to demonstrate his natural acting talent. He volunteered to be the actor in every drama exercise we participated in. An important aspect of acting is the actor's ability to connect with the character, both emotionally and physically. Sean was able to make these connections in a detailed way, so much so that his peers could quickly and easily recognized who he was portraying. One of the funniest moments was when Sean played the role of the Max (from *Where the Wild Things Are*) during the inside/outside circle exercise. The other children enjoyed his performance so much that they tried to imitate everything he did. When I asked Sean after class how the acting helps him understand the story he said:

I am the kinda reader who has to remember. I like books where I remember. Like I know about getting grounded in my room so I would know how sad Max is. Sometimes I don't see pictures in my head. I just remember.

Here Sean is calling upon his embodied background experience as a way to really understand the characters' feelings and better comprehend the text.

Seeing the way Sean engaged in the acting, I was not surprised when he told me that he really enjoyed writing-in-role. During our music lesson based on Gordon Lightfoot's lyrics for *The Pony Man* (about a magical man who rides flying ponies and brings children to pirate ships and worlds full of candy and apples), I asked the children to imagine what it might feel like to be a character in the story and then to write from that perspective. Sean chose to take the perspective of parent who wakes up to find his children missing from her beds.

> Aaaaa! Oh no! Where are they? I wonder where they went. What shall we do? Quick phone the search team. They'll help us. They will find them then they'll be , sound asleep and it will be fine. [Indicates that he has gone to the phone and is dialing] beep, boop, beep, beep. Hello! We l-l-los-st-t our children. Help.

From Sean's piece I get a strong sense of the character's voice and emotive state. I especially like the fact that he is so worked up that he stammers on the word lost. Sean also makes the physical actions of the character quite clear by using the beeps of the phone.

As mentioned above, in the pre-program progress interview Sean took on the role of a spectator, indicating with his clay figure that he was standing a distance away from the other characters. His character's distance from the action and discussion during the interview gave no indication that he was not actively taking a perspective inside the story's narrative. In the post-program progress interview Sean took the role of a spectator again, but this time he positioned himself much closer to the protagonist, hiding his represented clay character in the tree.

> Kari: Why did you move over here? Why'd you move closer?
>
> Sean: Cause I thought like if he turned around and he saw me, he'd probably
>
> think what would I be doing there.
>
> Kari: So you were hiding here? [Kari points to the tree]
>
> Sean: Yeah, I was trying to hide.

This interview differed from the previous one because Sean is more involved in the story's action—he can at any moment get caught for spying. Here, he is actively thinking about himself

inside the story and where he is situated. His spying character moved and had thoughts whereas before (in the pre-program progress interviews) the clay figure that represented him was just plunked down in the scene and not thought of until I inquired about it. Also, Sean does more than simply describe the setting. He told me physical details about the characters, "He looked like a sort of like a normal boy, sorta raggy clothes...[the villagers looked] sorta the same as the boy but a bit more stylish and better clothes, that's for sure," and he described the feelings they had,

Kari: How about these guys, how did they feel?

Sean: They feel sorta like disappointed that they actually fell for it and mad cause he made them drop all of their work...

Kari: And at the end when the wolf really did come, what did you see?

Sean: I thought I might jump on top of him [showed me that action—Sean's character jumps from the tree onto the back of the wolf] But I didn't want to [jump] because it would just be me and I might get eaten [demonstrates his clay wrestling the wolf and then getting bitten].

Kari: How did [the villagers] feel the last time?

Sean: They felt like, okay, he's done it (tricked us) twice, he is not going to do it again, so it ain't gonna happen (the villagers coming to help).

In this post-program progress interview Sean earned a score of four for implementing the engaging with/visualizing the story narrative. He fluidly communicated (verbally or non-verbally) about the picture in his/her mind with accuracy, and descriptive examples (beyond the story's narrative) of what he/she 'saw' or 'experienced' as the story was read. Also he actively took on a perspective inside the world of the text and demonstrated (verbally or non-verbally) rich affect.

Another strength for Sean was his ability to identify and sequence important story events. The sequencing cards Sean created in the pre-program progress interviews depicted all of the main story events in the right order. However, they were not very descriptive; important details about the characters, for example, were not described. Sean earned a score of three in this sequencing category during this interview.

Sean improved his sequencing throughout the lessons. In *Jeffery and the Sloth*, a lesson where we sequenced tableaux, Sean took a leading role both as an actor and a facilitator. He knew the scenes very well and could provide rich descriptions of the characters, the story's settings and action.

By the end of the program Sean's interview scores in the sequencing category had moved from a three to a four. At first I thought , "Again, his story is accurate and includes all of the important ideas but lacks description about the characters' feelings and thoughts. It should earn a score of three" However, when I then looked at Sean's sequenced pictures (Figure 1) I could see that he used thought bubbles to effectively describe the characters' thoughts and feelings. Also, I could see from his sequenced pictures that he tried to show that the setting changes throughout the narrative (the village and the meadow). His score was moved to four.

Sean received a score of three for both gist and theme in the pre- and post-program progress interviews. Although these scores indicate no strong improvement, I did notice that during the lessons Sean was making more inferences, and drawing more conclusions about the overall theme and gist from the stories. For example, during *The Camel Dances* music-integrated lesson Sean was acted to re-title the story

> Kari: What would be another title for this story?
>
> Sean: The happy camel? The camel that dances ballet.

These titles were inferred from the camel's decision to dance happily for herself. Although, Sean was unable to put these two big ideas together into one sentence—the fulfilled feeling of the camel and the decision to keep dancing—he did demonstrate understanding of the story's themes.

> Kari: [after story and song ends]. Who can tell me the moral of the story? What do you think is important about this story? I'm going to ask each of you.
>
> Sean: Believe in yourself.

Here Sean recognized the gist of the story—he could not have been more accurate. Unfortunately, Sean could not capture the gist in the post-program progress interview; when asked to re-title the story *The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf* (Aesop, 1994) he said, "The Boy and The Wolf" which almost exactly matched the original title and did not accurately tell about the narrative's themes. Only after I asked again, "Is that the title?" did Sean change his mind, "…unless it should be ''The Lying Boy and the Hungry Wolf'. Also he had difficulty describing how the characters' actions affected the other characters in the story. For example, an answer that would receive a score of four would have to say that the boy's yelling wolf when there was no wolf made the villagers not want to help him or even believe him. Sean answer missed important information about the villagers' reactions, "When the boy was screaming 'wolf, wolf, wolf!' the villagers heard the cry and that tells them it's their part, so they come running up."

At times it was difficult to score Sean because his non-verbal skills (especially gesture, proximity, expression) seemed much more sophisticated than his verbal skills. For example, he could show me with his bodily and facial expressions what the villagers felt, yet had difficulty putting it into words. I noticed that Sean would sometimes rely heavily on adverbs like "very" or "really" to describe the extent of the characters' feelings, "He's just really mad and really greedy. He really wanted that bone."

Sean's post-program progress scores illustrate that his ability to recognize the setting and themes of the story stayed the same whereas his ability to engage with/ visualize, bring knowledge and experience, and sequence the story improved.

Tate

Like Sean, Tate is another Caucasian boy who presented as outgoing and full of energy. He also appeared to be well liked by his peers and had a great sense of humour. When asked what he liked to read he said, "Joke books and that's it." When I asked him why he liked joke books he said, "Cause they are funny and I am funny. I am like the funniest kid in the class." Another student, overhearing our conversation confirmed Tate's statement with a nod.

Yet, I did not see this class clown persona during the observations in his grade four classroom; I noticed that he fidgeted a lot but mostly just watched the teacher. At one point he was asked to read aloud from Jean Craighead George, Christine H. Merrill's *There's an Owl in the Shower*. He hesitated, seeming reluctant but took on the task. He stammered over some of the more difficult words. I could see that Tate was trying to draw from the context as he read. For instance, when he came to the word "morsel" (in a sentence that went something like this: "I fed the owl a morsel of food.") I heard him mutter under his breath, "maybe it means a lot."

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Tate was the child who struggled to decode his grade-levelled passage. After reading only three sentences over a two minute span I knew that this reading passage was too difficult for him. He lacked automaticity, meaning that he would probably also have difficulties constructing meaning from the text. Tate was asked to read the grade three passage instead. Here, Tate scored in the low independent range (96.6%). His fluency rate (3 minutes. 33 seconds.) was only a little slower than the other grade three students who read that same passage. Tate seemed unaware of some of the punctuation marks. According to the

semantic analysis task, Tate only understood 69% of the sentences in the passage, providing some clues as to why his literal comprehension score (2/5) was in the frustration range.

All of these decoding and literal comprehension scores did improve throughout the program. By the post-program progress interviews Tate had moved his oral reading score (although still at a grade 3 level—one year behind his peers) into the high independent range (98.4%). Although his decoding did improve greatly, as I mentioned earlier, the post-program passage (although written by the same author and rated by the same formula) may have been a slightly easier read; it certainly contained more familiar English words than the pre-program passage. Tate's other scores improved too. He cut 35 seconds off of his reading time and seemed to have gained a better understanding of punctuation marks. His semantic analysis moved from a low 69% to a high 94%, indicating that he now had more opportunities to comprehend the passage because more sentences made sense. As a result of his gains in decoding and fluency his literal comprehension score also improved slightly (3/5).

Although the global/interpretive comprehension data presented in Table 1 confirms that Tate's performance throughout the program ranked as the lowest of all twelve students, his post-program progress interview indicated that he improved his score by six points—the second highest improvement score after Clyde and Boris' seven.

In the pre-program progress interview Tate clearly struggled to implement setting, sequencing, and theme/gist strategies. He had no idea where *The Greedy Dog* story took place—"In the trees. I don't know"— or even what the main events were. Because he sincerely believed the story was about him and his friends kicking soccer balls at the greedy dog, he had no way of understanding the true underlying themes of the narrative.

It is difficult to determine how Tate came to interpret *The Greedy Dog* narrative in this way. I suspect that as the story was passed around, being read aloud, he daydreamed about what he would do if he came in contact with such a mean dog. "…He scared all of us [Tate and his friends] and we shot soccer balls at him."

A strength for Tate was that he had this ability to connect with many characters' feelings across a wide range of texts. During this interview he did relate to the puppy saying, "…The little puppy came over and watched us cause he was actually one of our pets." Later he said, "I felt bad for the little dog." And during both the *When Vegetables Go Bad* and the *Hey Little Ant* lessons he talked about how scared Lilly and the ant must have felt, "If I was her I would hide

under the covers forever" and "The ant is scared cause he is gonna die." When asked what ants and people have in common he said, "Both can feel stuff." Although Tate did not bring many ideas or factual knowledge to the text. His understanding of the characters' feelings earned him a pre- and post- score of 2 out of 5 in the comprehension category, bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text .

Another strength during this interview and throughout the program was Tate's capacity to engage with and visualize the text. Like Sean, he demonstrated but was not able to articulate the use of this strategy. For example, Tate's clay "bulldog" created for the pre-interview was also significantly bigger than the "golden retriever puppy" and even the other people in the scenes. Also, Tate moved the characters to show that he was inside the story, interacting with the greedy dog and standing close enough that he could kick [the bone] out of its mouth.

When I asked Tate if he imagined in his mind as he read, he replied, "Only if it doesn't have pictures. If it has pictures then I don't have to imagine." Yet the problem that I saw with Tate's ability to use this global/interpretive comprehension strategy was not that he could not engage with or visualize, but that he could not relate what he imagined back to the printed text. He did get better at this however, especially when he was able to learn in the group setting.

> Kari: You guys know what a sloth is? What does a sloth look like?
>
> Nathan: It's a furry mammal and it has long arms to hang upside down.
>
> Tate: It always hangs upside down. And it looks like a monkey.

Here Tate repeated the Nathan's response. Later in drama exercise however, Tate integrated this mental model of a sloth hanging upside down when he acted as the sloth in our drama. In-role he pretended to hang upside down from the coziest bed's imaginary bed post.

By the post-program progress interviews, Tate boosted his engaging with and visualizing score two points, making his final score in this category a four. Here, Tate imagined himself as the wolf. When I asked him what he was thinking as the boy cried wolf he answered, "Let him go the second time to tell them. Since there was no wolf they would think it's a lie. And then they would think no wolf would go [to the meadow]." He was now thinking more globally about the narrative while still actively taking a perspective inside the world of the text. He also demonstrated rich affect while talking about the story. I could see from his SRI performance that he was trying to be silent as he hid in the bushes, and that he found it so funny that the boy kept telling lies to the villagers and that he was eager to eat the sheep.

The post-program process data indicates that Tate also improved his ability to recognize settings (moving from a score of one to a score of three). He had gained more understanding of the place and times mentioned in the narrative. I saw glimpses of this improvement throughout the lessons too. For instance, this is what Tate said during the *Jeffrey's Wor(l)ds Meet Sloth* (Winters, in press) lesson:

> Kari: So can you tell me where the story took place. Where do you think they are?
>
> Tate: Home
>
> Kari: What makes you think they are at home?
>
> Tate: He's doing his *home*work.
>
> Kari: That's right.

This conversation took place during the *Jeffery and the Sloth* (Winters, in press) lesson. Here, Tate not only recognized the setting he accurately defended his reasoning for thinking that Jeffery is at home. His inflection showed me that he grasped the story's setting through the word homework. Tate's post-program reflection sheet revealed that recognizing the setting was one of the strategies he learned most about. He wrote, "When ever you think of a story you think of the setting what time of day [and] where it was."

Tate never seemed to grasp the theme/gist global comprehension strategy. He scored one in both the pre-and post-program program interviews. When asked what the stories meant or why they were important he always replied, "I don't know."

Tate also made progress in his ability to decode. After learning more about the global/interpretive comprehension strategies, Tate seemed better able to draw upon the context of the story meaning while decoding. I noted that he was more likely to pause or re-read when he misread words that did not make sense.

Boris

Boris was a small boy of Iranian heritage. His first language was English. He said that he "didn't mind school" because he got to see all of his friends. When I asked him what he liked to read he said that he "really didn't like reading anything" because he "wasn't a very fast reader." However, when I heard him read aloud during the classroom observation, his pacing and fluency seemed fine.

Apart from Clyde, Boris was one of the most improved students. I chose him to write about because he was the only student who improved in every category he tested in (e.g. decoding, fluency, semantic sentence analysis, literal/local and global/interpretive comprehension).

. He began the program decoding his fourth grade passage at an independent level (97.6%) and by the end he could decode a similar passage at a high independent level (98.2%). It took him 3 minutes, 26 seconds to read the passage during the pre-program progress interview. Compared to his peers who read the same text, Boris's time was average. During the post-program progress interview Boris shaved 37 seconds off his time, reading considerably more fluently. While his first semantic analysis implied that 82% of the sentences in the passage made sense, his second interview illustrated that he had improved his sense-making skills—so much so that 89% of the sentences made semantic sense. Finally Boris moved his literal comprehension score from the frustration range (3/5) into the instructional category (4/5).

These results were also confirmed anecdotally by his teacher (May 14th, 2003). She noticed Boris' improvement, mentioning to me that he was more engaged in language arts class and he seemed more comfortable reading out loud for his peers. She also noted that he was getting more answers right, paying more attention in class, and using more higher-order thinking skills.

. In the Pre-program progress interview Boris earned a score of 3 in the engaging with and visualizing text category. Boris had the ability to clearly verbalize what he imagined. Boris had this to say about *The Greedy Dog*, "[The bigger dog] would look like he's standing, he's a bit bigger [than the puppy] with muscles." According to Boris he always "imagin[ed] stories in [his] own mind" and "had no trouble with this [particular] one." He added, "I have difficulty with nothing but the clay still makes it easier for me to see the story."

Throughout the program, Boris provided many detailed descriptions of what he saw in his mind's eye as he read. (e.g. During the Draw over lesson, Boris said, "I can just imagine the room. Like it would be so crowded with vines and creatures. I bet the boy hardly had anywhere to go it was so full of stuff.) By the end of the program he earned a four in this global strategy. Here, he describes how the villagers would look if he created a movie.

> Kari: If you were going to make a movie about *The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf* what would it look like?

> Boris: I'll get one person, to have a hammer in their hand. And some of them (the villagers) would have bats, for the wolf. And all of them would look messy because they're working. The boy looks like the way I just told you. (He has

brown eyes, brown hair , and he was wearing an orange shirt and orange pants) And the trees, the trees were high and they had branches so you could climb on it. And the wolf will come lurk like a big guy with water dropping out of his mouth. And then [after he eats the sheep] he will look like normal [with a] white and black face.

Here Boris described the characters with rich detail. When I asked him how visualizing helped him to figure out the narrative he said, "I am visual. I just see the pictures—not in colour just black and white. Then I want to see the movie. But sometimes the characters are just different [than how I imagine them]." He added, "After I see the pictures I know how the characters speak, feel , act, and move."

Later, in the student reflection sheet, Boris also mentioned that the drama and music were "fun too because [he] liked moving around." When I asked him how they helped him incorporate reading strategies he said, "You are alive and moving while you're doing it. I imagine myself inside the storybook."

Looking at his post-program transcript I see that Boris also used this visualizing and engaging strategy as a way to also better recognize the setting. He moved from describing the setting in a general and puzzled way during the pre-program progress interview, " They were in a farm...[in the] day. I mean morning. Afternoon!" to demonstrating and describing specifically what he imagined:

> Kari: Describe where the setting takes place.
>
> Boris: In a small mountain, where there's a village underneath it, right here. [points] right here and [shows the boundaries of the village] here...
>
> Kari: Where did the wolf come from?
>
> Boris: From somewhere in the bushes. From the bush here [points to the spot], the wolf just popped out.
>
> Kari: When?
>
> Boris: In the summertime, in the afternoon, 1:50 PM.

Boris earned a three for this description. Although he did elaborately communicate (verbally or non-verbally) thoughts about the place and the time of day or year when the narrative happened, he could not offer reasoning as to why he imagined the setting this way. I knew from previous lessons—having seen glimpses— that he was capable of fully implementing this strategy however. Here is an example from the *Jeffery and the Sloth* sequencing tableaux lesson.

> Kari: What time of the day do you think it is?

Boris: I think 6:30 am.

Kari: Why?

Boris: Because I think that sloths are like sorta nocturnal.

Because Boris knew something about sloths and because he knew the meaning of nocturnal he made a guess that story took place at 6:30 in the morning. Here he was making connections and offering reasoning that supports his thoughts about the story's setting. Unfortunately this was the type of evidence that Boris was unable to provide in the post-program progress interview.

Boris also improved his ability to bring background knowledge and experience to the printed text, boosting his score by two points, bringing it to four in the post-program progress interview. This progress is partly explained by the fact that Boris really struggled at the beginning to articulate what he knew.

Kari: Have you ever had an experience like this?

Boris: No.

Kari: Have you ever seen dogs fight like that?

Boris: I've heard about it but I haven't seen it.

Kari: You heard about it in real life? On TV?

Boris: [long pause]

Kari: Or maybe in books?

Boris: I'm not exactly sure, but, I don't remember if I saw it.

Throughout the process however, he seemed to gain more confidence. I began to see glimpses of these gains during the lessons. One example was noted above in the *Jeffery and the Sloth* (Winters, in press) lesson where he knew facts about sloths and about nocturnal animals. Another example occurred during the *Hey Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998) lesson where Boris enlightened our role drama by providing bits of information that he knew about ants.

Kari: What do you know about ants?

Boris: That they live in colonies for safety.

Kari: So how are ants like people?

Boris: They both live in communities and they both work, do chores, have feelings.

Since the role drama raised the question, "Should kids squish ants and bully others?"—these tidbits of background knowledge helped the other students empathize with the ant and to better understand the similarities people and ants might share.

With the post-program text, *The Shepherd Boy and The Wolf,* Boris demonstrated that he could bring rich and varied knowledge or experience to the printed text. He offered three examples of connections: 1) he had read a similar text before and could tell me the story with a different ending, 2) he remembered playing a similar trick on his friend where he told him that there were "killer worms" in the computer room, and 3) he understood the characters feelings having felt similar emotions in the past. I believe this past knowledge helped Boris to better comprehend the narrative.

Boris originally struggled to understand the underlying gist or themes of the narrative; His pre-program score of one confirmed these troubles—without continued scaffolding from me and his peers he had no way of identifying the main ideas and themes. For example when asked in the pre-program progress interview what might be the moral of *The Greedy Dog* (Aesop, 1994) story. He answered frankly, "I do not know what it means. I don't get it." At that time he only made minimal connections with the story he was also unable to draw conclusions about the story's gist.

> Kari: Have you ever seen dogs fight like that?
>
> Boris: No. I've heard about it but I haven't seen it.
>
> Kari: What did you learn from the story?
>
> Boris: I don't remember exactly.
>
> Kari: Why did I pick it?
>
> Boris: I don't know…it teaches us reading.

I did see some glimpses of Boris' potential to determine the themes and gist of the story when he was able to collaborate with other people. For instance, in the *Hey Little Ant* role drama Boris (who played an ant) compared the ant to a child, "It's like the ant being squished is kinda like a kid being bullied." Certainly this was one of the important themes. And in the *When Vegetables Go Bad* musical gist lesson when Tate noted that "Lilly should have just ate her beans and none of this would have happened," Boris disagreed saying that "Lilly would have never known that vegetables could go this bad if she had eaten them. She had to see how mean they were, like so she would know she had to eat her vegetables." Again with these examples, Boris seemed to grasp the underlying gist of the narrative.

> Tom Stabler points out, drama offers the possibility of a synthesis between language, feeling and thought, which can enrich the individual's inner world and increase his or her awareness and understanding of the outer world, as well as his

or her competence and confidence in operating within it (cited in O'Neill and Lambert, 1982).

These drama-integrated lessons seemed to help Boris generalize the character's feelings and thoughts and connect them with bigger ideas in the real world.

Boris proved that indeed he was more able to grasp the underlying themes and gist of the narratives-boosting his post-program score to three. During this interview he titled the narrative—"The Villagers Who Got Tricked"— which demonstrated that Boris understood at least one of the main themes in the story. He then identified this theme further, "What [the story's] really about is...don't play real big tricks on people because when the actual thing happens they won't help you." As well as identifying the themes, Boris was now more able to empathize with all of the characters, illustrating (verbally and non-verbally) how the characters' actions affected the other characters and the motivations for their actions:

Kari: These guys (pointing to the villagers) didn't laugh, how did they feel?

Boris: They felt bad, like they'd been tricked.

Kari: What happened the third day?

Boris: This guy felt, he felt pretty scared...

Kari: How did the villagers feel the third day?

Boris: They felt like the boy can't trick them anymore.

Kari: Why did they feel that way?

Boris: Because the other two days the boy tricked them.

Kari: And why did [the boy] trick them?

Boris: Because he was bored and wanted to have some fun.

I believe that Boris' developed ability to recognize the characters' feelings and thoughts also helped him to better understand the story's main themes and gist.

The sequencing strategy was a difficult strategy for Boris to implement (more so than bringing background knowledge to the printed text or engaging with and visualizing the narrative), earning him a score of one in the pre-program progress interview. He wrote:

#1 - The dog is still hungry because it is still sunny.

#2 - The dog is going on the bridge to get to the other side.

#3 - The dog dropped his bone because of his own reflection.

#4 - The dog [is] still hungry because the bone dropped in the water.

These sequenced cards indicated that he did not grasp the more important events of the story nor did he understand the story's plot. I wondered if he was just not able at that time to put his thoughts into words. For example, rather than the dog is still hungry *because* it is still sunny, he might have meant the dog was hungry, it was sunny. The word because certainly changes the meaning of the sentence. Also he doesn't even mention the secondary characters. In this story the puppy was important because the older dog demonstrated his greed by taking the puppy's bone.

However, Boris, had few difficulties sequencing the tableaux in *Jeffery and the Sloth* (Winters, in press). I believe that the sequencing tableaux exercise was a success for him because he could depend on his peers to scaffold his learning when he had difficulties. Yet, without the help of others–like demonstrated in his pre-and post-program interviews–Boris demonstrated problems implementing this sequencing strategy.

After the lessons however, he managed to bring his sequencing score up to 2:

#1 - The boy calls, "Wolf! Wolf!."

#2 - The villagers thought there was a wolf.

#3 - This is the second time the boy cries, "Wolf! Wolf!."

#4 - The wolf eats the sheep.

Here Boris depicts at least two of the main story events Yet he still doesn't capture the main idea—that that the boy lied about seeing a wolf and that the villagers consciously make the decision to not believe him anymore. Also, Boris demonstrated no understanding story's set-up and only minimal described of the characters' involvement in the narrative.

Boris showed some improvement in his ability to implement all of the global/interpretive comprehension strategies. It seemed that the arts-integrated techniques allowed Boris to externalize many of his internal ideas and enabled him to use the scaffolds of collaborative, active instruction to benefit his reading comprehension process.

4.7 Findings

Overall, the findings show that all of the students became better readers by the end of the study; they were more fluent decoders and were better able to employ global/interpretive reading

strategies when comprehending printed texts. When given opportunities to read and express themselves through arts-integration, they became more strategic, global comprehenders of printed texts. Their chance to engage cognitively, socially, aesthetically, and emotionally (cf. Verriour, 1994) helped them make connections, actively construct meaning, and monitor their understanding on both literal and global levels. In addition, practice working with and reading texts enabled 10/12 students to perform better and faster on reading record tasks.

Initially, though some students were successfully comprehending on a local level——understanding the content of the narratives—none of the students successfully delved into the deeper strategic meaning-making. For example, students in both classes comprehended below expectations in all five areas of the global strategies we focused on: (a) recognizing the setting portrayed, (b) engaging with and visualizing the story narrative; (c) bringing personal knowledge and experience to the text, (d) sequencing story events; and (e) understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story. Results following the program show that majority of students improved across all nine of the twelve students bettered their decoding and fluency scores. Six of the twelve students improved their literal/local comprehension scores, and all of the students scored higher in global/interpretive comprehension. In other words, all of the students bettered their ability to use global/interpretive strategies when reading, leaving them better able to sequence, connect with, summarize, interpret, visualize and to "[get] inside the text" (Wilhelm, 1997, pp. 46-47). Most brought more knowledge and experience to the text which gave them more opportunities to transact with it. And some students were beginning to have the meta-cognitive ability to step in and out of the story world, make inferences, and identify the underlying narrative themes.

While the data from the pre-and post-program progress interviews measured overall findings and gauged improvement amongst the class and individuals, the detailed examples of the lesson plans and case studies provided rich personal descriptions of how students related to the narratives (e.g. see the quote at the beginning of chapter 1). In addition, by looking holistically at the children I gained new insights into what global/interpretive comprehension strategies they were implementing and how arts-integrated integration could benefit their meaning-making.

V. Conclusions

Ironically, the arts, an area of thinking that has the most to offer, is the most neglected in our schools. The arts are models of work that do emphasize the creation of coherent structure, that do encourage multiple solutions to problems, that do prize innovation, that do rely on the use of judgment, and that depend on the use of sensibility. In short the arts are a most important means of celebrating thinking.

--Eliott Eisner, 1998, 28

5.1   Overview of the Study

My purpose for this study was to investigate the efficacy of using arts-integrated programming when teaching global reading comprehension strategies among less proficient third and fourth grade readers. I was particularly interested in understanding what global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies these students who struggle to comprehend were already applying to narratives and also how I could support their further strategy use within the classroom.

The project was undertaken with two groups of children (grade three and four) in a West Vancouver suburban public school for a total of seven months. Twelve students participated. The study consisted of three phases: (1) January-February 2003 where I conducted classroom observations, discussions, and the pre-program progress interviews, (2) February-May 2003 where global/interpretive comprehension strategies were explicitly taught through arts-integrated lessons; and I conducted discussions and a post-program progress interview, and (3) June 2003 where I concluded the study with the delayed-progress interview and where the students discussed their progress and filled out student reflection questionnaires.

Two research questions were addressed throughout the project:

1. Can less proficient (grades 3 and 4) readers improve their global understandings of written narratives by participating in a program that uses arts-integrated, global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies?

2. Can arts-integration be used as an effective tool for instructing and evaluating students' comprehension of narrative texts?

5.2   Discussion of Findings

As discussed at the end of chapter 4, the findings generally show that all of the students became more fluent at decoding and appeared to be better able at employing global/interpretive reading strategies when making meaning from printed texts. When given opportunities to read and express themselves through arts-integration, students became more strategic. They engaged in cognitive, embodied, social, and emotional ways which helped them make more connections as they constructed meaning from the printed text. They also seemed to improve their ability to monitor their understanding on both literal and global levels.

Making meaning from texts is the most significant reason for reading. This study aimed to help less proficient readers become more effective at implementing global/interpretive strategies for understanding texts and to move them beyond "just literal reproduction of the author's words" (Fielding and Pearson, 1994, p. 62). Indeed this arts-integrated program—which included drama, music and visual art techniques—supports a claim that students are able to heighten their capability to actively "transact" when they discover the narrative through movement and dialogue, drawing and form, or rhythm and song. Both classes appeared to demonstrate improvement in their decoding and fluency skills, their local understandings of text, and their ability to implement global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies. Beyond just gaining facts about narratives, students bettered their abilities to express their ideas through language and performance. "This ability to express themselves with more precision helped them in reading comprehension and across the curriculum" (as stated by a the grade 4 teacher in the field notes - May, 14th, 2004).

In the literature review I asked the question, "Can the Fine Arts be used as an effective way to teach reading comprehension?" I suspected at that time that the collective, active, multi-modal, and reflective nature of the arts could broaden and promote children's constructions of text.

Arts-Integration Provides Opportunities to Collaborate and Discuss Texts

Pearson (2003) argued in a recent lecture that students need opportunities to engage in rich conversations around texts. He demonstrated that even young students, when given opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations about texts, could deepen their literary understandings of narratives. Sipe (2000), too, demonstrated a similar finding with his research—showing that even young students were capable of complex literary understanding when they were in the context of social settings (e.g. interviews, performance texts).

Yet a problem for teachers is that some students may talk openly and easily, while other perhaps linguistically diverse students, find these discussions unnatural and difficult. How do we then as educators provide a space where talk becomes more natural and accessible? Rogers and O'Neill (1993) suggest that classrooms that use process drama as an instructional tool, invite students to transform their classroom interaction patterns "so that student talk becomes richer and students' responses become the center of the literary interpretive process" (p. 69). In this way student talk is less mediated by teacher questioning. Students simply respond (with words or actions) to an imaginary world they have created around the text. Often, this type of response-based talk is less threatening than answering formal questions that were presented by the teacher. Thus, the students are less inhibited when it comes to talking about texts.

The transcripts and case studies illustrate that these imaginative worlds were created not only during the process drama technique but also through many of the other arts-integrated lessons (e.g. musical gist, SRI, picture mapping collage, inside/outside circle). Indeed arts-integration promoted rich discussions around several narratives. These discussions, then in turn became an integral part of this program as students discovered that instead of simply extracting details from the printed text, they could respond to the literature and actively construct their own understandings.

In addition, collective participatory experiences seemed to enhance student motivation and reflection. Within a playful context, students actively took part in rich conversations about texts and about how proficient readers construct meaning. This gave them opportunities to see one another interacting with texts and each other. When we went back to the original narrative, students were therefore better informed about how to re-contextualize what they knew, positioning themselves within rather than outside of the story.

Arts-Integration Provides Opportunities for Students to Become Active Meaning-Makers

Reading, like anything else, requires practice. Proficient readers read, just as skilled musicians have to practice and good actors have to rehearse. Jean Piaget (1973) talked about how babies must manipulate objects, holding, tasting, seeing, and moving them, to know them and understand their function (cited in Vacca et al., 2003). And Eisner (1998) wrote, "A unified body and mind must be fully engaged with the material at hand to have a basis for making...judgments. Here, students were given opportunities to actively manipulate—the material at hand—global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies converged with playful and meaningful contexts.

Actual reading, responding to literature, and comprehending texts, both performance and print-based texts, was how we spent our time together. Each group participated in twelve 60-minute lessons (720 minutes in total) in a small group setting actively making meaning of written narratives. With this much additional practice, it is not surprising that students became better composers of meaning.

What is more surprising is how engaged the students were during these 720 minutes. Although drama, music, and art activities sometimes seem chaotic, these children were focused and motivated. Again and again I heard them saying things like, "I like this class because we can do fun stuff" or that "using drama, art, and music is exciting because we get to move around, play roles, sculpt, and sing." Similar ideas were also reflected in the delayed-progress interviews and reflection questionnaires.

These comments bring me to these questions, "What is meaning-making?" and "Where is it constructed?" For me, an analogy for meaning-making is having a learner stretch a piece of silly putty. The putty, which represents the learner's mind, body, and affect (the places that I believe meaning-making occurs) are manipulated, extended and broadened by the learner. The forming of the putty is affected by the learner's prior ideas, feelings, and perceptions he brings to the task, his relationship with the sculptured putty and to his environment during the task, and his goals and intensions of where he will take the creation. The putty, when stretched and formed in this way, is incapable of returning to its original form; it is permanently altered. This is not to say that the learner can not return to the putty to re-mold, re-form, and re-broaden it further. He can and will because meaning-making in this way is a ongoing and dynamic process.

Again, I am reminded of Siegel's (1984) and Harste, Short, and Burke's (1988) work in signification, and especially the strategy called Sketch to Stretch. As I think about the theory behind this strategy, I realize how similar it is to my definition of meaning-making; in both students actively manipulate sign systems as a way to stretch their thinking. Specifically in the Sketch to Stretch program, after reading a story, students draw a sketch representing what the story meant to them. Each student's sketch is then discussed and responded to. Hence, the story has been recast into two new representations (the drawing and the talk about the drawing). This recasting process, using layered and varied sign systems, is called "transmediation" (Haste in Berghoff, Egawa, Harste, and Hoonan, 2000, p. 3). Arts-integrated activities, when used as varied ways to represent a printed text is clearly a form of transmediation. Siegel (1995) argues that students, when using arts-integration, are activating their prior knowledge of texts and re-symbolizing them in ways that are meaningful to them. In this way, learners are transmediating and finding the core of literacy.

Yet not all transmediation processes are as formal as this. Play, like other arts-integrated activities (e.g. drawing, sculpting, acting, dancing, singing, etc.) is also a form of transmediation. In fact, it is the basis of many of these sign systems is play; the arts, are rooted in play. Children from an early age actively construct and engage in "world-making" in the context of play (Cobb, 1977 cited in Gallas, 1994). They pretend, sing, tell stories, and dance to figure out who they are, what they know, and how to make sense of their worlds. So after years of practice embodying these imagined worlds–by the time they are nine or ten–students exude confidence playing, singing and drawing what makes sense to them. In this way play seems to reinforce meaning-making.

In this study, I saw the benefits of imaginative play prior to coming to a printed text. Students who had prior opportunities to engage in imaginative play seemed to have an easier time transmediating through arts-integration. Why is that? I think it is like anything else; as I mentioned in the first line of this section, reading requires practice. Those who practice a task usually become better at that task. Because a large part of reading is imagining the story world and bringing background knowledge to the text, those who have had lots of practice–making meaningful pretend worlds through play–could more easily relate the text to their prior imaginary experiences and seemed to have less trouble envisioning and engaging with the world of the narrative.

Yet even today, schools that privilege print-based literacies do not effectively access this dynamic expertise. The arts —where students compose multiple meanings from texts— are seen as frills, sometimes evoking thoughts of unruly children, noise and mess. Administrators do not realize that playful experiences and the arts can be intricately weaved with literacy. Perhaps they see arts-integrated activities and play as separate from the curriculum or as just belonging in distinct areas (e.g. music class, art class, school plays, assemblies, etc.). Perhaps they do not realize how valuable playful and imaginary practice can be to print-based literacies. From my experience in schools I know that many administrators view arts-integration as a performance and overlook the process, the rehearsing and the learning. Arts-integration *is* an active process. It is about making connections, building on prior knowledge and experiences, and transacting with texts—not coincidentally, so is reading comprehension. It makes sense for schools and school-based literacies to capitalize on the strengths and expertise that students naturally bring to performance texts.

Through the case studies and lesson reviews, I realized that students were being actively occupied cognitively and affectively. Not only were they activating cognitive schemata, thinking about texts for sustained amounts of time, and constructing knowledge about the world and themselves, they were also feeling the story as though they were a part of it. They sensed the complexity of the characters' emotional states, and empathized through their own personal expression. Karen Gallas (1994) writes:

> In story, the content almost always ties meaning to an emotive value. Useful stories, for teachers, are those that ring true, stories that are evocative of their own lives in the classroom. Each story we hear forces us to situate ourselves in relation to the personal truths that the storyteller is relating; each story, although not a fiction, presents many perspectives and many meanings rather than one focus conclusive meaning (p. 123).

In this project, arts-integration seemed to allow these less proficient readers to move through texts in broader and more personal ways so that they were able to make deeper connections on both cognitive and affective levels.

During this project students actively practiced employing global/interpretive reading comprehension strategies. Practicing with explicit and guided instruction gave students opportunities to see how strategies could be successfully implemented and then how to consolidate their learning by discussing and applying them. In other words, after watching

strategies being modeled for them, students were able to talk about and then try the strategies themselves. Finally, some students were able to go one step further, by applying the strategies they had learned across a variety of print and performance texts.

Students made many connections in this project, seemingly through using arts-integration as representational tools for meaning-making. They appeared to become better decoders who were more fluent and better able to draw literal comprehension from an author's words. Additionally, they began to understand how to actively implement global strategies to make more associations and transactions with the text.

Arts-Integration Provides Opportunities for Multi-Modal Expression

Language-based literacies have taken a privileged place in schools. The ability to talk, listen, read, and write adeptly earns students respect and higher academic status (Heath, 1983). Meanwhile, others who *do* have the capacity to construct meaning and express themselves in different ways, but can not articulate what they know, get labeled as having a disability and are often left behind. This is not to say that language-based literacies are not important! Some ideas are knowable only through language (e.g. "the day before yesterday, my brother's friend's uncle dropped me and my poodle off in Stanley Park"), and second our print-based world demands that people be able to comprehend and compose across a range of print-based texts. These texts define who we are as a society as much as performance texts. What I am suggesting, however, is that we begin to recognize children's negotiations and representations of meaning across a variety of texts. Valuing each representation as meaningful and informative.

Children delight in arts-integrated expressions. Most have a natural propensity to dance, sing, paint, pretend. When arts-integration is combined with reading comprehension students can express themselves naturally in other ways than through words alone. Imagine a classroom where students can represent their thoughts through melodies, stories, visual images, multi-media, movement, numbers, *and* words; a place where students of diverse cultural backgrounds and academic levels of attainment have equal opportunities to succeed because they can read and express in ways that work for them. Karen Gallas (1994) argues in her book the need to re-think the languages of learning and the values that we assign various representations of meaning.

> When students are continuously offered opportunities to express their stories about the world through many avenues, they show that the power and range of their intellectual and creative pursuits are unbounded; they create new kinds of

learning communities that offer membership to every child; they teach us that the process of education transcends methodology and curriculum and is situated in the realm of possibility."

Collectively we created a natural context to play with literacy where students had opportunities to connect with others and with texts, to converse, sing, act, dance, draw, or write their understandings about narratives, and to see a purposeful relationship between performance texts and printed texts. Here several things happened. First students became more astute readers of sign systems and readers of the body (Morgan & Saxton, 2000). They began to recognize and compose meaning from non-verbal and multi-disciplinary cues (e.g. gesture, proximity, line, colour, balance, facial expression, cadence, etc.). Second, students felt more confident because they could express themselves in ways that they could articulate. Since all forms of expression (e.g. talking, drawing, singing, acting, gesturing, etc.) were equally valued students demonstrated continued success. Both the teachers and I noticed that in May,[18] the students were less hesitant about offering their knowledge to the class conversations and about reading in front of the class. Third, verbal/non-verbal interchanges were mutually triggered by the other's presence. In other words, performance-based literacies were informed language-based literacies and language-based literacies developed into performance-based literacies. The students wanted to converse and write about their art, music and drama-integrated activities. And at the same time, they wanted to perform, sing, and draw the narratives and conversations they were having. Rogers and O'Neill (1993) posited that process drama helps to create classroom contexts that support students' explorations, interpretations, collaborations and negotiations (p. 72). Similarly, this project gave students an opportunity to form a learning community where they could construct and negotiate meaning through language and also through acting, drawings, building collages, singing, playing musical instruments, and dancing.

Arts-Integration Provides Opportunities for Students to Become Reflective

Art and literature can serve many purposes. Perhaps the artist/writer created the piece to ask a question, demonstrate a state or mind, look aesthetically on an aspect of life, or communicate a

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[18] Based on field notes from the post-progress interview, May 16, 2003

T: I can't believe it. He is actually volunteering to read in front of the whole class. And Nathan too. He barely spoke before.

K: I noticed a huge difference in Nathan. He seems more confident with words.

particular idea. Whatever the reason for its creation, the mere fact that it has been put into the public domain means that it will be reflected on.

As students responded to texts (e.g. picture books, recorded songs, illustrations), their prior knowledge, cultural background, understanding of the text, and emotional state at the time positioned them and allowed them to construct and reflect upon the meaning that was unique to each one of them. Students then discussed and represented their understandings, storying from their own perspectives and through other modalities to make their reflections known. The group then responded and reacted to these reflections, forming a somewhat circular process, from the original representation to the individual meaning constructed from the text to the "re-reflecting" of the individual's construction and back to the original text..

I discovered through this project that children particularly enjoyed reflecting through narrative "any complex of signs and texts [communicated or expressed] that make children's thinking visible" (Gallas, 1994, p. xiii). Mikhail Bakhtin quotes,

> If the word 'text' is understood in the broad sense—as any coherent complex of signs—then even the study of art...deals with texts. Thoughts about thoughts, experiences of experiences, words about words, texts about texts (cited in Gallas, 1994, p. xii).

We tell stories, build on stories, move within stories, and create stories within stories as ways to connect with and remember our experiences and also to make sense of the world. In other words, storying allows us to think about worldly themes in the first person.

> We make stories, live them, remember or forget them, tell them, reshape them, pass them on, write them down, sing, act, and paint them. Children speak almost entirely through stories—real or invented—and they comprehend what others say through story (Booth, 2001).

Through storytelling children are able merge their play, literacy and cultural worlds—children's "texts represent the convergence of [their] literacy and culture, and by extension, [their] identi[ties]" (Kendrick, 2003, p. 160; see also Dyson, 1997). Likewise, this study offered these twelve less proficient readers opportunities to reflect and respond to literature and also to communicate and represent their personal narratives. The more that children were able to practice reflecting, the deeper their reflection and subsequent comprehension of the text seemed to become.

In conclusion, this study provides significant opportunities for students of all abilities to collaborate, respond to, and reflect across a range of texts, and also to become more active, strategic meaning-makers.

5.3   Limitations of the Study

Allington (2001), drawing upon research writes, "There is now good evidence that smaller classes, at least in elementary schools, make better teaching possible" (p. 117). From my earliest experiences as a teacher I've seen that a smaller class size benefits children immensely. Teachers must have opportunities to put the children first, looking at they already know and then taking them further. In smaller classes teachers can view the children more holistically, looking not only at their academic achievement but also gauging their capacity to use language and express themselves in multi-modal ways, to examine their affective and cognitive processes while reading, and their interests in or connections to texts. Certainly this study makes the case for smaller class size: the generous results my program achieved are partly due to the fact that I only had twelve students.

If I were to do this project again, I would consider changing some of the comprehension strategies that I used. For example, I found that recognizing the setting could have been combined with either the engaging and visualizing strategy or the sequencing strategy. The data I received seemed repetitive. Also, I feel that I missed an important element in reading comprehension by not making more students aware of their connections with the author. In the future I would develop a critical strategy where students would have opportunities to learn and reflect on their possible dialogues with the author. Moreover, although there was a lot of monitoring understanding throughout the program, I would contemplate teaching and evaluating it as another separate global/interpretive strategy.

I would also consider creating a script for myself for the pre-and post-progress interviews. I found myself in both interviews having conversations with the students. For some, especially the out-going and verbal children, these conversations really helped some students boost their scores. Others, especially the more tentative students, did not benefit. For example, when I asked during two interviews "Can you remember how the author described the setting in this story?" the first child responded, "It was a lonely day." This answer inspired another question from me, "What does 'it was a lonely day' mean to you?" And so the conversation continued, feeding yet another

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question and giving me information that this child knew about the type of day it was and the time of day. Meanwhile, when I asked another child the same question "Can you remember how the author described the setting in this story?" he could not respond. So instead of re-phrasing the question or inquiring further, I moved on to another topic.

Finally, I am a teacher with background knowledge in the areas of remedial instruction, literacy, and the arts. Coming from a professional background in both theatre and education, the creation and implementation of these arts-integrated techniques came easily to me. However, since this project was meant to be a arts-integrated program that could be accessed by other educators with diverse backgrounds, it needs to be clearly explained in layman terms. I am not sure, however, if these techniques can be accessed simply by the way I have talked about them. In this way, I think that this program has potential to improve student reading comprehension but that more attention needs to be paid to the program itself (e.g. further suggestions for children's literature, samples of how to integrate arts-integrated and reading comprehension strategies, a list of additional arts-integrated strategies that may benefit student's engagements with print-based literacies) .

5.4   Implications of the study and Recommendations for Further Research

This project supports the claim that arts-integrated instruction can further students' abilities to globally comprehend and interpret narratives. Additionally, it celebrates the engagement even less proficient readers can have with printed texts when they are provided opportunities to see, hear, and feel beyond the words.

As educators we have to consider the possibilities embodied, multi-modal and multi-sensory learning has to offer. We want to find ways of learning that engage the body and the affect, as well as the mind. By layering ideas with feelings, movement, colour, texture, form, and other sensory perceptions we further potential engagement and motivation in students. We let them think, and embody different forms of meaning-making, and ultimately we give them multiple tools they can use to extend their learning and retain their ideas.

In a technological and industrial world we want students to be able to negotiate meanings across a variety of texts (both printed and performance). This project demonstrates that perhaps performance texts can be used in classrooms to help students construct deeper meanings from

print texts and also that print texts can be used to better students' transactions with performance texts—that they are not in opposition but are indeed tools that, when used together, can advance students meaningful constructions of text.

This project has proven to me that texts (both print and performance), when converged or layered upon one another, help learners form more meaningful connections and strengthen their motivations to comprehend. This layering of texts also facilitates the learner's ability to form new texts. For example, after reading *I Want to Be* by Thylias Moss. Students were able to symbolize the meaning they constructed through drama and movement; this representation then informed and strengthened their collage work which in turn, helped them re-form and extend their comprehension of the print. In other words, prior representations of meaning can inform or shape newer representations. The students did not forget the meaning they attained from the drama when they constructed the collage or when they went back to the printed text. In fact, the findings of this study prove that by layering texts or transmediating, students appeared to be better able to globally and strategically comprehend print-based texts.

Throughout this research I have asked educators to re-consider engagements with text and to consider incorporating arts-integrated programs that go beyond language alone; to think about how proficient readers combine cognitive and reader response-based strategies; and to re-imagine the possibilities teaching and learning through arts-integration can offer. Although, layering representations of meaning-making may seem novel or innovative, transmediation or arts-integration (thinking with varied sign systems) is not a new idea. Although the term multiple literacies or multiliteracies is a recent term, the core ideas stem back to ancient civilizations where, for example, Egyptians and Romans used multiple signs (e.g. hieroglyphics, wall paintings, artifacts, oral myths, theatrical performances, and others) as ways to communicate and recast knowledge. In many ways, Gardner's (1983) and Armstong's (1999) work in Muliple Intelligences, Boal's (1984) research with the theatre of the oppressed , Heathcote and Bolton's (1995) or O'Neill's (1982; 1995) bodies of work in process drama, or even the multi-authored concept of learning styles all reframe the same ideas, that learning is enhanced and better remembered when can be actively symbolized or embodied through varied experiences and representations.

The research addressed in this study begins to answer some of the questions that I had about arts-integration and its benefits within the school curriculum. Yet I still believe that the

instructional potential for arts-integration is even broader than explored here. While my particular interest in this study was to see how the arts could be integrated to improve students' comprehension of narratives, I know that these arts-integrated activities could also benefit the student's understandings of other genres. I believe that comprehension of poetry, non-fiction, and hypertext could also be improved when combined with artistic, musical and dramatic techniques. Further, I speculate that additional investigations would demonstrate that arts-integration also boosts scores across a range of courses including but not limited to writing, math, the sciences, and the humanities.

This project demonstrated that improvements in global/interpretive comprehension were possible in suburban grade three and four classrooms. Would similar results derive from studies in more rural or inner-city settings? What possibilities do arts-integrated activities offer to younger and older children? Could adults benefit as well? How could this program be modified for ESL students, or pre-service teachers?

With a little imagination it is not difficult to envision the benefits arts-integration could have for other types of readers, where even the most reluctant or the most critical readers have the potential to further their connections, engagements and visualizations, sequencing, and thematic understandings of print-based texts. Models of curriculum which employ art-integration and multiple literacy pedagogies celebrate thinking in many forms and add to student's potential collaborative, active, multi-modal, and reflective meaning-making of the world in which they live .

VI. Appendix A

The Greedy Dog manuscript

From: Aesop. (1994) *Aesop's fables*. NY: Modern Publishing.

On a lonely farm road a hungry old dog met a puppy carrying a juicy bone in its mouth.

"I'll get that bone," thought the greedy dog.

The old dog barked and growled until the poor little puppy dropped its bone and ran away.

With the puppy gone, the greedy old dog licked his lips and carried the bone off to find a quiet place to eat.

On his way he walked over a footbridge, and, looking over the side of the bridge, the greedy old dog saw another dog with a bone in its mouth.

"I'll scare that fellow off too," he thought.

"Then I'll have both bones for my dinner."

The greedy old dog growled and barked at the other dog.

SPLASH! The bone fell into the river.

He saw that he was looking at his own reflection.

And now, the greedy old dog was hungry once again!

The Shepherd Boy and the Wolf manuscript

From: Aesop. (1994) *The Aesop for children*. NY: Scholastic. p. 20

The Shepherd boy tended his master's sheep near a dark forest not far from the village. Soon he found life in the pasture very dull. All he could do to amuse himself was to talk to his dog or play on his shepherd's pipe.

One day as he sat watching the sheep and the quiet forest, and thinking what he would do should he see a wolf, he thought of a plan to amuse himself.

His master had told him to call for help should a wolf attack the flock, and the villagers would drive it away. So now, though he had not seen anything that even looked like a wolf, he ran toward the village shouting at the top of his voice, "Wolf! Wolf!"

As he expected, the villagers dropped their work and ran in great excitement to the pasture. But when they got there they found the boy doubled up with laughter at the trick he had played on them.

A few days later the Shepherd boy again shouted, "Wolf! Wolf!" Again the villagers ran to help him, only to be laughed at again.

Then one evening as the sun was setting behind the forest and the shadows were creeping out of the pasture, a wolf really did spring from behind the underbrush and fall upon the sheep.

In terror, the boy ran toward the village shouting, "Wolf! Wolf!" But though the villagers heard the cry, they did not run to help him as they had before. "He cannot fool us again," they said.

The wolf killed a great many of the boy's sheep and then slipped away into the forest.

VII. Appendix B

Global/Interpretive Comprehension Questionnaire

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

Story: _____

Recognizing the Setting:

Describe where the story takes place.

_____

_____

Tell me about when this story happens.

_____

_____

Do the places or times change in the story? How?

_____

_____

Can you remember how the author described the setting in this story?

_____

_____

B. Engaging With and Visualizing the Story Narrative

When you are reading do you imagine in your mind what is happening? _____

Tell me about when that picture you have in your mind. What does the story look like when you are imaging it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you were going to make a movie about this story what would it look like?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Were there any parts of the story that you had trouble imaging? Why?

_____

_____

_____

C. <u>Bringing Background Knowledge and Experience to the Text</u>

What did you already know about the story?

_____

_____

_____

Have you ever had an experience like the characters' in the story?

_____

_____

_____

Do the characters remind you of people you know or have seen on television? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

How did the characters feel throughout the story? How did they act?

_____

_____

_____

Why did they act the way they did?

_____

_____

_____

D. Sequencing Story Events

Order the story cards:

(place sequenced story cards here)

Tell me about how you ordered the story cards.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do they have to go in that order? Why?

_____

_____

_____

E. <u>Understanding the underlying themes or making inferences about the gist of the story</u>

What would be the perfect title for this story?

_____

_____

_____

How do the character's actions affect the other characters?

_____

_____

_____

This story is about... This story means...

_____

_____

_____

Why is this story important? Why do you think I picked it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

VIII. Appendix C

Global/Interpretive Comprehension Rubric

A. Recognizing the Setting

4. A very good understanding of this concept

- elaborately communicates (verbally or non-verbally) thoughts about the story's setting (including rich descriptions of the place and the time when the narrative happens)
- offers (local/literal or beyond the story's narrative) reasoning that supports thoughts about the story's setting
- demonstrates accuracy
- provides evidence (verbally or non-verbally) about whether the places or the times change throughout the story
- uses vocabulary and phrases from the story

3. An adequate understanding of this concept

- communicates (verbally or non-verbally) thoughts about the story's setting (including some descriptions of the place and the time when the narrative happens)
- demonstrates accuracy
- acknowledges (verbally or non-verbally) when the places or the times change throughout the story

2. Some understanding of this concept

- attempts to communicate (verbally or non-verbally) some thoughts about the story's setting (including listing the place and the time when the narrative happens)
- demonstrates some accuracy and some misinterpretation

1. Very little understanding of this concept

- struggles to communicate (verbally or non-verbally) any thoughts about the story's setting
- misinterprets setting places and times

B. <u>Engaging With and Visualizing the Story Narrative</u>

4. A very good understanding of this concept
- effectively and fluidly communicates (verbally or non-verbally) rich details about the picture in his/her mind
- demonstrates accuracy
- enhances textual meaning with mental imagery or action (gestures, movements)
- actively engages with the narrative (e.g. takes a perspective inside the world of the text)
- demonstrates (verbally or non-verbally) rich affect when reading

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3. An adequate understanding of this concept
- communicates (verbally or non-verbally) some details about the picture in his/her mind
- demonstrates accuracy
- engages with the narrative (e.g. takes a perspective outside of the text as if the story is separte from the reader)
- demonstrates (verbally or non-verbally) some affect when reading

2. Some understanding of this concept
- attempts to communicate (verbally or non-verbally) about the picture in his/her mind
- demonstrates some accuracy and some misinterpretation
- minimally engages with the narrative (e.g. lists ideas he/she liked)

1. Very little understanding of this concept
- struggles to communicate (verbally or non-verbally) about the picture in his/her mind
- misinterprets the action of the story
- seems unaware of this concept

C. <u>Bringing personal knowledge to the text</u>

4. A very good understanding of this concept
- provides rich details about how the text relates to his/her prior knowledge or experience
- knows that he/she is using background knowledge or experience to interpret the story
- depicts (verbally or non-verbally) rich understandings of the character's feelings and motivations
- makes rich personal connections (text to self, text to text, text to world) with the text

3. An adequate understanding of this concept
- provides some details about how the text relates to his/her background knowledge or experience
- depicts (verbally or non-verbally) some understanding of the character's feelings and motivations
- makes some personal connections (text to self, text to text, text to world) with the text

2. Some understanding of this concept
- provides minimal details about how the text relates to his/her background knowledge or experience
- struggles to provide (verbally or non-verbally) examples of how the story relates to his/her own life
- depicts (verbally or non-verbally) some understanding of the character's feelings
- makes minimal personal connections (text to self, text to text, text to world) with the text

1. Very little understanding of this concept
- provides no details about how the text relates to his/her background knowledge or experience
- seems unaware of how the story relates to his/her own life
- misinterprets the character's feelings
- makes no personal connections (text to self, text to text, text to world) with the text

D. <u>Sequencing Story Events</u>

4. A very good understanding of this concept
- depicts all four of the important story events (those that represent the plot's set-up, rising action, main problem and resolution)
- accurately sequences all of the story cards and can effectively communicate their understandings of why the plot has to be sequenced in that particular way
- richly describes (verbally or non-verbally) important details about the characters and setting of the story
- uses vocabulary and phrases from the story

3. An adequate understanding of this concept
- depicts at least three of the important story events (those that represent the plot's set-up, rising action, main problem and resolution)
- accurately sequences all of the story cards
- describes (verbally or non-verbally) some important details about the characters

2. Some understanding of this concept
- depicts at least two of the important story events (those that represent the plot's set-up, rising action, main problem and resolution)
- attempts to sequence the story cards even though some of the events may be out of sequence
- lists (verbally or non-verbally) some general ideas about the characters

1. Very little understanding of this concept
- depicts one or none of the important story events (those that represent the plot's set-up, rising action, main problem and resolution)
- seems unaware of how to sequence the story cards
- misinterprets ideas about characters (including leaving out important characters, and adding additional characters to the story)

E. <u>Understanding the Underlying Themes or Gist of the Story</u>

4. A very good understanding of this concept
- effectively and fluidly communicates (verbally or non-verbally) the story's most important ideas and themes
- provides an accurate and appropriate title for the narrative
- accurately illustrates using rich depictions (verbally or non-verbally) how a character's actions affect the other characters in the story
- demonstrates rich understanding the underlying themes or gist of the story
- merges textual clues with prior knowledge in order to grasp the deeper meaning of the story

3. An adequate understanding of this concept
- communicates an awareness (verbally or non-verbally) of the story's most important ideas and themes
- provides an accurate title for the narrative
- accurately describes how the character's actions affect the other characters in the story
- demonstrates some understanding of the underlying themes or gist of the story

2. Some understanding of this concept
- communicates one important idea or theme
- attempts to title the narrative
- misinterprets how the character's actions affect the other characters in the story
- demonstrates minimal understanding of the underlying themes or gist of the story

1. Very little understanding of this concept
- misinterprets the story's most important ideas
- struggles to title the narrative
- seems unaware of how the character's actions affect the other characters in the story
- read the story literally and could not label the underlying theme of the story

IX. Appendix D

Delayed Progress-Interview Questionnaire

1. What did you like about my classes?

2. What was more difficult?

3. What reading comprehension strategies did we talk about during our time together?

4. Did you know about these strategies before I came?

5. Are you able to use these strategies? Did you learn to incorporate these strategies when you read?

6. Do you have any questions about how to use these strategies when you read?

7. What did you think of the arts-integrated activities?

8. Do you think that they helped you learn more about the comprehension strategies?

9. How many of you liked to read before the classes?

10. How many of you like to read now?

11. Do you think you are a good reader? Why?

X. Appendix E

Student Reflection Questionnaire

1. Something I liked about this class was...

2. Something I had difficulty with was...

3. I really remember...

4. I thought that using art, drama and music with reading was _____ because...

5. I learned about reading stories. Some of the things I learned were...

XI. Appendix F

Table 5 – Overall Thesis Data

Name And grade		Lisa (3)		Sean (3)		Clyde (3)	
DECODING AND FLUENCY	Miscue Analysis Score/ Level	99 % H. Ind.	99.6% H. Ind.	96 % L. Ind.	100% H. Ind.	97.9% Ind.	98.8% H. Ind.
	Time	2 min. 56 sec.	1 min. 45 sec.	2 min. 8 sec.	3 min. 21 sec.	2 min. 18 sec.	2 min. 4 sec.
LOCAL COMPREHENSION	Sentences	92%	100%	69%	100%	85%	94%
	Literal Comp. Score	4/5 Instr.	4/5 Instr.	4/5 Instr.	5/5 Instr.	4/5 Instr.	4/5 Instr.
GLOBAL/INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION	Setting	3	3	3	3	1	3
	Engaging Visualizing	2	3	3	4	2	3
	Knowledge/ Experience	2	3	2	3	2	3
	Sequencing	1	2	3	4	1	3
	Theme/Gist	1	3	3	3	1	2
	Total	9	14	14	17	7	14
	Change	+5		+3		+7	

		Andy (3)		Heidi (3)		Doreen (3)	
DECODING AND FLUENCY	Miscue Analysis Score/Level	96.7% Ind.	98.8% H. Ind.	94.6% H. Inst.	99.2% H. Ind.	97.5% Ind.	99.6% H. Ind.
	Time	3 min. 58 sec.	3 min. 54 sec.	3 min. 59 sec.	2 min. 41 sec.	3 min. 6 sec.	2 min. 30 sec.
LOCAL COMPREHENSION	Sentences	69%	82%	69%	94%	85%	94%
	Literal Comp. Score	3/5 Frust.	3/5 Frust.	3/5 Frust.	4/5 Instr.	2/5 Frust.	4/5 Instr.
GLOBAL/INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION	Setting	2	2	2	3	2	3
	Engaging Visualizing	2	3	2	3	2	3
	Knowledge/ Experience	2	2	2	2	3	3
	Sequencing	2	3	3	4	1	3
	Theme/Gist	2	3	3	2	2	2
	Total	10	13	12	14	10	14
	Change	+3		+2		+4	

Name and grade	DECODING AND FLUENCY		LOCAL COMPREHENSION		GLOBAL/INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION					Total	Change
	Miscue Analysis Score/Level	Time	Sentences	Literal Comp. Score	Setting	Engaging Visualizing	Knowledge/Experience	Sequencing	Theme/Gist		
Drew (3)	100% H. Ind.	2 min. 45 sec.	100%	5/5 Ind.	3	3	3	1	3	13	
	Gr. 4 test 99.3% H. Ind.	2 min. 28 sec.	94.4%	4/5 Instr.	4	4	3	3	2	16	+3

Thesis Data

Name and grade	Miscue Analysis Score/ Level (DECODING AND FLUENCY)	Time	Sentences (LOCAL COMPREHENSION)	Literal Comp. Score	Setting (GLOBAL/INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION)	Engaging Visualizing	Knowledge/ Experience	Sequencing	Theme/Gist	Total	Change
Cliff (4)	97.5% Ind.	3 min. 44 sec.	82%	3/5 Frust.	3	3	3	2	2	13	
	98.6% H. Ind.	3 min. 12 sec.	83%	4/5 Instr.	4	3	4	3	3	17	+4
Nathan (4)	100% H. Ind.	2 min. 14 sec.	100%	5/5 Ind.	2	2	2	2	2	10	
	Gr. 5 test 99 % H. Ind.	3 min. 21 sec.	99%	5/5 Ind.	4	3	4	3	2	16	+6
Boris (4)	97.6 % Ind.	3 min. 26 sec.	82%	3/5 Frust.	2	3	2	1	1	9	
	98.2% H. Ind.	2 min. 49 sec.	89%	4/5 Instr.	3	4	4	2	3	16	+7

Grade 4 students

Name and grade	DECODING AND FLUENCY		LOCAL COMPREHENSION		GLOBAL/INTERPRETIVE COMPREHENSION					Total	Change
	Miscue Analysis Score/Level	Time	Sentences	Literal Comp. Score	Setting	Engaging Visualizing	Knowledge/ Experience	Sequencing	Theme/Gist		
Tate (4)	Gr. 3 test 96.6% L. Ind.	3 min. 33 sec.	69%	2/5 Frust.	1	2	2	1	1	7	
	Gr. 3 test 98.4% H. Ind.	2 min 58 sec.	94%	3/5 Frust.	3	4	2	3	1	13	+6
Vincent (4)	99.3% H. Ind.	3 min. 23 sec.	94%	3/5 Frust.	1	2	2	1	2	8	
	99.3% H. Ind.	2 min. 35 sec.	94%	3/5 Frust.	3	3	2	3	3	14	+6

XII. Appendix G

Jeffrey's Wor(l)ds Meet Sloth manuscript

From: Winters, K.L. (In Press) *Chameleon Magazine*. BC: University of British Columbia's Creative Writing Department.

Jeffrey looked at the blank page. It glared back.

No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't think of something to write about.

So Jeffrey doodled instead, drawing landscapes and his favourite buildings. His ideas were coming slowly, sloth-like, and he found himself sketching a round-bellied, long-armed sloth.

"Focus on the words," Jeffrey muttered to himself as he stared at the ceiling.

"Just forget about the words," whispered a voice.

Wide eyed, Jeffrey looked around. "Who said that?"

Down on the page, now covered with more doodles, he noticed that the sloth he had just sketched looked different. "Hey, I didn't draw you with your hands on your hips!"

"Good writers have lots of ideas," declared Sloth. "*You* don't have any!"

Jeffrey rubbed his eyes. He had just watched his sloth doodle move!

"Whoa!" Jeffrey jumped to his feet, shaking his head in disbelief.

"You should just stick to drawing," said Sloth.

"W-w-what d-do you know anyway?" he stammered.

"I know that you're a lousy writer," said Sloth.

"I am not a lousy writer! I just can't think of anything to write about."

"Well, instead of drawing the CN Tower, make yourself useful and sketch me a chair," demanded Sloth, pointing his long dangly arm to a perfect spot on the page.

Jeffrey did as he was told and drew an overstuffed chair.

Sloth relaxed into the chair. Lounging across it he said with smirk, "This is good. Now sketch me a blanket."

"Urgh," Jeffrey sighed. "I'll never finish my story at this rate!"

"You're right," Sloth chuckled, settling into his chair. "You can't even think of one idea. So do something you're good at and draw me a real cozy blanket."

Jeffrey was tired of listening to Sloth. He knew he had to finish his homework. He began to write.

Once there was a pudgy sloth who searched for the world's coziest blanket.

Suddenly, Sloth stood up. He appeared to be searching for something. "Who are you calling pudgy?" he asked.

He looked up high for that blanket.

Sloth looked to the sky.

He looked down low for that blanket.

Sloth peeked under the chair. "I sure would like that blanket."

Jeffrey now realized what was happening. "Oh, I get it. You don't want me to write because you're lazy and you know that whatever I write you have to do!"

"No, no, that's not it," Sloth muttered as he peeked out from behind the chair.

"Oh yeah? So if I wrote a story making you dig clear through the earth, you wouldn't be upset?"

Sloth looked worried. "Absolutely not." Sloth glanced around, still searching for the blanket.

"And if I wrote about you swimming across the ocean, that would make you happy?"

Sloth was sweating now. "I wouldn't mind."

Jeffrey noticed that Sloth was nervous, but persisted nonetheless. "How about if I made you search all of Canada for a . . . "

Looking anxious, Sloth interrupted, "if I could find that cozy blanket, I wouldn't mind."

"You do know that Canada is a big place? You would have to climb mountains, trek across the tundra, paddle the great lakes, and hike the prairies."

"Well, you can't make me!" And with that, Sloth crossed his arms and plunked himself back down into his chair.

"Oh yeah?" Jeffrey's face reddened with annoyance. He picked up his pencil, sketched a shovel and wrote:

He began to dig.

Sloth was controlled by the words. He had no choice but to pick up the shovel and dig. He was no longer smiling.

He dug a hole clear through the earth to India.

"Now I need some water. Quick, write about water," ordered Sloth.

Then he swam to France. He really wanted to find the world's coziest blanket.

"That's not what I meant! This water is freezing!" cried Sloth, his teeth chattering.

But the coziest blanket wasn't there.

Now Jeffrey was smiling.

He would have to scan the whole perimeter of Canada. He continuously searched, climbing, trekking, paddling, hiking, wandering, stumbling along...

"Ahem...." Sloth looked wilted from fatigue, "I'm afraid that I made a great mistake...." Sloth was panting now. He was not used to so much exercise. "I said that your writing is lousy," Sloth huffed. "I was wrong. I should have said that your writing is very engaging. And that it makes a lot of sense, too. Honestly, I mean that. In fact, you are a great ... no, a marvelous ... no, a wonderful writ...."

"Okay," said Jeffrey. He knew just what Sloth was doing.

Then he looked down at the page and realized that, thanks to Sloth, his homework was done! Jeffrey felt confident again.

He smiled as he wrote:

And finally, the very tired sloth found the world's coziest blanket and happily fell fast asleep.

Sloth snuggled into the chair, cuddled the blanket, and closed his eyes.

Jeffrey moved to put his pencil down but changed his mind and quickly added:

At least for that evening.

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