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Children's preferences for text and how these preferences contribute to classroom literacy events

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CHILDREN'S PREFERENCES FOR TEXT
AND HOW THOSE PREFERENCES
CONTRIBUTE TO CLASSROOM
LITERACY EVENTS

by

LINDA J. JOHNSON

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Instructional and Curricular Studies

Department of Instructional and Curricular Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May, 1995
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May, 1995
ABSTRACT

In an exploratory study, I examined young children's text preferences in the classroom and how those preferences contributed to three literacy events: read-alouds, independent reading, and writing. Emergent literacy, interest theory, text structure, and teacher decision-making in literacy instruction provided a framework. Data about children's preferences were compiled and three case children were then studied over five months. Videotaped observations, audiotaped interviews, record booklets, artifacts of student work, and field notes were collected. The classroom teacher and librarian were interviewed and observed to determine how their literacy decisions influenced the study. Findings indicated that the children had mainly fiction interests about animals, fairy tales, and fantasy. Of the three case children, one boy preferred nonfiction, one girl fiction, and one girl fiction and nonfiction. While all three children preferred animals, the boy preferred science and the two girls preferred fairy tales. Their preferences contributed to the literacy events through discussion and participation in classroom activities. Both teachers read aloud mostly fiction. The teachers' instructional themes, strategy decisions, time, and choices both promoted and limited the children's use of their preferences in the literacy events. Attention to these findings can promote classroom practices designed to facilitate young children's text interests in literacy development. Future research can inform us about the role of individual and situational interest in literacy development.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Ideally, young children in an emergent literacy classroom often work in learning centers structured around specific themes based on their interests. They learn through play and creative experiences such as art, music and dramatic activities. Further, reading and writing are an integral aspect of the learning environment. The daily interaction with print is varied and purposeful, and the use of a wide range of text genres is implemented (Clay, 1991).

Within this ideal learning environment children engage in important literacy experiences. Through frequent interaction with varied text children build their vocabulary and acquire new information. Repeated interaction with familiar text provides children with an understanding of text structures such as story grammar in narrative text and organizational structure in expository text. Both frequent and repeated literacy experiences with text provide children the opportunity to develop their own preferences for text genre which emulate what readers do in the real world.
Home and prior school experiences as well as the media contribute to young children's text genre preferences. Parents often choose narrative texts for traditional bedtime stories because that is what they were read as children. Teachers of young children also choose mainly narrative text for their daily read-aloud selections (Robinson, 1990). The media capitalizes on marketing recent children's movies and television shows by publishing the children's book version of the story. Therefore, societal influences further the emphasis on narrative text.

While it may appear that children prefer narrative text structure this is not necessarily the case when researchers have actually asked children what they prefer. Many researchers have found that children prefer a more balanced selection of text genre, both narrative and expository text. Nonetheless, it is only within the past decade that researchers have begun to take children's preferences seriously by investigating the effects of children's preferences on literacy development (Lonigan, Anthony, Arnold, & Whitehurst, 1994; Martinez & Teale, 1988; Morrow, 1983; Pappas, 1993; Robinson & Sulzby, 1985). How children's text preferences influence what occurs in the classroom, however, has not been investigated in any depth.

When I recently conducted a case study of an elementary student's literacy development, I noticed that she had a limited understanding of text structures and very limited text interests. I questioned if these noticeable limitations were strong indicators of her limited literacy development. As a teacher and researcher, I became intent on discovering whether children's
text interest, especially kindergarten children's, played a role in the development of classroom curriculum. Throughout my professional career, college professors and principals encouraged me to administer interest surveys to children in my classroom, but I was not expected to use the survey results to influence my instructional decisions. Perhaps other teachers used the results of their children's interest surveys to guide their instruction. However, I questioned if teachers actually responded to children's interests and whether evidence of those interests existed within the classroom context. As a researcher, I was acutely aware that literature-based programs afforded teachers the opportunity to develop curriculum based on children's interests which research reported facilitates literacy development. To what extent this opportunity occurs in the classroom has not been documented to any great extent.

Purpose of Study

The principal purpose of my study was to explore kindergarten children's preferences for varied text genres within their school environment and how their text preferences contributed to classroom literacy events. Three objectives were achieved by conducting this study: (1) to acquire a general understanding of kindergarten children's experiences with, and preferences for, varied text genres; (2) to explore in depth three kindergarten children's knowledge, experiences, and preferences of varied text genres, and (3) to examine how the literacy events
provided by a teacher in an emergent literacy classroom responded to children's preferences for text genre.

**Research Questions**

Specifically, in this exploratory study I focused on the following research questions:

1. What are young children's preferences for text genre?
2. How do children's text preferences contribute to specific literacy events in an emergent literacy classroom?
   a. How do their text preferences contribute to read-aloud events?
   b. How do their text preferences contribute to independent reading events in the classroom library?
   c. How do their text preferences contribute to writing events?

Implicit in question one was the fact that young children's text preferences evolved from both school and nonschool experiences. These experiences included hobbies, sports, television, and movies. Young children acquired preference at an early age prior to their formal school experience. Therefore, it was important to first identify what those preferences were, and then determine how those preferences were manifested in children's school activities.
Question two asked how children's preferences contribute to literacy events; the term contribute referred to how children's preferences influence these literacy events. In other words, I sought to determine the role preferences played in these literacy events. Further, question two implied that, when children enter school, preferences may have been expanded during classroom experiences when teachers implemented instructional strategies. These strategies were generally influenced by teachers' educational philosophies and beliefs. However, teachers' selections of text presented through literacy events may also have been based on the preferences young children demonstrated. For example, a teacher may have noted several children reenacting the arrival of a new sibling during free play. In turn, the teacher selected children's books about the arrival of a new baby for read-aloud events.

Likewise, teachers may have provided opportunities for choice when children engaged in reading and writing activities. Independent reading time may have afforded children a rich variety of print from which to choose and the time to explore this print. Teachers may also have supported children's developmental writing efforts and provided choice of topic when they wrote. In addition, the type of literacy events, such as read-alouds, independent reading, and writing (Wells, 1986) may also have influenced children's preferences.

In emergent literacy classrooms, teachers dramatically impacted the opportunity to expand preferences of the children by using thematic studies and creating a responsive learning
environment. Further, teachers who coordinated their programs with school librarians extended the opportunity to integrate classroom thematic studies.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundations of this study evolved from four major areas of research: emergent literacy, interest theory, text structure, and teacher decision-making in literacy instruction.

Emergent Literacy

Emergent literacy has been defined as the "reading and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy" (Sulzby, 1989). Emergent literacy theory evolved from the work of a number of researchers (Clay, 1975; Goodman, 1984; Heath, 1983; Sulzby, 1985, 1988; Sulzby & Teale, 1986; Wells, 1986). In general, researchers found that young children learned about literacy in informal environments where conversing, playing, singing, problem solving, listening and writing stories were an integral part of their home culture. These literacy events in the home were an important aspect of the literacy development of young children (Doake, 1985; Heath, 1983; Holdaway, 1979; Sulzby, 1985; Sulzby & Teale, 1987; Wells, 1986).

Teale, 1986), and acquiring a sense of written registers (Pappas, 1991, 1993; Pappas & Brown, 1987, 1988) were identified as events that children in literacy-rich environments experienced. Children whose parents enjoyed reading to them and answering their questions learned many reading strategies (Clay, 1975; Heath, 1983; Wells, 1986).

Researchers also investigated interaction patterns in reading and various text genres in home and school. They found that the type of text affected interaction patterns between parents and children. Picture/label books and alphabet books elicited higher levels of interaction between parent and child than did narrative text (Sulzby & Teale, 1986) while reading expository text elicited more talk from children than did narrative text (Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda, & Brody, 1990).

These findings, based on studies of the home environment, influenced what researchers looked at in classrooms. For example, Morrow and Smith (1990) found that group size during storybook reading affected teacher/child interaction. Other researchers showed how environmental print contributed to children's conceptual understanding of reading (Goodman, 1984; Mason, 1980). Clay (1975) and Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) found children could distinguish between pictures and print and developed concepts of print and word.

Vygotsky (1978) suggested that make-believe play, gestures, drawing, and writing led to written language. Consequently, the written process extended the function of drawing, storytelling, and various kinds of play. Dyson (1982,
1983) examined children's drawing, writing and speech attempts to communicate and found social interaction changed writing outcomes and purposes. Sulzby (1989) examined young children's writing, too, and found seven writing categories as children progressed toward conventional writing. These studies contributed to our understanding of the writing process and its complexity. They further helped educators understand how children's writing attempts are windows into the understanding of children's thinking and feeling.

In summary, emergent literacy researchers examined various literacy events and how those events affected children's literacy development. Both home and school environments impacted this literacy development. Through experiences in these environments children acquired important knowledge and understanding of oral and written print. As a result, the varied experiences and the interactions with adults and peers greatly influenced the outcome of young children's literacy development.

Interest Theory

Interest theory, the second component of the theoretical framework of this study, drew from both psychological and educational research. Interest theory derived from the educational research of Herbart and Dewey. Herbart regarded interest as one of the primary goals of education (cited in Schiefele, 1992) while Dewey proposed characteristics of interest as being active, being based on real objects, having high personal meaning, and being a form of self-expressive activity (cited in
Monson & Sebesta, 1991; Schiefele, 1992). Both these theorists implied that interest is an intrinsically motivated state.

Additionally, Renninger (1992) suggested interest is a psychological state which varies for individuals, yet is universally found. Supported by the work of Vygotsky (1967) and Piaget (1981), Renninger stated that an individual co-constructs an understanding about the world by interacting with objects and people. Deci (1992) also contended that an analysis of interest considers the person, the activity, and the social context. Thus, the way an individual understands the world through interactions results in individual differences (Renninger, 1992). Consequently, when there are individual interests, individuals develop preferences.

Preferences are dispositional interests which develop as a function of "innate capacities, environmental affordance, and interpersonal contexts" (Deci, 1992, p. 51). For example, a child may have good eye/hand coordination and may be introduced to tennis by a parent. That child is likely to experience success with tennis and develop a preference for the sport over another one which does not require good eye/hand coordination and is not in the immediate environment. Monson and Sebesta (1991) also make a distinction between interest and preference. They suggest preference requires a choice to be made over something else.

Based on these definitions and discussions, for the purpose of this paper, interest is defined as a high-level of engagement in an activity that has been self-selected. Individual interest is a
stable interest which is associated with the individual having increased knowledge, positive emotions, and increased reference value. Preference is sustained interest over a period of time and requires the individual to make a choice for one activity over another.

Researchers tended to use the terms preference and interest interchangeably and both were important to our understanding of the research done in this area. For the purpose of this study the terms had qualitatively different meanings.

A necessary condition for interests and preferences to develop is for children to have an opportunity to persistently pursue a particular topic of choice (Prenzel, 1992). However, one problem in implementing individual interests in a classroom is the time constraint in identifying and implementing all children's interests (Hidi, 1990). In contrast, use of situational interest is more viable in a classroom context. Situational interest is interest stimulated by environmental situations and shared among individuals; it is an extrinsically motivated behavior. While it often has a short-term effect in knowledge and a limited reference value, it may have a more permanent effect and serve as the basis for the emergence of individual interests. The use of thematic studies and integrated curriculum in emergent literacy classrooms creates optimal conditions for children to fully explore interests and preferences (Hidi, 1990). Situational interest is considered when children engage in reading and writing activities (Hidi & McLaren, cited in Hidi & Anderson,
1992) and in literacy tasks in the context of traditional and whole language classrooms (Turner, 1992).

Educational studies examined preference by age, grade, and gender (Chiu, 1984; Galda, 1990; Jose & Brewer, 1990; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1991; Sosnik, 1990; Taylor & Waynant, 1978). The findings suggested children's preferences changed as they became older and gender differences in their preferences existed. Other studies used the International Reading Association's "Children's Choices" (Abrahamson & Shannon, 1983; Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta, 1974; Carter, 1978; Greenlaw & Wielan, 1979; IRA-CBC, 1992; Lehman, 1991; Roser & Firth, 1983). Even though adults composed the original lists, children then made choices for books they preferred. Findings from all of these studies supported the assumption that adults made different choices for children than children made for themselves.

Additionally, researchers examined gifted and regular children's preferences (Coy-Shaffer & Pettit, 1992) in which boys and girls reported favorite authors and categories. In a naturalistic study, McLarty (1991) found children read for a variety of reasons, used a wide range of materials, and talked to people who shared their interests.

In summary, variables in these studies were diverse. They demonstrated that structural elements of text along with age, grade, and gender were deciding factors for text preference. Generally, fiction with animals as main characters were preferred by primary girls and boys while science was preferred.
only by primary boys. Mysteries were preferred by primary and intermediate boys and girls while humor was preferred by primary girls. Sports were preferred by primary and intermediate boys.

Identifying children's preferences for text, however, was more complex than identifying age and gender. Weiss (1982) found page size and type were important variables for text preferences while Mendoza (1985) found age and gender affected children's preferences for group size.

Findings from studies conducted solely about the preferences of young children (Cappa, 1957; Jose & Brewer, 1990; Kiefer, 1983; Kirsch, 1975; Martinez & Teale, 1988; Mason & Blanton, 1971) reported they preferred books with illustrations and suspenseful narratives or fairy tales; books that faced forward on the shelf, that the teacher had read, and that other children liked; and predictable and big books. In contrast, Pappas (1993) found that kindergarten children preferred information books.

While few studies examined preschool children's interests in relation to literacy development, the relationship between young children's favorite books and emergent reading behaviors was examined. Several researchers found that young children had a strong literacy environment at home and child interest was significantly related to language abilities and frequency of shared-reading (Lonigan et al. 1994; Morrow, 1983; Robinson & Sulzby, 1984).
In two poetry studies, Fisher and Natarella (1979; 1982) surveyed children's poetry preferences. They found preferences for form, topic, and poetic elements.

In summary, interest studies provided an emphasis on individual and situational interests while other studies provided a general understanding of developmental preferences of children by age, grade, and gender. While these studies were drawn from two research fields, psychology and education, they all contributed to the knowledge of how children's interests develop.

**Text Structure**

Text structure theory, another major component in the theoretical framework of this study, plays a significant role in understanding emergent literacy and interest theories. Specifically, literacy events provide children experiences through which to acquire a sense of text structures. Included in this discussion are studies of narrative text, expository text, and both narrative and expository text studies.

Many investigations of narrative story structures were found in the literature (Applebee, 1978; Botvin & Sutton-Smith, 1976; Cook-Gumperz & Green, 1984; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Pappas & Brown, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Rumelhart, 1975; Sulzby, 1982, 1985, 1988). Some researchers compared children's narratives to a more conventional structure while others analyzed them according to concept development. These researchers also identified developmental strategies children
used to retell narratives. Other researchers used repeated pretend reading with kindergarten children to determine their understanding of the message of the text (Pappas and Brown, 1987, 1988). Their findings suggested reading is a meaning driven process.

Other studies on expository text were conducted (Bissex, 1980; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Langer, 1985, 1992; Newkirk, 1984, 1989; Sowers, 1985; Weiss & Hagen, 1988). Evidence indicated that young children understood the text structures and used various genre in their writing attempts. For example, if children wrote a letter using the letter format, they then understood the organizational structure of a letter. Bissex (1980) and Newkirk (1984) identified their own children's writing as being primarily informational. In addition, Sowers (1985) suggested the "All about" books children commonly wrote were an elaboration of lists.

In a study about environmental print, Weiss and Hagen (1988) found kindergarten children could identify, and were aware of, the functions of common environmental items such as a shopping list and a calendar. Similarly, Harste et al. (1984) found that when children and parents used books and materials in their home, then young children had an understanding of environmental print.

Additional studies investigated both narrative and expository text. Spiro and Taylor (1980) found young children had difficulty with expository text structures in school because of their limited experiences with expository text which had a
greater variety of structures. In contrast, Langer (1985) found that children understood and could use text structures for both narrative and expository text in writing. Additionally, Pappas (1991, 1993) found children focused on constructing meaning in both narrative and expository text. Zecker (1991), too, found children had text structure knowledge of three genres: a story, a list, and a letter.

In general, researchers found that children used developmental strategies when they attempted retellings and pretend readings of narrative and expository text. They also found evidence of these text structures in their writing attempts and reported that expository text was more difficult for young children because of its complexity and fewer experiences in hearing it read aloud.

**Teacher decision-making in literacy instruction**

The final component of the theoretical framework was based on studies which reported the kind of decisions teachers made about literacy instruction and how these decisions were made. Generally, the studies investigated beliefs about literacy, planning, and instruction. Researchers found teachers combined information about children to form reading groups and chose less structured lessons for high-ability groups and more structured lessons for low-ability groups (Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981; Combs, 1984). Teachers' decisions reflected their beliefs about
how children of varying abilities learned and how they should be taught.

Some studies related specifically to planning. Lalik and Niles (1990) found teachers used different instructional strategies engaged in a collaborative planning task of reading comprehension. Kinzer (1988) found most teachers had holistic or interactive beliefs, but only holistic teachers chose lesson plans that reflected those beliefs.

Teachers' instruction was influenced by their beliefs about their conception of their roles, (Magiliaro & Borko, 1985) how children learn, (McGill-Franzen, Lanford, & Killian, 1994) and their knowledge of reading content (Rupley & Logan, 1985). While studying the relationship between beliefs, planning, and instruction, Meyerson (1993) identified positive and negative factors which influenced teachers' reading instructional decisions while other researchers found that constraints prevented teachers from implementing their beliefs (Mitchell, Konopak, & Readence, 1991; Smith, 1992; Wilson, Konopak, & Readence, 1992).

Researchers found that using a diary was effective in changing teachers' instructional practices (Blanton & Moorman, 1993), but that teachers who received training in making instructional decisions had difficulty sustaining them (Duffy, Roehler, & Putnam, 1987). In contrast, Roser, Hoffman, and Farest (1990) and Duffy, Roehler, & Wesselman (1985) found teachers effectively made changes in instructional decisions.
Teacher decision-making in literacy is a comparatively new field of study. While these studies identify teachers' beliefs and their planning and instructional decisions, they further identify factors that facilitate and constrain implementing their literacy beliefs.

Summary

These studies combined to form a theoretical framework through which to study children's preferences for text and how these preferences are manifested within the context of a classroom. Within the field of emergent literacy, research centered upon home and school studies that identified significant literacy events. Interest studies explored individual interests or situational interests and identified children's text preferences by age, gender, and genre. Other variables such as structural features and format factors were used. More recently, a few studies examined the relationship of interest and literacy development. Also, text structure research focused on narrative story structures, expository text, and combined studies of both genre. Finally, studies in teacher decision-making in literacy were discussed. These studies explored teachers' beliefs and planning and instructional decisions. Moreover, they indicated factors that facilitated and constrained teachers' implementation of their literacy beliefs. However, to my knowledge, no studies have determined how children's text preference contribute to literacy events in an emergent literacy classroom.
Rationale for Methodology

The purpose of my study was to explore kindergartener's text genre preferences and how those preferences contributed to literacy events as they naturally occurred in their school environment. For this reason, an ethnographic study in a naturalistic paradigm was appropriate (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The five month study followed general principles of emergent literacy which considered learning to be a continuous process. For example, reading and writing were viewed as developmental processes and children proceeded from emergent literacy behaviors toward conventional behaviors.

Case study methodology was used in this study to describe how text genre preferences contributed to literacy events. This methodology did not require control over behavioral events while it focused on contemporary events (Yin, 1989). It allowed me to conduct intensive studies of a few children which provided an in-depth analysis of the research questions. I collected data from text choice records, structured interviews, children's retellings of text, videotaped observations, field notes and artifacts of the children's work (Taylor & Waynant, 1978; Yin, 1989).

Parallel to conducting the case studies of the children I gathered extensive information about the classroom teacher and, to a lesser extent, the librarian. What these educators did as instructional decision-makers influenced what the children did in the classroom. Through the use of interviews, audiotapes, and
observations, I collected data to determine their educational philosophies, beliefs, and practices as they related to this study.

Using the criteria suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1982), the goodness of the study was determined by (1) dependability, which was accomplished by gathering data over a period of five months; (2) confirmability, which was determined through the use of triangulation and supported analysis by original data; (3) transferability, which contained rich descriptions with many quotes from the respondents; and (4) credibility, which included triangulated data, persistent observation, field notes, and a member check of work.

Significance of the study

This study may contribute to several important areas in the field of literacy. First, it alerts parents and early childhood teachers to examine and reflect upon their choices for reading literature with young children. Second, it contributes to the understanding of how literacy events in a kindergarten classroom accommodate young children's text preferences. Third, the study provides insight into how children use their preferences in their own literacy experiences. Fourth, it contributes to teachers' and librarians' understanding of the effect of their instructional strategies and selection of materials. Finally, it reinforces the need for teacher education programs to include instruction in identifying and using children's interests in curriculum planning.
Operational Definitions

The terminology used in this study can have several definitions. Additionally, the terminology is derived from several fields of study. To clarify how these terms are used, explicit definitions are presented for the purpose of this study.

Emergent literacy - The "reading and writing behaviors that precede and develop into conventional literacy" (Sulzby, 1989).

Emergent literacy classroom - One in which there was a wide variety of text genres and an opportunity for children to experience them through a broad range of reading and writing experiences.

Expository text - A nonfiction text using an organizational structure such as compare/contrast, description, sequential, enumeration, problem/solution, or cause and effect.

Genre - Text which is categorized as either narrative, expository, or poetry.

Guided reading - A term synonymous with shared reading

Independent reading - A literacy event in which the children read books during a free reading time.

Individual interest - A stable interest which was associated with the individual having increased
knowledge, positive emotions, and increased reference value.

**Interest** - A high-level of engagement in an activity that was self-selected.

**Narrative text** - A fiction text identified by the major story elements: setting, theme, plot episodes, and resolution.

**Personal experience** - An interest which was relevant to the children's personal lives outside of school. It was not identified as individual interest or preference.

**Preference** - Sustained interest over a period of time and required the individual to make a choice for one activity over another.

**Read-alouds** - A literacy event in which the teacher reads text aloud.

**Situational interest** - An interest which was stimulated by environmental situations and shared among individuals. It often had a short-term effect in knowledge and a limited reference value, but it may have a more permanent effect and serve as the basis for the emergence of individual interests.

**Text** - Any reading or writing in which children engaged.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Text preference</strong></th>
<th>The text children selected based on free choice whether due to a specific classroom experience or something else to which children related. This text preference was one of enduring interest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text structure</strong></td>
<td>The way a text was organized.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The theoretical foundations of this study evolve from four major areas of research: emergent literacy, interest theory, text structure, and teacher decision-making in literacy instruction. The first section of this chapter reviews the relevant literature on emergent literacy. Research in this relatively new field can be traced to the work of theorists who historically have made important contributions to education. In the next section, research relevant to the two components of interest theory is reviewed. These studies reflect the multifaceted nature of studying children's interests. In addition, relevant studies from text structure research are reviewed which reflect the organizational structures of text and children's understanding of these structures. Finally, studies about teacher decision-making are reviewed which focus on the kinds of decisions teachers make about literacy instruction and how they arrive at these decisions.

Emergent Literacy

Influences from the learning theories of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Frobel, Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, and Vygotsky
shaped emergent literacy theory (Morrow, 1993). These theories focused on learning through social interaction and through real experiences in meaningful environments. Also, from the common belief that learning begins at birth, the work of many researchers emerged. A common definition of emergent literacy is that "reading and writing behavior precede and develop into conventional literacy" (Sulzby, 1989). In this first section on emergent literacy, studies which addressed significant literacy events were reviewed followed by studies of emergent literacy classrooms.

**Significant Literacy Events**

**Read-alouds**

In Australia, Holdaway (1979) observed four preschool children being read to by an adult and analyzed their reenactments of storybooks after hearing them read. He found that children learned vocabulary and the syntax of written language and developed self-monitoring and predictive strategies from being read to by an adult. He described "read-on" as holding a place for an unknown word and "re-run" as returning to the beginning of the passage. Read-alouds helped them develop expectations for decoding and the kinds of language in specific books.

Robinson (1990) studied kindergarten teachers reading aloud to their children and how teacher decisions were made. Teachers asked questions, elaborated on text or allowed children
to finish a sentence. Text consisted primarily of narratives but some expository text was used. Teachers' decisions were determined by their philosophies and district mandates.

In addition to identifying developmental patterns, researchers found that storybook interactions varied among socioeconomic groups and across time. How parents interacted with their children while reading to them affected their vocabulary development and later school achievement. During a longitudinal ethnographic study of rural African American and Caucasian children, Heath (1983) found the patterns of discourse used at home and at school were different. High socioeconomic status mothers asked questions and provided new information. Conversely, low socioeconomic status mothers provided less support in eliciting conversations from their children. Parents also changed their interactions with their children as they became older. After children turned three, parents discouraged dialogue during reading to their children and expected them to sit and listen.

**Reading**

In addition to being read to, children acquired emergent reading strategies during their reading attempts. Doake (1985) audiotaped four preschool children's behavior over a seven-month period as they read favorite books with their parents or the author in their homes. He identified four emergent participatory strategies: mumble reading, cooperative reading, completion reading, and echo reading through listening and
joining in during reading. Emergent reading was initially fluent and expressive when children focused on meaning and later was more arythmical when they attended to cues in the print. Similarly, both Holdaway (1979) and Doake (1985) showed how children developed self-monitoring and predicting strategies through being read to.

Also, as children heard stories at home, they reenacted those stories by "pretend reading." Those reenactments changed as children became older; they had a developmental pattern. For example, Sulzby (1985) conducted two related studies. In Study I, she analyzed pretend reading of storybook attempts of 24 middle class kindergarten children and identified categories and subcategories that emerged from reading governed by pictures to reading governed by print which suggested developmental trends. In Study II, she analyzed pretend readings of low-income 2-, 3-, and 4-year-old children. Results indicated children's emergent reading behaviors were relatively stable across familiar storybooks and changed predictably over age levels. Children progressed from interacting with the book in discrete units to interacting with the book as a whole.

In his longitudinal study, Wells (1986) found children who entered school ahead were likely still to be ahead five years later. The factor accounting for differences between children in their achievement was their initial literacy. During the children's preschool years, he chose four literacy activities to observe: looking at a picture book and talking about it; listening to a story;
drawing and coloring; and writing or pretending to write. Wells concluded the two story events most affected literacy.

**Writing**

Studies of children's writing development were also conducted. Sulzby (1983) found that the relationship between young children's writing and rereading were very important. During a two-year longitudinal study, she found nine children from kindergarten to first grade used different levels of writing systems according to the task and the social situation. For example, a story written in a group had a qualitative difference than one written in a one-to-one situation. Further, rereading their written task reflected children's understanding of the print-oral language relationship and the structural characteristics of written language.

Clay (1975) also studied children aged four to seven in home and school settings. From observations, she identified three concepts and eight principles that children used during writing development. The concepts emphasized that signs carry a message, print carries the message expressed in speech, and spaces separate words on the page. The eight principles of copying, experimenting, inventory, repeating, generating, directional, differences, and abbreviation were applied in combination at different times during development. Clay found that children temporarily seemed to go back to lower levels of writing according to the writing task.
Likewise, Dyson (1982, 1983) claimed that speech and
drawing support the communication process. In two related
studies, she examined kindergarten children's writing processes
and found 10 purposes for writing and eight forms of a written
product. The 10 purposes were: labeling, representing a
drawing object, producing a message, producing a particular
written product, producing conventional symbols, writing,
communicating a message to an audience, expressing feelings,
organizing and recording information, and investigating the
relationship between oral and written language. The eight forms
of a written product were: drawing and writing on a page, a
label, a list, the alphabet, a card, a letter, an envelope, and a
book. Dyson found children interpreted tasks in different ways;
they wrote differently for different purposes. They also looked
for patterns to follow. For example, in their use of strategies,
children in the study wrote a given number of letters to
represent a syllable. Additionally, they controlled all aspects of
the writing process through use of the writing event components:
devising the message, changing the message into print, physically
placing letters on paper, and translating the written message.
However, social interaction with adults and peers resulted in
changes in writing. For example, when children interacted with
the teacher, they often requested help with the spelling of words.

In a subsequent study, Dyson (1985) examined the writing
and sharing of three second-grade children in a basal reading
program. Their free writing consisted of daily experiences,
stories, and poems. However, all three children wrote for
different audiences and purposes. Dyson found interaction with peers and behaviors during free-writing affected children's decisions about audience and purpose.

From the emergent literacy perspective, young children have writing skills that are different than adult writing skills. Sulzby (1989) claimed it is important to look at the ways in which children reread their own writing and other types of text in order to assess children's knowledge of written language. While studying children in five classrooms, she identified seven categories of writing systems: drawing, scribbling, letterlike forms, nonphonetic letterstrings, copying environmental print, invented spelling, and conventional spelling. During kindergarten and first grade, she found children moved back and forth across forms of writing and by the end of first grade all children used conventional writing.

**Emergent Literacy Classrooms**

Findings of the emergent literacy research in children's homes led researchers to conduct studies in school settings based on what they had learned from the home studies. For example, because parents' reading to children had such a powerful effect on literacy development, Morrow and Smith (1990) examined the size of kindergarten and first grade groups in school settings during reading. One-to-one and small group settings elicited more interaction and praise, but the whole-group setting elicited almost no interaction and more frequent negative responses.
Further, on probed and recall tests, children performed better in small groups than one-to-one. Researchers who looked at children's conceptual understanding of print found print in children's environment naturally stimulated their interest in letters, words, and numbers. Mason (1980) attempted to identify a relationship between print awareness and the development of reading. She found that parents who reported giving considerable support for reading had children who were further along in print awareness and of print meaning than children whose parents reported giving little support for reading. Also, Mason found a natural hierarchy of children's development in learning to read by identifying letters, environmental print, and nouns and function words which was facilitated by classroom informal reading instruction and home interactions with parents, siblings, and television.

Also, Goodman (1984) found that preschool and kindergarten children had considerable knowledge about books and print. Based on research of young children aged two to six, she observed that children used oral language to express concepts about written language. Further, they developed conscious awareness of the written forms and functions of written language.

In addition to examining children's conceptual understanding of print, the conceptual development of their reading and writing also received considerable attention from researchers. Two studies conducted in diverse cultures resulted
in similar findings. Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) studied 4-to-6-year-old Spanish speaking children's early reading and writing behavior in Argentina. They found these children could distinguish drawing from writing, pictures from print, letters from numerals, letters from punctuation, letters from words, and print from cursive writing. These children were taught cursive writing when they entered school which accounted for their awareness of print and cursive. Similarly, Clay (1975) studied New Zealand children from the time they first entered school at five until they were six. She found that children made several distinctions between pictures and print and developed concepts of print and word.

Summary

Early literacy experiences had a powerful influence upon young children's literacy development. Significant literacy events such as being read to and engaging in interactive literacy events promoted literacy development. Research results indicated interaction patterns were affected by parents' socioeconomic level and text genres being read. School studies focused on young children's concepts of word and print, on classroom literacy events, and relationships between reading and writing development. These findings suggest that a study of emergent literacy in an early childhood classroom necessitates an understanding of children's literacy behaviors within the context of a classroom.
Interest Theory

In this section, the interest and preference studies stemming from both the psychological and educational literature were discussed. Specifically, the psychological literature reported research on individual and situational interest while the educational literature reported how children's interests varied across age, grade, and gender. One section reviewing studies solely about young children was discussed. Next, studies related to specific genre preferences were discussed.

Psychological Literature

There is a need to examine children's text genre preferences to determine how they support literacy development because it is not sufficient to identify categories only by children's preferences and ages. Rather, it is important to examine their preferences from different aspects to gain a more complete picture of the interrelationship between children's preferences and emergent literacy development.

Interest theory was grounded in the educational theories of Herbart and Dewey. Herbart regarded interest as one of the primary goals of education (cited in Schiefele, 1992). Dewey proposed characteristics of interest as being active, being based on real objects, having high personal meaning, and being a form of self-expressive activity (cited in Monson & Sebesta, 1991; Schiefele, 1992). These researchers implied interest is an intrinsically motivated state.
Additionally, another researcher suggested interest is a psychological state which varies for individuals, yet is universally found. Supported by the work of Vygotsky (1967) and Piaget (1981), Renninger (1992) stated that an individual co-constructs an understanding about the world by interacting with objects and people. Thus, the way an individual understands the world through interactions results in individual differences. Consequently, when there are individual interests, people develop preferences.

Preferences are dispositional interests and develop as a function of "innate capacities, environmental affordance, and interpersonal contexts" (Deci, 1992, p. 51). Monson and Sebesta (1991) also make a distinction between interest and preference. They suggest preference requires a choice to be made over something else.

Based on these definitions and discussions, for the purpose of this paper, interest is a high-level of engagement in an activity that has been self-selected. An individual interest is a stable interest which is associated with the individual having increased knowledge, positive emotions, and increased reference value. Preference is sustained interest over a period of time and requires the individual to make a choice for one activity over another.

People are intrinsically motivated when they are freely doing what interests them. Intrinsically motivated behavior is characterized by concentration and engagement, by spontaneity, and by total absorption. An analysis of interest requires
consideration of the person, the activity, and the social context (Deci, 1992). The person and the activity within the environment more completely represent the occurrence. For example, a child reading a text is a totally different activity from the child reading and discussing a book with another child.

A necessary condition for interests and preferences to develop is for children to have an opportunity to persistently pursue a particular topic of choice (Prenzel, 1992). However, one problem in implementing individual interests in a classroom is the time constraint in identifying and implementing all children's interests (Hidi, 1990).

In contrast, use of situational interest is more viable in a classroom context. Situational interest is interest stimulated by environmental situations and shared among individuals; it is an extrinsically motivated behavior. It often has a short-term effect in knowledge and a limited reference value. However, it may have a more permanent effect and serve as the basis for the emergence of individual interests. The use of thematic studies and integrated curriculum in emergent literacy classrooms creates optimal conditions for children to fully explore interests and preferences (Hidi, 1990).

Situational interest was also considered when children engage in reading and writing activities. Hidi and McLaren (cited in Hidi & Anderson, 1992) studied the impact of situational interest on reading and expository writing. They investigated the text preference of social science topics and themes among teachers and fourth and sixth grade children and found both
groups reported themes to be interesting. However, when topics were unfamiliar or familiar, ratings were low which suggested the optimal level for high interest may be moderate knowledge. Further, when the children wrote about either a high interest or low interest topic, the high interest topic did not result in qualitatively better papers than the low-interest topic. However, combining themes with topics resulted in longer productions but not overall quality of the writing. The researchers concluded that high knowledge and low interest facilitated writing.

In the next study, Hidi and McLaren (cited in Hidi & Anderson, 1992) conducted an experimental study of sixth grade children to determine whether combining topic-relevant information with high-interest topics would improve children's writing. The researchers found the children who read a text, answered questions, and wrote about a question using ideas from the text produced longer and higher quality writing. They also reproduced more ideas from their tutorial texts in the papers than the other children. Researchers concluded children's knowledge of topics facilitated writing performance.

Turner (1992) observed first grade teachers and children to determine how the context of literacy tasks facilitated greater use of motivated actions. She found that teachers in traditional classrooms utilized skills-oriented basal materials in ability-groups and seatwork which consisted of worksheets, workbooks, and copying sentences from the board. Conversely, teachers in whole language classrooms used texts designated by the district but determined pacing and selection of skills. Generally, formal
instruction was conducted in whole groups or with individual children, and self-selected heterogeneous groups worked in centers in the room. Children in whole language classrooms exhibited higher percentages of motivated behaviors. She found the use of learning strategies, reading strategies, help-seeking, persistence, and volitional control were higher in whole language classrooms than in basal classrooms.

In a study where individual and situational interest were considered, Renninger (1990) studied children's actions with play objects identified as interests or noninterests. She also considered how interaction with other children affected their interests or noninterests. Objects of interest were identified and used in experimental tasks to assess attentional shift, recognition, and recall memory. Findings suggested all children had more than one interest and gender differences existed. It further indicated interest influenced attention, the likelihood the objects would be recognized when encountered again, and recall.

In a more recent study, Schiefele, Wild, and Schmidt (1994) considered the importance of text elements, individual interest, and situational interest as predictor variables in analyzing coherent text. University students read two experimental texts and rated their interest. The authors concluded that reading time was significantly related to topic interest, but reaction time was only affected by interestingness. Topic interest and interestingness were both significantly related to recall while it was not likely that attention mediates the effect of interest on recall.
Educational Literature

In this section, studies that have a wide age range were reviewed followed by early childhood studies. Within these two sections, interests and preferences were reported by grade and gender. Finally, studies related to a specific genre were reviewed.

Preschoolers to Teenagers

Two organizations conducted early studies which represented children's reading interests. Beta Upsilon Chapter Pi Lambda Theta (1974) conducted an informal study of 4- to 13-year-old children's reading interests. On a Reading Interest Form, children were asked to record the title and author and complete open-ended statements about likes or dislikes of the book and specific areas of interest. Seven-year-old boys liked animals while 8-year-old boys chose animals, science, and history. Seven- and 8-year-old girls liked funny books and animals the most. Nine-year-old boys chose animals, transportation, science, and sports; girls preferred animals, mysteries and stories about people. For 10-year-old boys, animals, mysteries, and science were favored topics; girls preferred animals, mysteries, and people. For 11-year-old boys, information books, mystery, animals, transportation, history, sports, and science were the most popular; girls were more interested in mystery, animals, people, and make-believe. Twelve-year-old boys liked fiction and nonfiction equally well; girls liked animals, mysteries, and people.
The next year, another organization became interested in children's text interests. In 1975, children marked ballots in response to their book preferences and the results were "Children's Choices" published in The Reading Teacher. Books submitted by publishers were sent to review teams in different areas of the United States. These books were read to, or by, elementary children in their classrooms and their responses were tabulated and reported. This project was begun by a joint committee of the International Reading Association and the Children's Book Council (International Reading Association, 1992).

Shortly after the beginning of Children's Choices in 1975, 500 trade books on the Children's Choices 1978 list were distributed to over 2000 children in grades one through eight. They responded to three open-ended statements. "This book's grade is ______(A-F). I like the book because _______. I don't like the book because ______." (Greenlaw & Wielan, 1979: 432). Fifteen major categories were reported which suggested that elementary children classified books according to the traditionally established categories of genre and literary form. The categories were: humorous, riddles and jokes, high interest, adventure, how-to, animals, magic and fantasy, poetry and rhymes, realistic fiction, a phase of nature, family relationships, informational, character actions and feelings, moral lessons, and pictures (Greenlaw & Wielan, 1979).

Of 61 picture books of the 1982 Children's Choices, (Abrahamson & Shannon, 1983) 22 were realistic fiction books
about elementary school children. Of 11 easy readers, nine were realistic fiction involving main characters confronting a problem. Four picture books were nonfiction while two were pop-up books. Most popular books featured animals as main characters. Twenty-four of the books were fantasies with episodic plots.

More recently, Greenlaw (1984) compiled the first six years of Children's Choices titles and found that, of 374 primary level books, those chosen as first place were classified as humorous. Make-believe, people, and animal stories were second choice while real things, rhymes, and mystery were third choice. Last choice were fairy tales, sports, and how-to-do-it books. Of 306 upper level books, she found adventure, jokes/humor, and informational books were first place; fantasy, mystery, sports, and the supernatural were second place; how-to-do-it, biography, historical fiction, and poetry were third place; and science fiction and romance were last place.

To determine the relationship of Children's Choices and award winning children's books, Lehman (1991) compared thematic, stylistic, and structural commonalities among the two groups of books. Children's Choices' books were more easily identified by characteristics of style and structure than by theme. Predictable qualities, an optimistic tone, and a livelier pace were also evident in books favored by children. Children's preferences contained action-oriented structures and complete resolutions.

In another interest study (Carter, 1978), 36 children in grades one through four in a traditional basal reading school
environment were interviewed. Structural elements such as illustrations, the cover picture, and the book length influenced these children's book selection more than any other schema. Second was content and third was familiarity. Next was genre which the researcher determined was the choice of readers. Other reasons children gave for their choices were because the book was part of a series, no clear reason, external forces such as incentive programs, recommendations by a friend, author preference, to increase a skill, or availability.

In still another study, Taylor and Waynant (1978) asked first, third, and ninth grade children to keep logs of unrequired reading at home and at school for a period of one week. First grade children listed environmental print, books, magazines, comics, and newspapers. Third grade children listed functional materials such as TV guides and indexes. They also listed trade books and school-related tasks. Ninth grade children's logs reflected reading interest and demands related to functional and school tasks.

Similarly, Chiu (1984) investigated first through sixth grade children's attitudes toward reading and their reading interests. She found 79% of girls and 62% of boys liked reading. Reading about animals was generally the most popular with girls; make-believe was chosen most frequently by younger children; and upper-elementary children more often chose people and mystery. Interestingly, only boys chose sports. She reported her findings were similar to those of Beta Upsilon Chapter Pi Lambda Theta (1974).
In a large study, McKenna et al. (1991) examined 18,185 elementary children's reading interests. Children from grades one to six self-reported on a checklist whether they had read comic books, funnies, library books, newspapers, encyclopedias, and magazines. As age increased, boys read comics more while girls read comics less. All children read funnies more as age and reading ability increased. Reading library books decreased with age but use of the newspaper increased. One fourth of all grade one through four children did not read magazines and from one third to one half did not use an encyclopedia.

A longitudinal study by Galda and Pellegrini (1990) was conducted to determine how the evaluative responses of fourth through ninth grade children changed across time and how they varied according to genre. The researchers found preferences varied across grades. Fourth graders wanted contemporary stories while fifth graders wanted action, excitement, and real and familiar characters. Sixth and seventh graders indicated gender differences in preference with girls preferring romance novels and boys science fiction and fantasy. Eighth graders indicated a strong preference for adult novels and an eclectic group of preferences. During discussions younger readers produced more categoric responses, and the older readers produced more analytic responses.

Likewise, Swanton (1984) administered a questionnaire to third through sixth grade regular and gifted children to determine what and why they read. Of the gifted children, 35% owned 100 books or more versus only 19% of the regular
children. Fifty-two percent of gifted children obtained books from the public library and 37% of regular children listed the school library. The gifted children preferred the authors, Lloyd Alexander and J.R.R. Tolkien, but regular children favored Wilson Rawls and Jack London. Both gifted and regular third grade children preferred Judy Blume. For both gifted and regular children, mysteries were their favorites; reading was important to one or both of their parents; their favorite activity when they were young was being read aloud to; Dr. Seuss and fairy tales were types of books they remembered liking best when they were younger; and they viewed reading as pleasure, relaxation, or education involvement.

McLarty (1991) asked similar questions in an exploratory naturalistic study to determine fifth grade children’s reading preferences. She examined why and what they read and who they talked to about their reading. Like Swanton, she found children read for entertainment, to fill time, to perform a function, to inform, to fulfill requirements, and to increase their knowledge. They read a wide range of materials and included items in the environment and context related materials. They talked to parents, their class, or with friends who shared their interests.

Coy-Shaffer and Pettit (1992) reported favorite authors of sixth grade children. Girls chose Judy Blume, Ann Martin, Beverly Cleary, Stephen King, Francine Pascal and Carolyn Keene as favorite authors. Boys chose a wider range of authors but also chose Judy Blume and Stephen King. The top six categories
chosen were mysteries, adventure, scary, humor, romance, and sports.

Twenty-five 6th-grade children's logs were studied by Greenlee, Monson, and Taylor (1992) for four months. Individual interviews were also used to explore their preferences of series and nonseries books. The researchers found preferences were based on subject matter which most often indicated a personal level of engagement with the events and characters in the story.

Further, researchers examined the relationship between attitudes and recreational reading. Morrow (1987) studied children aged 6 to 10 to determine what factors motivated their book selection, what literature activities were preferred, and what benefits the children saw in the library program. Her findings indicated children's attitudes toward reading improved and teacher directed activities, TV presentations, and influence of friends motivated their book selection. Children preferred socially interactive experiences such as reading books, listening to taped stories, reading with a friend, checking books out to take home, and using feltboard stories.

Fifth grade children in Irish primary schools were asked to complete a diary for three days in one week about their leisure time. From these diaries, Greaney (1980) found that overall 5.4% of leisure time was spent reading. Sixty-two percent of this time was spent reading books, 31% comics, and 7% newspapers. Girls tended to spend more time reading books while boys tended to spend more time reading comics.
Sosniak (1990) identified issues fourth and sixth grade children raised in selecting a textbook for their class. He found boys favored stories about sports and information and girls chose stories about people and nature. Genres receiving the highest value were mysteries and plays while least valued were stories that resembled children's lives.

**Other Factors**

Rather than focusing on children's preferences for text content, Weiss (1982) used format factors to identify 145 third and sixth grade children's text preferences for page size, type, and illustration position. Through interviews she found that 70% of the children considered at least one format as important in book selection. Further, format selection varied by grade, sex, and reading ability. Page size was more important to third graders and low ability readers than sixth graders and middle and high ability readers. Type was more important to third graders and male readers than sixth graders and female readers. Illustration position was not important by grade, sex, or reading ability.

Mendoza (1985) surveyed 520 children ranging in age from 5 to 13 about their preferences when being read to by others. The majority of children responded they liked being read to. Primary boys preferred being read to in a large group at school while primary girls preferred any size group. Older children preferred small groups at school.
Mendoza's study also found the majority of children said they were read to at home, usually by their mother less than once a week. As children's age increased, the frequency of reading by a parent decreased. All children preferred to be read to in small groups at home. As children's age increased they read to younger children once in a while. Children stated they would like to know the summary, questions, characters, setting, pictures, or nothing before the book was read to them. He further found primary children felt freer than intermediate children to ask questions at school while intermediate children felt freer to ask questions at home while being read to. The majority of children liked to discuss the book after listening, to be asked questions afterward, and to read the book by themselves afterward.

These findings suggest the study of interest and preference is complex. Importantly, universal developmental trends were identified by grade and age. These studies further suggest that gender differences emerged and became more prevalent as children became older. Other factors were identified that suggested age, grade, and gender were not the sole criteria children use in forming interests and preferences. Therefore, a study of children's interests must consider many variables that influence children's text choices. The materials, the social context, and the child contribute to the dynamics of the development of interests and preferences.
Young Children

Studies in this section reviewed interest and preference studies limited to young children. Reactions of 2500 kindergarten children to storybooks read to them by their teachers were recorded on a questionnaire by the teacher immediately following the story. Illustrations, story content, information content, humor, surprise, and refrain were recorded. Illustrations had the highest appeal while story content was the second highest. Information, humor, surprise, and refrain were then recorded as a source of appeal (Cappa, 1957).

Kirsch (1975) analyzed culturally diverse first and second grade children's reading interests and the derivation of those interests. Children were asked to draw a picture showing what they would like most to read or have read to them. A structured interview elicited that second grade children demonstrated a greater interest in factual material than first grade children. First and second grade girls showed greater interest in fiction and less in information than boys. Twenty-eight percent of children identified television as their interest source while others named trips, the family pet, the classroom teacher, model kits, phonograph records, trade books, and basal books.

In another study of young children, Jose and Brewer (1990) determined that after reading stories to kindergarten, first grade, and second grade children, the children preferred stories that were suspenseful to nonexciting narratives about mundane activities. Children indicated preferences by rating, ranking, and choosing to reread one of three stories they would
most prefer. Second graders presented a clear preference for suspense stories by rating, ranking, and rereading their preference. First graders indicated preference for suspense stories for the rereading and ranking data, and the kindergarteners showed preference for the suspense stories with the rereading data.

In another study, Kiefer (1983) studied second and first graders' responses to picture books. Children chose books that faced forward, that the teacher had read, and that other children liked. When they looked at picture books during read-alouds, children scanned the picture, glanced back and forth from the book to the teacher's face or glanced around the room and at the book. During partner reading some children tended to look more at the pictures as the tension of the story increased while others looked at the pictures frequently and stopped to talk about what they saw or read during the story. In sustained silent reading, children either looked at the pictures before they read or read and looked at the pictures page by page.

Kiefer also found children discussed title pages, dedication pages, end pages, and the artist's technique, and used descriptive words to discuss the illustrations. They additionally looked at small details or focused on similarities among books. Interestingly, their responses changed with individual books. For example, one child changed from perceiving a book as strange to reading it enthusiastically.

Using the structured interview, Mason and Blanton (1971) concluded that most children aged 3 through 5 enjoyed being
read to. Nine of 180 children responded they did not wish to hear a story read. They most preferred fairy tales while animal stories were second and television characters third.

Findings from one interesting study reported that children's preferences for text changed as they became more familiar with both genres. Kindergarten children performed pretend readings of narrative and expository text. When first given a choice about which book to pretend read first, six boys and seven girls preferred the information book. In the second and third sessions, almost all the children preferred the information books (Pappas, 1993).

Martinez and Teale (1988) observed kindergarten children in their classroom library center and examined their book selections by familiarity, predictability, and size. Familiar books and predictable books were preferred almost twice as often as unfamiliar books while big books were selected more often than average-size books. Of seven strategies used by children with the books, the most common strategies were browsing, silent studying, and emergent reading.

Robinson and Sulzby (1985) interviewed parents of 2-through 4-year-old children and found the children favored particular books above others and took part in behaviors that had previously been linked only to precocious readers. The children asked for the books to be read repeatedly and showed emergent reading behaviors with the books in the home setting.

To summarize, few studies were conducted solely with young children. Young children are not consistent in their
choices; however, the above studies indicate there are developmentally appropriate ways to gather data. Findings identified content and structure of text and strategies and characteristics of children who interacted with text.

Poetry

Fisher and Natarella (1974; 1982) surveyed 792 first, second, and third grade children's preferences for poetry. Form, topic, poetic elements, and traditional and modern poems were represented. Children's overall form preferences were first for narratives and limericks, second for rhymed verse, third for free verse, fourth for lyric poetry, and last for haiku.

Their overall topic preferences were first for poems about the strange and fantastic, second for animals, other children, and childhood experiences, third about things, and last for nature. Use of rhymes and figurative language were preferred poetic elements. Traditional poetry was preferred over modern poetry by all children.

Summary

Interests and preferences of children were researched from a psychology and an education perspective. Further, findings reported the developmental nature of children's interests and preferences by age, grade, and gender. Studies also reported other factors which contributed to children's text preferences. These studies contributed to our understanding of the universal trends which emerged.
Other findings suggested the variables of individual interests and situational interests and their relationship in the development of interests were complex. These studies presented information about what has been researched and the context in which they were conducted. The implication is to question what relationship this information has to literacy instruction and how teachers can use this information to facilitate children's literacy instruction.

Text Structure

The text structure most prevalently read with young children is narrative text. However, this practice limits children's expanded acquisition of vocabulary and understanding of text structures. Children need to master specific structures and content of different text genre through interaction with varied genres. In this section, studies related to narrative and expository text structure are examined. Finally, studies related to both narrative and expository text structure are reviewed.

Narrative Text Structure

Considerable research was conducted to determine what elements made a story and what structures stories had in common. According to Mandler and Johnson (1977) and Rumelhart (1975), well-formed stories included a setting, a theme, several plot episodes, and a resolution.

Information about children's knowledge of narratives has been analyzed according to many variables. Applebee (1978) used Vygotsky's stages of concept development to analyze
children's written and oral stories. The stages were: heaps, sequences, primitive narratives, unfocused chains, focused chains, and narratives. Heaps were related to the child's perception and were unrelated to the characteristics of the material to be organized. Sequences were when the child related events in the story based on a common center. Primitive narratives were structures based on complementary events organized around a common center. Unfocused chain narratives were incidents which have the structure of a narrative, but the lack of a center prevented it from becoming a structured whole. Focused chain narratives contained perceptual concepts rather than true concepts and their center was usually a main character. Finally, narratives were developed around a center and incidents develop out of a previous one. A well-formed story contained a beginning, an initiating sequence, a series of actions, and a conclusion. Applebee (1978) found that even 2-year-olds had begun to use one of three structures: formal opening or title, formal closing, and consistent past tense.

Mandler and Johnson (1977) compared children's oral narratives to an ideal story structure which had six major story parts: setting, beginning, reaction/goal, attempt, outcome, and ending. They found first and fourth graders generally recalled one or more main characters, the beginning event, and the outcome while adults additionally recalled characters' attempts to reach a goal. These findings suggested there were qualitative differences in recall.
Cook-Gumperz and Green (1984) examined a young child's interactive storytelling. They found the child used text structures similar to ones he had heard read and used the pictures to frame the story. These findings suggested this complex model included narratives containing aspects of both oral and written models.

Similarly, Sulzby (1982) compared kindergarten children's told and dictated stories and their early reading attempts of favorite storybooks to their own composition. She found children high in reading-related abilities tended to adapt dictation toward writing while children low in reading-related abilities were more conversational in telling their stories. Likewise, in two longitudinal studies, Sulzby (1985, 1988) found children aged 2 to 6 years, when asked to read favorite storybooks, moved from commenting on items in pictures and giving labels to giving an oral recount using pictures. They then moved to creating a story using words from the story to using print to compose the story to conventional reading.

While Sulzby examined the meaning children derived from the spoken and written communication of a book, Pappas and Brown (1987a, 1987b, 1988) examined young children's understanding of written textual features of narrative text. After hearing the book read aloud, children pretend read picture storybooks and developed strategies to aid in their readings. As they read, they increased use of approximations such as saying 'went around' for the phrase, 'walked-round'. They decreased use of direct inferences which occurred in the story but did not
relate or interact with another token. For example, one child added a reason for the deer to come for a ride in the bear's wagon. Additionally, through rereadings, gradual growth in vocabulary was identified.

Pappas and Brown's first study (1987a) focused on when the character was introduced and when the problem or conflict emerged. Three kindergarten children had different understandings of the meaning in the events. For example, the first child introduced the owl and the woodpecker in the beginning of the story and then introduced the owl again later. However, all three children added more semantic properties by the second and third reading. The first child's readings indicated he had learned about the placement and initiating events, the second child about story discourse, and the third child about an increased understanding of story discourse.

In their second study, Pappas and Brown (1987b) analyzed the Initiating, Sequent, and Final Events. During the read aloud, the kindergarten girl misunderstood the story which interfered with her pretend reading. After discussing the story with the researcher, her second pretend reading showed marked improvement and her third pretend reading reflected idiosyncratic constructions such as "poo" and "deserved," which were not part of the text. These constructions showed she may have been more creative because she was no longer confused about the story's conflict.

Twenty-seven children followed the same procedure as the two previous studies. The researchers found the two most
consistent patterns were children's increased use of approximations across the three readings and their decreased use of direct inferences (Pappas & Brown, 1988).

Similarly, Botvin and Sutton-Smith (1976) conducted two studies in which they asked children from 3- to-12-years old to make up creative and original stories. They found 3- and 4-year-old children generally told stories with no apparent structure while children around five used a simple narrative. Children aged 6 and 7 elaborated and expanded narratives while children around eleven told stories with multiple embedded structures.

Other studies focused on how young children's understanding of story structure affected their comprehension. Galda and Pellegrini (1990) found, through active involvement and peer interaction, role playing stories improved children's comprehension. In a similar study, after hearing stories read aloud, kindergarten children were asked to retell those stories three times. Children could remember the components of the story that most carried the meaning. Additionally, retellings improved their performance (Morrow, 1985). Also, when reading to kindergarten children, use of prequestioning and discussion, reading the story, and follow-up questions and discussion improved young children's comprehension of stories (Morrow, 1984).

In summary, these studies described various strategies researchers used to examine narrative text. First, studies that identified the elements of narrative text and how those variables
were used to analyze children's stories were discussed. Next, studies that focused on children's understanding of narrative text structures through strategies of pretend reading were explored. Finally, studies that examined how text structure and comprehension were enhanced through role playing, retelling, and directed reading activity strategies were discussed. The findings from these studies suggested that young children had some understanding of story structures and qualitative changes in recall occurred as children became older.

**Expository Text Structures**

In this section, studies related to expository text structure and informational text were discussed. Studies provided evidence that young children acquired understanding of text structures at an early age (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Harste, et al. 1984; Newkirk, 1989). Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) and Harste et al. (1984) reported children aged 3 to 6 wrote labels, letters, signs, and lists. Newkirk (1989) observed young children wrote for different audiences and purposes. This research provided knowledge about children's understanding and use of expository text in reading and writing experiences.

**Writing**

Bissex (1980) conducted a case study of her son, Paul, from the ages of 5 to 9. While studying his writing, she identified it as being primarily informational. As a 5-year-old he wrote signs, labels, and captions. During the next two years he used
organizational writing such as charts and schedules. Additionally, during the case study he wrote stories which progressively changed from simple to complex. Newkirk (1984) confirmed Bissex's work when he examined 130 pieces of his daughter's writing at home between the ages of 5 and 6. He found only seven of the pieces were stories. In a subsequent study, he found personal notes and letter genres were among children's written products (Newkirk, 1989).

Likewise, Harste et al. (1984) reported young children identified lists, maps, letters, and stories through organizational structures. In her longitudinal study, Heath (1983) also reported that lists accounted for a big portion of everyday communication in American homes. In fact, lists have been a preferred genre among young writers (Bissex, 1980; Clay, 1975; Harste et al. 1984; Newkirk, 1984, 1989).

Further, Sowers (1985) identified "all about" books as an informational genre among first grade children. All about books include a "listlike collection of facts, features and attributes of its subjects" (Sowers, 1985, p. 73). At both home and school, the children in this study had been read concept books which were a form of all-about books. The all-about books seemed to be an elaboration of list-making of 5-year-olds as reported by other researchers.

**Environmental Print**

In addition to identifying children's structural understanding of varied text, Harste et al. (1984) determined 3-,
4-, 5-, and 6-year-old children's understanding about environmental print. They found the major home factor that determined reading was whether books and materials were available and whether children were naturally involved in using them. The other salient factor was whether parents involved themselves in using and encouraging reading and writing.

Weiss and Hagen (1988) found kindergarten children could identify common environmental items and explain their function. For example, children were asked to identify items such as a shopping list, a letter, and a calendar. Children were then asked to explain how they would be used. The researchers found that kindergarten children could identify the items and, in general, were aware of the functions of print.

**Reading and Writing**

There is a strong relationship between children's reading and writing development. Text structures children learned during reading were later used when they wrote. From reading expository text, elementary children used this text structure knowledge to write reports. Langer's (1992) analysis revealed a developmental trend which consisted of five types of organizing structures ranging in complexity from simple description to expressing point of view with defense.

These studies identified many diverse purposes for reading and writing expository and informational text. Use of personal notes, letters, lists, environmental print, reports, and books was examined in various studies which indicated young children had
considerable knowledge of expository text and used it in their everyday life. When young children's literacy development is examined, many types of print should be considered their text, not solely books.

**Narrative and Expository Text Structure**

To understand children's understanding of these two genres, Langer (1985) explored children's awareness of narrative and expository text in reading and writing activities. She found even third grade children had a clear understanding of differences in story and report form and could produce writing using those genre structures.

More recently, Zecker (1991) asked kindergarten and first grade children to perform writing and reading tasks using three different text genres: a story, a grocery list, and a letter. The letter and the grocery list were considered to be environmental print while the story was not. First graders and kindergarteners differed significantly in the types of writing systems that they applied to each task. In the fall, kindergarten children tended to use both alphabetic and nonalphabetic writing systems, but in the spring, a greater number of them used a range of alphabetic writing. During the year, the first grade children used a variation of alphabetic writing. When these same children were asked to reread their writings during the year, kindergarten and first grade children displayed more conventional reading behaviors and displayed knowledge about the structures of each text.
By using pretend reading, a strategy children naturally used in literacy acquisition, studies were conducted to better understand how these strategies varied among narrative and expository texts. Children acquired a sense of written registers during pretend readings (Pappas, 1991, 1993). Kindergarten children pretend read books by first using illustrations and later concentrating more on the linguistic message of the books. They used several strategies to express certain features of the book language. They substituted words for technical terms, substituted grammatical words for those used in the book, and used singular forms of words for the plural. Learning to use the information-book genre was a meaning-driven, constructive process, similar to that which has been seen in the acquisition of the sense of the story genre (Pappas, 1991, 1993).

Discussed in this section were studies that examined reading and writing tasks of narrative and expository text. Through writing stories, reports, lists, and letters, differences were identified in the structures used while writing these various genre. Also, through the strategy of pretend reading expository and narrative text, differences were identified in children's understanding of the two genre.

**Summary**

These studies reported children as young as two had some understanding of narrative text. Further, research results identified developmental trends in children's understanding of story elements.
Other researchers found children understood and used a wide range of expository text, such as lists, letters, signs, notes, and labels. Researchers who examined environmental print supported the notion that children had a broader understanding of text structures than adults assumed. Children identified varied structures of text and used organizational structures in reading and writing tasks in both narrative and expository text.

Even though studies suggested that children had a broad range of experiences with varied text genre, use of this understanding may not be perpetuated in the school culture. Teachers may give too narrow a definition to text and thus limit children's text experiences.

Teacher Decision-making in Literacy Instruction

The final component of the theoretical framework concerns what kind of decisions teachers made about literacy instruction and how they were made. In an early study, Borko et al. (1981) reported findings of four studies in which elementary teachers made planning decisions about grouping children for reading instruction. In the first study, Russo (cited in Borko et al. 1981) conducted an experimental study of second grade teachers and found they made grouping decisions concerning instructional strategy, materials, emphasis on motivation, practice, and importance of lesson. In the second study, Barr (cited in Borko et al. 1981) conducted a naturalistic study in first grade classrooms which compared variation in pacing of high and low aptitude children. In the third study, Barr explored first grade teachers'
decisions about grouping and pacing. In the fourth study, Stern and Shavelson (cited in Borko et al.1981) observed during two teachers' planning time and during small group instruction over a six month period. From analysis of these studies, Borko et al. (1981) found teachers combined information about children to form estimates of their reading ability to form groups. However, school environment factors which included preparation time, class size, and class composition also influenced their grouping decisions.

Further, they found teachers grouped children for the kind of instruction that has the greatest impact on achievement and made instructional decisions about the reading group, not individuals within the group. Teachers generally chose less structured lessons with abstract materials and individual follow-up activities for high-ability groups and the opposite for low-ability groups. High-ability groups were faster paced and learned more while low-ability groups were slower paced and learned less.

To determine how beginning teachers made preactive and interactive decisions about reading instruction, Combs (1984) studied first year elementary teachers and found major decisions were made about grouping, techniques, materials, and pacing. Grouping was determined by standardized reading test scores, oral reading performance, and phonics ability. Open discussion with little skill instruction was used with high groups while use of a code-breaking process and great effort were emphasized with the low groups. The teachers' plans focused on completing
tasks or materials. A traditional planning process was used; one activity was planned for one skill which was usually a workbook page or group activity. Pacing of the groups centered on completing the book. Preactive decisions were influenced by the beginning teacher's consulting teacher, other teachers at the same grade, the administrator, and the needs of the reading groups.

During interviews, teachers were asked to focus on interactive decisions, decisions made during instruction. The beginning teachers decided on change after grading a paper and pencil activity for accuracy and their decisions centered upon a new material rather than a new approach. Trial and error, the teacher's personal experience as a learner, and the type of materials available also influenced decisions. Evaluation criteria was difficult for teachers to articulate. More importantly, they did not distinguish between expected performance for introductory and independent activities.

Rupley and Logan (1985) examined the relationship between elementary teachers' beliefs about reading, knowledge of reading content, and decisions about reading outcomes. Results suggested that teachers' knowledge of reading content and beliefs about reading influence their decisions. Content-centered teachers gave greater emphasis to decoding oriented reading outcomes and child-centered teachers focused on comprehension reading outcomes.

While employing ethnographic methods, Magiliaro and Borko (1985) studied two teacher/student teacher dyads to
examine classroom interactional patterns, participants' perspectives and process-product methods to record reading activities and child engagement during reading lessons. The third grade dyad did not differ in the way they taught, but the student teacher exacted less engagement time and lower scores on comprehension tests from the children. In contrast, the fourth grade dyad differed greatly in the way they taught, but the children's engagement time and achievement did not differ greatly. The differences in the student teacher effectiveness was accounted for by their conception of their roles. The third grade student teacher was interested in maintaining positive interpersonal relationships with the children while the fourth grade student teacher was interested in establishing authority and in the children's learning.

Duffy, Roehler, and Wesselman (1985) reviewed four sequential studies involving the complexities of reading instruction. During year one, 4 second-grade teachers received instruction on how to give explicit explanations and were then observed. During year two, 5th grade teachers in the treatment group were trained in how to explain the use of reading skills while the control group received one session on reading management techniques. While achievement tests did not indicate significant growth, findings from both studies suggested the teacher's interactive role was crucial, skills should be presented in the context of immediate usefulness, and emphasis on strategic skill usage facilitated children's ability to monitor their own comprehension.
During year three, seven teachers participated in a descriptive study and the results indicated significant growth in teacher explanation and in child awareness but no significant gains in achievement. Finally, during year four, third grade teachers either received training in explicit explanation or reading management techniques. Then all teachers were observed once a month. Even though year four of the study was not yet completed, researchers expected a significant relationship between achievement gains and explicit explanation. Six examples of the complexities of instruction unfolded: the act of explaining was complex; the tendency to equate instruction with variables of instruction needed to be disentangled; different outcomes demanded different instruction; instruction was qualitatively different for different types of children; instruction was different from the consequences of instruction; and instruction was complex because it was a component of the balance between classroom management, routine procedures, thinking patterns, and time organizations.

Duffy et al. (1987) analyzed basal textbooks and taught teachers how to make decisions about changing skills to strategies and how they were to be integrated into children's repertoire. Low-group children of the experimental teachers used strategies better and achieved more than the control group. However, teachers found it difficult to sustain what they had learned and comply with district mandates without the continued support from the researchers. Rather, they tended to revert back to relying on directions from basal guides.
Kinzer (1988) investigated the belief systems of preservice and inservice teachers and their instructional choices. None of the experienced teachers and only one preservice teacher believed reading took place in a text-based manner. Fifty percent of the experienced teachers and 56.6% of the preservice teachers believed reading ability developed holistically. Forty-four percent of the experienced teachers and 42.2% of the preservice teachers had an interactive orientation.

Also, holistic lesson plans were chosen by the majority of preservice and inservice teachers for vocabulary, comprehension, and syllabication. A positive relationship between lesson choice and orientation was found only for teachers indicating a holistic based explanation. Teachers who indicated interactive orientations tended to choose lesson plans that did not reflect theoretical orientation.

To facilitate teachers' instructional decisions, Roser et al. (1990) worked with kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers. The researchers organized children's books into literature units, developed a teaching guide, placed them in classrooms, and conducted an inservice with the teachers. After the book sharing activity was established, teachers explored writing activities, Big Books, and a Recitation method. Evaluation of the program included examining changes in teachers' story sharing strategies, the teachers' reports of child learning, and academic achievement. Also, change in percentile scores showed five of the six schools made statistically significant growth on their state mandated test of basic skills (TEAMS).
Lalik and Niles (1990) examined the nature of a collaborative planning task when student teachers were asked to plan a comprehension lesson using a cause/effect basal worksheet. Group A planned a demonstration, discussion, dramatization, and evaluation while Group B planned a lecture/discussion activity and then practice. The researchers found Group A spent less time planning than Group B but spent more time testing and evaluating a series of lesson activities while Group B spent more time on developing an original text for children. Further, Group A engaged in a greater amount of higher level thinking (51%) than Group B (28%). Student teachers' perceptions of the process of small group planning indicated it was beneficial, promoted idea development, idea assessment and a supportive group affect.

Consistency between Chapter 1 teachers' beliefs and preactive and interactive decisions was investigated by Mitchell et al. (1991) through the case studies of four teachers. They found one teacher reflected beliefs consistent with his stated planning, two teachers reflected reader-based beliefs and text-based planning, and one teacher reflected reader-based beliefs and both reader-based and text-based planning. Similar findings were reported about the teachers' planning and instructional practices. One teacher reflected reader-based planning but text-based instruction, one teacher reflected text-based planning and instruction, one teacher reflected text-based planning but reader-based instruction, and one teacher reflected both reader-
based planning and instruction and text-based planning and instruction.

Smith (1992) found that pressures from cooperating teachers and university supervisors to maintain the routine and curriculum were felt by all the student teachers who had whole language perspectives. Child constraints involved misbehavior, deficiencies in academic and/or social skills, and lack of motivation. Time constraints involved duties other than planning, lack of time to implement instructional strategies, and time obligations outside of school hours. Personal qualities which constrained the student teachers included lack of management skills, difficulty disciplining children, lack of planning skills and implementing classroom instruction, and finding their own voices as teachers. Institutional constraints included large class sizes, crowded classrooms, limited supplies to implement whole language strategies, school-adopted textbooks which were incompatible with a whole language perspective, and a school culture which did not aid children in making decisions for themselves. The school culture also involved teachers using extensive learning time to practice class presentations for parent programs. Cultural constraints included emphasis on achievement goals, commercially developed instructional packages, and objective evaluation tools.

Researchers administered belief instruments to determine a secondary English teacher's theoretical orientation and sample lesson plans to identify her thoughts and decisions about content area reading. These instruments indicated she was primarily
reader-based in her beliefs and indicated a preference for whole-language instruction. However, upon observation they found she was primarily teacher-directed. During an interview, her remarks indicated her decisions were influenced by the low-ability children in her class and state mandates of her curriculum. This suggested that these environmental realities constrained her from implementing her own beliefs (Wilson, Konopak, and Readence, 1992).

Meyerson (1993) conducted a qualitative study with teachers enrolled in a graduate reading class using a reflective activity designed to encourage professional growth among teachers. The first part of the activity required teachers to complete a concept web of factors which they felt influenced their reading instruction decisions. The second part of the activity required them to write narratives about each factor in their webs. Twenty-two factors were identified and organized into four categories: professional controls, significant others, teacher uniqueness, and professional development. Professional controls included materials or supervisors which forced their instructional decisions. Significant others included children, family, teachers, and colleagues. Teacher uniqueness included personal philosophy and affective characteristics. Professional development included learning and teaching experiences. The teachers' narratives explained how these negative and positive factors influenced their instructional decisions and they generally reported that the activity provided them a vehicle with
which to think through who they were and how they made instructional decisions.

Blanton and Moorman (1993) used a diary to mediate reading instructional decisions of elementary teachers using basal reading programs. Teachers attended weekly seminars for two years to discuss literature and decisions about basal reading instruction. The researchers found modifications were made in pre-reading, vocabulary, word recognition, and during reading, and post-reading instruction. Teachers generally followed basal manuals for developing background and providing purpose while decisions to modify instruction were most often related to background information and vocabulary.

McGill-Franzen et al. (1994) studied the instructional practices and beliefs of three kindergarten teachers and the drawings, writings, and rereadings of three kindergarten children. One teacher used the district-required and supplementary materials; her main goal was to involve her children in literacy learning during all subjects. She was effective because of the personal responsibility she felt for her children's learning. The case study child in her class began kindergarten as an average child and ended with preprimer reading and writing skills.

The second teacher rejected the district-required materials but used Sunshine Books and tradebooks and primarily engaged her children in copying words in a journal and memorizing rhythmic text in whole group instruction. The case study child in her class began kindergarten with a limited literacy background
and ended the year with a limited knowledge of the concepts of print. The third teacher used the district-required materials and supplemented the program with tradebooks and chapter books. The case study child in her class was frequently read to in his home. He began kindergarten not knowing the letters of the alphabet and made slow progress in reading and writing. At the end of the year he began reading predictable books. Teachers two and three did not individualize literacy instruction according to the children's needs; no one-on-one instruction occurred. Also, they believed children would learn when they were ready.

Summary

These studies reflected many components of teacher decision-making about literacy instruction. While teachers had strong beliefs about literacy instruction, other influences actually determined the planning and instructional strategies used by teachers in the classroom. The outcome of that instruction may constrain or facilitate the literacy development of the children.

Conclusion

I presented related literature about emergent literacy, preferences, text structure, and teacher decision-making in literacy instruction. The relatively new field of emergent literacy emphasized developmentally appropriate practices within child-centered curricula. Home and school activities that promoted literacy development included storybook reading,
pretend reading, writing, and high levels of interaction among children and adults.

Psychological studies emphasized individual and situational interest while studies indicating text interests and preferences reported findings by age, gender, and topic. The use of thematic studies and integrated curriculum in emergent literacy classrooms created optimal conditions for children to fully explore situational interests and develop new individual interests. Additional variables influenced children's text preferences which indicated the complexity of studying and understanding their preferences.

Development of text structure knowledge in reading and writing through wide exposure to varied text genres enhanced young children's literacy development. However, historical instructional practices left gaps in children's experiences with varied text genres which were mostly limited to narrative text. Young children gained text structure knowledge through broad literacy experiences and purposeful activities broadened their genre awareness.

Research about teacher decision-making in literacy instruction provided a more complete understanding of literacy environments. Studies indicated many factors influenced teachers' decisions. Often teachers' beliefs did not match their planning or instruction, but holistic teachers were more likely to be consistent. Researchers found cultural, institutional, environmental, and personal constraints contributed to their inconsistencies.
Classroom environments and literacy experiences provided by classroom teachers greatly influence children's knowledge of text structure and their text preferences. Teachers who make curricular decisions to allow for child choice make beneficial changes that facilitate the development of this knowledge and preference. Research is needed to examine the interrelationship of how teachers' literacy decisions within emergent literacy classroom provide development of text interest and understanding of text structure.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore young children's preferences for varied text genre within the school environment and to determine how those preferences contributed to classroom literacy events. This study attempted to answer the following questions: (1) What are young children's preferences for text genres? (2) How do literacy events in an emergent literacy classroom impact preferences? (a) How do their text preferences contribute to read-aloud events? (b) How do their text preferences contribute to independent reading events in the classroom library? (c) How do their text preferences contribute to writing events?

This chapter described the methods for implementing the study. I first presented a description of setting and subjects, followed by the procedures for data collection and analysis. I also included the assumptions and limitations of the study.

Research Context

School setting

This study took place in one kindergarten classroom in a year-round elementary school in an urban neighborhood in Las Vegas, Nevada. The school was representative of a range of
sociocultural levels, ethnic origins, and ability levels. Since this study focused on young children's preferences for text genre, a kindergarten classroom was selected as an appropriate setting, because it was here that children's first formal school experience with literacy education occurred.

**Classroom teacher**

I first established criteria for selecting a classroom teacher who fit the study because the instructional decisions made and the classroom environment created by the teacher powerfully influence literacy learning for young children. Criteria included several critical components. A kindergarten teacher was selected who had taught a minimum of two years, had a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and implemented emergent literacy theory emphasizing children's emergent knowledge of literacy and literacy practices (Sulzby & Teale, 1986). These practices included giving children a broad range of reading and writing experiences. Specifically, the teacher involved children with print through using the classroom library, reading aloud daily, and engaging them in purposeful writing. Class time was spent in many hands-on activities. Also, I looked for a classroom rich with environmental print and which reflected evidence of children's work.

I contacted ten elementary principals in seeking kindergarten teachers who implemented emergent literacy practices. Based on their recommendations I contacted five teachers to schedule an initial interview and observation. I
visited each teacher to discuss the teacher's involvement with the study. I discussed in detail what I expected from the teacher and the children (Appendix A). The teacher was informed that I was interested in literacy development of young children. In order to avoid bias of the study, no other information was given. While the teacher was not the main subject of the study, participation and cooperation were vital to its success. If the teacher agreed to participate in the study, then I proceeded with the selection process.

To gain a broader understanding of the teacher's beliefs I conducted a structured interview (Appendix B) designed to specifically identify emergent literacy beliefs (Strickland & Ogle, 1990) with each teacher. To assure that teacher beliefs and practices matched, I also observed each teacher to make the final selection based on my own theoretical sensitivity. In the observation, I looked for specific indicators that showed the teacher used emergent literacy instructional practices in the classroom (Appendix C).

No teacher I interviewed and observed implemented pure emergent literacy beliefs nor had all the necessary classroom components. Mrs. Kay, the teacher I selected, actually implemented a dichotomy of traditional readiness and emergent literacy beliefs. However, I observed that she had created a classroom environment in which a substantial classroom library was provided. During the initial interview Mrs. Kay stated she regularly engaged the children in writing activities and that she read aloud to the students daily. Based on the interview and
classroom observation. I concluded she most closely fit the established criteria for teacher selection.

**Children**

Group I - Twenty-two kindergarten children received parental consent to participate in this study. Six children in the classroom, for various reasons, did not participate. The purpose of selecting the 22 children in the class was to gain a general understanding of kindergarten children's text preferences. Ten males and 12 females were in the afternoon session. The mean age at the beginning of the study was six years and three months (range from five years and five months to six years and six months).

Group II. - A group of three children, one boy and two girls, was purposely selected through teacher recommendation, a formal interview which indicated the extent of literacy experiences of each child (Appendix D), and classroom observations for case study investigation. They were also chosen with the approval of the teacher, the parents, and the principal. One boy, Allan, and two girls, Patty and Barbara, were selected from the class. Allan and Patty had a broad range of experiences with text genres such as lists, letters, cards, picture books, information books, magazines, and posters prior to kindergarten. Conversely, Barbara had a limited range of experiences of text genres such as only picture books and posters prior to kindergarten. All three children experienced the same formal school environment, had a kindergarten classroom designed
around both traditional readiness and emergent literacy beliefs, and had Mrs. Kay as a teacher. The small number of children provided a means to intensively investigate the many components of text genre preference and to conduct a cross-case analysis.

Research methods

Procedures prior to data collection

Prior to the beginning of the study and data collection I met with the kindergarten teacher to discuss procedures to implement the study as had been previously discussed at our initial meeting. The agreement between the teacher and myself was reviewed so there were clear expectations of the teacher's role and my role (Appendix A).

Data collection procedure

Data was collected during a five-month period and was conducted in three phases of the study. In this section I discussed the three phases with an explanation of data collection, the timetable, involvement of children, and analysis of the data during each phase.

Insert Table 1 here

I observed two and one-half hours a day for three days each week in the afternoon kindergarten classroom. Initially, I spent a week visiting in the classroom to become familiar with
classroom routines and to establish rapport with the children. During that time I took field notes and interacted with Mrs. Kay and the children. I also established contact with the librarian, Mrs. Tinna, and obtained permission to videotape her read-aloud session with this kindergarten class during the study.

**Phase I**

**Question:** What are young children's preferences for text genre?

**Data collection:** During the first phase of the study, two methods were used to gather data. During the first month of the study, 22 children used booklets containing a dated page in the classroom library (Taylor & Waynant, 1978) to record data of their free choice of books during the class session. Children peeled a numbered dot from the cover of the chosen book and attached it on the dated page in their booklet. I maintained a master list which matched the names of the books with the numbered dots. I also maintained the dots on the books for the children to record choices. According to the agreement I made with the classroom teacher throughout the study, I placed 20 of the purchased books or public library books at a time on the library shelf with the classroom library books and replaced them periodically as themes changed. I initially agreed to place 20 purchased books of various genres in the classroom library, however, my funds did not allow me to purchase that many books. For that reason, I supplemented the purchased books with public library books. Also, I conducted one audiotaped
structured interview (Appendix E) with all participating children to discuss their general preferences.

Data analysis: The first phase involved data analysis of 22 children in the study. I used a categorical form to record the information by three genre, narrative text, expository text, and poetry (Appendix I) and reported the information for all children's preferences.

To analyze the structured interviews I transcribed them and identified emerging categories of children's preference of text topic (see Table 2). The categories changed as other structured interviews were conducted and analyzed. This procedure was consistent with the constant comparative method as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Final categories were animals, plants, fairy tales, weather, holidays, cultures, science, biography, fantasy, tall tales, sports, fine arts, people, poetry, and concept. Other categories were identified that served to interpret the children's choices. They included read-alouds, patterned text, or specific formats of the text.

Phase II

Questions: What are young children's preferences for text genre? How do text preferences contribute to specific literacy events in an emergent literacy classroom?

Data Collection: During the second month of the study, using three books from the free-choice preference booklet, I interviewed the three case study children to gain additional understanding of their book choices. I showed each child the
booklet of choices and asked the child to select three books from the list to discuss with me. During an audiotaped structured interview (Appendix F) I determined each child's understanding of the text genre, text structure, their explanations for choosing those books, and their discussions of the books. Retellings were included in the structured interview. I used Morrow's instructional strategy for retelling to interact with the children.

Data analysis: I transcribed the data responses on the structured interviews and identified emerging categories. I then analyzed the data using open and axial coding according to the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The final categories were included in the tables listed previously.

To analyze the retelling of each narrative book, I parsed it into four categories: setting, theme, plot episodes, and resolution. Using both the quantitative and qualitative criteria, I assessed the retelling to determine the child's sense of story structure (Morrow, 1990). To analyze the retelling of an information book or a poetry book, I parsed it according to its structure, which varied. An assessment was used to determine the child's sense of organizational structure. Because no proven instrument was available for the quantitative assessment, I adapted Morrow's procedure for a narrative (Rhodes & Shanklin, 1993). I also used her qualitative assessment which fit all three genres (Appendix G).
Phase III:

**Question:** How do text preferences contribute to specific literacy events in an emergent literacy classroom?

**Data collection:** During the third, fourth, and fifth month, audiotaped structured interviews (Appendix H) about specific literacy events were conducted with the three case study children. Literacy events included the teacher reading aloud, independent reading in the library center, and any phase of writing such as painting, drawing, writing, or dictation. Two specific studies from this research were central to framing this study. Well's (1986) longitudinal study served to pinpoint literacy events important to literacy development. He observed four literacy activities: looking at a picture book and talking about it; listening to a story; drawing and coloring; and writing or pretending to write. He found looking at a picture book and talking about it and listening to a story most affect literacy development. Based on his findings, for the purpose of this study, I examined these literacy events more closely in the classroom setting. However, I identified them as three literacy events: independent reading, read-alouds, and writing.

I videotaped sessions of children participating in three classroom literacy events at any time during their class session from the first through the fifth month of the study. I videotaped case study children participating in the read-aloud sessions, independent reading in the library center, and in writing events. Artifacts were gathered during the entire study; they comprised copied samples of children's work related to the three specific
literacy events. These artifacts were used to contribute to information about how literacy events responded to text genre preferences of the children.

**Data analysis:** The third phase comprised analysis of the three children's discussion of three literacy events, a read-aloud, a writing event, and an independent reading event. Sulzby's (1989) study also provided a framework from which to analyze the children's writing. She identified seven categories of writing systems which kindergarten children use. They included drawing, scribbling, letterlike forms, nonphonetic letterstrings, copying environmental print, invented spelling, and conventional spelling. I used these categories to analyze the writing samples of the case study children in this study. I also identified which categories of writing were used according to each child's personal experience, text preference, or classroom situational preference (see Tables 3, 4, & 5).

I compiled a list of the read-alouds Mrs. Kay and Mrs. Tinna I observed in the classroom. I analyzed this list to determine the genre of the read-alouds and the availability of this text to the children for rereading (Appendix J).

Analysis of data comprised the transcription of structured audiotaped interviews of the three children. Questions from the interviews were analyzed using open and axial coding according to the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Videotapes of the three literacy events of these same children were transcribed and analyzed using open and axial coding according to the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin,
Artifacts and field notes were analyzed to determine how text preferences contributed to specific literacy events. The categories that emerged from the interviews, videotapes, field notes, and artifacts were first organized around the three literacy events. Other categories that fell out of the data became evident through the activities in which the children engaged. These categories are detailed in the findings in Chapters Four and Five.

After analysis of each case study was conducted, a cross-case analysis was conducted (Yin, 1989). Individual case narratives were reported and a narrative of cross-case issues was then reported.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Role of the Researcher

As with all research studies, I assumed that I had philosophical beliefs by framing my study around emergent literacy practices. While this study informed us about this specific group of children, it did not attempt to make generalizations to a large population. This limitation is inherent in qualitative methodology. Also, I served as a participant as observer in this study which limited my total understanding of the home and school culture. I had limited understanding of the home culture because I only minimally interacted with the children's parents. I was limited in my understanding of the school culture because I was not a member of that culture.

I expected that kindergarten children would be self-conscious about being videotaped and that my presence in the room would affect the children's behavior to some degree. As
the study progressed, they became used to the videorecorder and ignored it. I maintained the role of participant as observer and not one of aide for the children. I took care to not converse with the children but responded to their questions in an open manner.

I additionally presumed that the teacher would be concerned about my judgement of her teaching, so I made every effort to give reassurance and approval to the teacher. I assumed that the teacher would be curious about the findings of the study, and I responded by asking the teacher to read and confirm my transcripts for accuracy. However, I did not discuss the findings of the study until data collection was completed.

I brought certain biases to my study, but I attempted to acknowledge and address them as I proceeded through this study. One bias, in particular, was toward the teacher limiting children's choice of activities. Another bias I encountered was in interpreting the data to accurately reflect what occurred in the study. I also had a bias toward the use of emergent literacy practices. I studied the children from their standpoint and viewed them as part of a family system. My most important responsibility was to represent the children and teachers I studied (Harding, 1993).
CHAPTER IV

Findings: The Kindergarten Class and Teachers

In this chapter I related the group findings associated with text preferences of the 22 children in the kindergarten classroom and attempted to answer the first research question: What are young children's preferences for text genre? Two aspects of the study were presented. First, the stated preferences of the children were enumerated. Second, various categories of the book choices of the children were presented. The findings were presented for text choices by categories of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry; text choices by topic were also reported. In addition, information about choices of read-alouds, patterned text, and format factors were included.

The orchestraters of the literacy events, the kindergarten teacher and the librarian, made important instructional decisions about materials and activities with which children engaged. For this reason, a case study of the classroom teacher and an interview with the librarian were presented. The case study portrayed a biographical sketch of the kindergarten teacher, her teaching beliefs, and her instructional practices. The librarian related her read-aloud beliefs and practices as they pertained to
this particular kindergarten class through an interview. A summary concluded this chapter.

The Kindergarten Class

The purpose of conducting this phase of the study was to determine what general text preferences this group of children possessed. I determined preferences by genre and topic and then examined the preferences to determine whether the book had been read aloud by the teacher, whether it had a patterned text, or whether it had some format factor.

Twenty-two kindergarten children participated in this study. These children attended an afternoon session of kindergarten in a middle-income neighborhood. Most of these children's parents worked in service positions in the hotel/casino industry while only three parents were professionals. However, there was a high level of parental participation in the classroom; parents volunteered on a regular basis.

The cultural diversity of the class was limited. One factor that contributed to that situation was the fact that all kindergarten bus children attended morning sessions. With the exception of two Hispanic children, all the children were identified as Caucasian.

Classroom Environment

The classroom was a large exciting room rich in print. Every inch of wall space was occupied with print of some kind: maps, charts, posters, child work, and pictures. In front of the
calendar area was a large open space for children to sit together and do movement activities. Four large tables were behind the open space for the children to complete journal writing and worksheets. Shelves around the room held materials for children to use during center activities.

The classroom library was large and held an extensive assortment of books. Many shelves displayed the front of the books while several crates on the floor held other books. The library center also had a flannelboard with flannelboard materials, puppets, and a listening center at a small table. Several large pillows and a child's rocker were also in the library.

One part of the classroom had a loft which the children reached by climbing a ladder. The area was used for the housekeeping center which contained kitchen furniture and equipment and a table and chairs. Underneath the elevated area was a storage area while the writing center, which contained four desks and chairs, was in front of the loft. A sight word chart was on the wall and another chart filled with words hung above the center. Toward the back of the room, close to a sink, was the art center which contained a table and four chairs. Opposite the art center was the puppet center.

**A Typical Day**

The children's afternoons were structured around a specific schedule. They had a whole group session on the carpet when they first arrived at school. They responded to roll call when Mrs. Kay, their teacher, made requests of them. For example, she
asked them to answer in a foreign language. They then sang songs and recited the pledge of allegiance. They participated in science or social studies lessons and engaged in a movement activity as they went to their tables. They wrote in their journals and completed a worksheet. If the children had time, they chose a book and sat on the carpet to read. When all children were finished with their work, they sat on the rug and engaged in calendar activities. In small groups they went to one of eight assigned centers and participated in a wide range of activities, such as the traditional housekeeping center and manipulatives. Other activities involved working on the computer and playing board games. After they cleaned-up, they went to recess. Upon returning to class they participated in a read-aloud activity or another whole group lesson such as math. They then were dismissed to go home.

Mrs. Kay used a variety of strategies in her management plan. The Stop and Go Board involved three cards, one red, one yellow, and one green, for each child. She displayed a yellow card for their first warning and a red card for their second warning when their parents were called. She displayed a green card for children who earned a treat from the Treasure Box and their name on a chart in the room.

The group having the highest points at the end of the day received cookies on their way out of class and got to line up first. They also were chosen to sit in the front row on the carpet to listen to a story.
Mrs. Kay very effectively exaggerated or dramatized what she wanted the children to do and then made sure they were successful. She also deliberately made mistakes so the children could correct her.

**Text Preference Findings**

During the second week of the study, I interviewed each of the children individually to determine their text preferences. I recorded the number of times a category was mentioned, then determined the highest occurrence was the children's preference, even though other categories were cited. Of the 22 children interviewed, seven children preferred fiction and nonfiction books about animals while nine children favored fairy tales. Other children preferred fantasy and fine arts topics such as *How to Draw Cats and Kittens*. Choices for fairy tales and fantasy were heavily influenced by television and movies. For example, children chose books about recent movies such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* which were also available on video. Television influences included preferences about *Sesame Street*, *Ninja Turtles*, and *Power Rangers*.

**Text Choice Findings**

During independent reading time, the children were asked to record their book choices for one month. Some days, when a special event occurred, there was no class time allotted for independent reading.
Mrs. Kay required the children to complete journal writing and a worksheet. They then were allowed to read books. Generally, fifteen minutes was scheduled for reading. However, if the children had not finished with their written work, they had little or no time to read.

Rather than allowing children to select books from the well-stocked classroom library, Mrs. Kay selected a group of books from the classroom library from which the children could choose a book. The books were usually selected to support a thematic study. During this particular month three major themes were used: animals, plants, and the Asian culture. After learning what themes would be studied, I purchased books for the classroom library to supplement these themes. I also checked-out 20 books from the public library during each thematic study and placed them in the classroom library. It is within that context that children selected books to read.

Text Choices By Genre

The genres of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry were used to determine the children's choices. Of the total 271 books chosen by the children, 189 (69.9%) books were fiction, 67 (24.9%) nonfiction, and 15 (5.5%) poetry books were chosen.

Individual children chose from two to 22 different books. Nineteen (86.3%) children chose more fiction than the other two genres. Two (9.1%) children chose one fiction and one nonfiction book. One (4.5%) child chose less fiction than nonfiction. Based on these findings, the children generally preferred fiction.
Text Choices By Topic

Thirteen topics were generated from the 22 children's choices. One hundred thirty-six (49%) animals books, 42 (15%) books about plants, and 23 (8%) books about holidays were most frequently selected. Also, 18 (6.4%) books about people, 14 (5%) poetry books, and 10 (3.6%) concept books were picked.

Of the 13 topics, only four were picked as preferences. Sixteen (72.7%) children selected more animals books while two children (9%) picked an equal number of animal and plant books. The two topics most selected were also thematic studies during this month. Clearly, the children's most preferred topic was animals.

Text Choices By Read-aloud, Pattern or Format

From the total books chosen, I attempted to determine if children picked books for reasons other than by topic and genre. Three factors were examined: books read aloud by Mrs. Kay, a repeated pattern in the text such as found in Who's Behind the door . . . ?, and a format factor such as a hole in each page. Ten children (45.5%) chose to read at least one book read aloud by Mrs. Kay 12 times. Twelve children (54.5%) chose books that had
a repeated pattern and read it from one to six times for a total of 23 times. Thirteen children (59.9%) chose books with a format factor 38 times.

**Summary of Findings for the Kindergarten Class**

Children recorded their text choices for a one month period and findings were reported by genre and topic. Generally, children selected more fiction than nonfiction and poetry combined. Of the 13 topics generated by child choices, four topics were preferred. Both fiction and nonfiction animals were preferred the most and by more children while plants were selected next. Both animals and plants were thematic studies during this month. When I examined three additional text choices, I found less than one half the children chose books read aloud in class while over half of the children selected patterned books and books with format features.

**A Case Study: Mrs. Kay, The Teacher**

**Professional Education And Experience**

Mrs. Kay earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education with an emphasis in fine arts at a public university in New York State in the 1970's. Upon graduation, she immediately began working on her master's degree in psychology and guidance at Springfield College in Massachusetts. During that time she worked as a dorm mother at a private prep school where she later taught history to seventh and eighth grade children. Upon moving to Las Vegas, Mrs. Kay taught third grade
in a public school for two years and then took a maternity leave. The next position she held was teaching psychology to girls in a private reform school for four years. She then took another maternity leave and, upon returning to teaching, taught kindergarten part-time in three different schools in the public school district for six years.

Beliefs About Literacy Development

Mrs. Kay was highly recommended by her principal as a kindergarten teacher who implemented emergent literacy practices in her classroom. I observed in her classroom just before Valentine's Day when the children, dressed in party clothes, were having a dance for their parents. The classroom environment was rich with print and I immediately located a well stocked classroom library and an established writing center. The appearance of the room suggested a classroom in which the teacher implemented emergent literacy practices.

When I initially interviewed Mrs. Kay in February, she was unsure of what emergent literacy was. She expressed the philosophy she followed in her teaching by stating "Learning is fun. It also nurtures and promotes the self-esteem of the children. I believe the classroom changes to fit the children."

However, in March Mrs. Kay enrolled in an early intervention workshop which caused her to reflect on her first belief statement. She later stated, "It (the workshop) made me realize that children have a greater potential that I thought. When I saw what children could be doing I was really, really impressed."
She believed she uses a combination of philosophies, concluding:

I really believe that if you do any one method, if you go any one direction, you're going to lose somebody. You need a smorgasbord of sources to pull from. Had I had the background in Reading Recovery I could have done a lot more with some of my children. Some children cannot learn phonetically. Before I didn't know what another way was. Now I see another way. In emergent literacy there are so many fun activities that the superreaders can enjoy as well as the nonreaders. I don't think there's a sense of boredom... When we cut up the sentence strip and matched the words they could match those words. They could read their sentences, too, because it was their own words. I thought, God, this is great! I love the belief where they say, "Make sure your materials are ready for the kids."

Mrs. Kay stated that she began planning her curriculum by getting a "rough idea of the themes I wanted to use." She then incorporated the "curriculum essentials framework using thematic studies in my plans." She elaborated by stating, "On a weekly basis I focus on the children's interests. Many of these children have very strong science interests, so my plans reflect those interests."

During the initial interview Mrs. Kay stated that "the whole classroom environment is included in literacy instruction." She emphasized that whole group instruction involved science/social studies, language arts, and story-time. She further stated:

I create my classroom environment by what works, basically by the flow of the class. I adjust to the whole personality of the class. It is also created by the way I set up my program. I use Box It and Bag It for my math, so the calendar is very important. I know kindergarteners
don't like to sit too long so you have to move back and forth. I like centers; they like centers. They love it. You need lots of little working areas. It gives them a sense of independence and hopefully self-direction.

The eight centers were coordinated with the thematic studies and usually lasted from two to four weeks. She planned for the themes to include "dinosaurs, plants, animals, skeletons, light, shadows, America, the environment, bubbles, water, and fairy tales." She planned to end the year presenting a fairy tale play, The Three Piggy Opera, to the school.

When I asked her how much class time the children spent in small group activities, she commented "I engage them in centers daily except Friday when parents visit to share a lesson. For example, one parent is an artist and she is going to show the children how to make pottery."

When we discussed how time was spent in her classroom, Mrs. Kay commented "the children spend very little time doing worksheets and none doing workbooks. The time spent doing worksheets is called 'warm-up'. They engage in organized activities during centers and free play during recess."

I asked Mrs. Kay several questions about the children's discourse. She responded, "I try to let every child talk during instructional time. I don't let them talk just when I call on them but try to achieve a balance. I try to listen to what they want to talk about during recess and at the beginning of the day. In turn, I expect them to listen when I read a story. Other than that, they don't spend much class time just sitting and listening."
Beliefs About Read-Aloud Experiences

Mrs. Kay stated "guided reading was a very important component of story time; it was an instructional time." She further stated she "read a story a day to the children."

However, later in the year, I asked Mrs. Kay if I could obtain a list of all the books she had read aloud to the children during my study since I was not in class every day. She stated:

I don't always write the books down in my lesson plans. Sometimes I choose a book from the ones that go with the thematic unit. Other times I plan to read one incorporated around a lesson. Sometimes I read one that Susan (the other kindergarten teacher with whom she shares a room) says is really good. I feel the afternoon children need to do their academic work first. Then, if I have time, I read to them.

These two comments at different times in the school year reflected a contradiction in her beliefs. It appeared that as the school year neared an end, Mrs. Kay emphasized skills instruction to prepare the children for a formal first grade classroom. She shared with me the skills reading list which she completed at the end of the year which reflected specific skills each child had mastered.

Beliefs About Reading Activities

As we talked about the extensive classroom library, Mrs. Kay explained "the books and magazines were collected by the kindergarten teacher I share a room with and me." When I asked her if the children were allowed to check out books she
replied, "They go to the school library once a week and check out books. We don't check books out to the children because they don't always come back and it just costs us too much money to replace them." During further talking about the classroom library, Mrs. Kay explained, "The children spend time listening to tapes, looking at books, and using a flannelboard. I view reading as a transition and children need many different experiences."

Beliefs About Writing Activities

When we discussed children's writing activities, Mrs. Kay said, "We do guided writing. Sometimes I have the children complete sentences. I use many different tools to help them write. For example, I combine pictures with words. Then I have specific plans for some months. In April I plan to have the children do creative writing and in May we will publish a newspaper."

Personal Interests

Two of Mrs. Kay's personal interests emerged in her curriculum. She spent time helping her children learn to count and sing in several languages, such as Swahili, French, Japanese, and Spanish. She also taught sign language to them.

When I asked about her interest in languages she replied:

I did study French in college. We study languages because of the cultural programs the school district wants us to use. When we had Black History week the kids had a name for my kids with dark skin. When we had Hispanic Week the kids would say, "Oh, you're Mexican." They were emphasizing the differences but I didn't think it was in a
positive way. So, I got into languages; the kids thought it sounded funny. They think it's really cool. They can say something their mom and other kids don't understand. Then, when we hit Mexico and Spain around Columbus Day, they say, "Oh, we speak Spanish." I thought it was a good way to incorporate culture the whole year.

The other strong interest Mrs. Kay displayed was her love of theater. She and her husband professionally built scenes for theater and volunteered their services to local community theaters. Mrs. Kay used this interest to help her children present programs, usually musicals, to their parents and the school. She explained her reason for incorporating theater into her curriculum.

I don't do a lot of theater. I did Bah Humbug and Three Piggy. It is not an end unto itself. We've been telling the story of the Three Little Pigs to each other. We've told it many different ways. We told it from the wolf's point of view. We told it from the piggies' points of view. We read it from two or three different books who told the story and they told it differently. This helps kids see words carry meaning. So, what you hear and what you understand makes language important. And rhythm is important. Those are in theater. Once kids have a puppet or a mask, they aren't the same person. They don't remain the shy person. Barbara couldn't sing in the Christmas show, but she could in the Piggy show. It brings out their real selves but they don't realize it. It's neat to see a kid become someone else.

**Literacy Practices**

I observed that Mrs. Kay implemented a dichotomy of literacy practices. The emergent literacy practices included engaging the children in shared reading and writing, predicting and confirming predictions, and discussing the read-aloud
stories. She also used environmental print, hands-on center activities, journal writing, and a high level of social interaction. The traditional readiness skills were reflected in such practices as engaging the children in skills worksheets, computer reading skills games, and reading basalized skills practice books for homework. Also, in a more traditional sense, Mrs. Kay chose mostly fiction books and a few poems to read aloud.

Mrs. Kay spent considerable time using big books to develop predictions, recording them, reading the story, and confirming predictions. During this process she had the children reread their prediction and confirmation charts. She also involved the children in extensive discussions which required them to evaluate or make judgements about the story.

From these charts, Mrs. Kay wrote sight words and drew a picture of the words on cards. She then placed them on the chalkboard for the children to use in their journal writing. The children wrote in their journals three or four times a week. Journal writing was also assigned for homework during two track breaks.

Other environmental print was placed on floor to ceiling bulletin boards. A daily newspaper was also used, which gave directions for them to follow during "warm-up" time. Additionally, other sight words were placed at the writing center. However, other than the directions and the sight words, little reference was made by Mrs. Kay to encourage the children to use that print in their writing.
Two additional activities supported language development, writing, and children's interests. First, four or five children were assigned a specific day to bring show and tell items. During this time each child was required to use complete sentences to tell about the show and tell item and to choose three children to ask questions about it. Mrs. Kay also asked questions to help the children give more information about their items. For example, she asked them to explain where they got the item, what they did with it, and why they had brought it to school.

The second activity involved a stuffed dog named Gabby, a journal, and a backpack. Children were asked to take the backpack home, to write in the journal about an experience with the dog, and to bring it back and read it to the class. Mrs. Kay volunteered to read the journal if the children chose and then they talked about the experience. The more ridiculous, the better. The children loved their turn.

The children rotated through eight learning centers over a period of two weeks. Three or four children were assigned to a group; the group stayed together during that two week period. The centers, planned by Mrs. Kay, were mainly hands-on activities which allowed them to participate in a high level of social interaction.

In a more traditional sense, four days a week the children went to their tables, read the newspaper with Mrs. Kay, completed a skills worksheet, and, if they had time, read a book. They then did a movement activity, the calendar, the pledge, and sang two songs.
During center time several activities supported a traditional readiness approach. The computer was used for skills practice such as beginning sounds or rhyming words. The writing center was also used for skills practice on several occasions. For example, the children were asked to cut out pictures of rhyming words and glue them to the matching picture on the worksheet.

For homework the children were assigned books in a series of 50 books called I See Sam. These linguistic books focused on beginning sounds and rhyming words. Parents were asked to sign a form stating their child had read the book. Mrs. Kay or a parent would then ask the children to read the book to them at school. If the child had difficulty with it, the book was sent home to be read again. Six children were still reading these books at the end of the year.

When that set of books was completed, the children took home books from a set called Treasure Chest (1981). It was a set of skills books which included vowels, blends, digraphs, and increasingly difficult words. Mrs. Kay said they were "first grade books." Most of the children were reading these books at the end of the year.

Read-Aloud Experiences

Mrs. Kay often read aloud to the children. I observed the majority of her read-aloud selections were fiction books while some were poetry and two nonfiction books (Appendix J). She read to the children on a sporadic basis and for different reasons.
At times, as she had stated, the read-aloud was the focal point of a thematic lesson. Her lessons were planned around a book or a combination of the theme and a specific lesson. Other times when she had some extra time, she read a spontaneously chosen book. Interestingly, on no occasion during my observations did she read a book chosen by a child brought from home or selected from the classroom library. However, she previously had stated she did read books children brought from home. On other occasions she did not read a book at all. She commented, "I feel the afternoon children need to do their academic work first. Then, if I have time I read to them"

I observed that most of the books Mrs. Kay read were specifically related to a thematic study, a holiday, or a specific lesson. For example, when they studied plants Mrs. Kay brought a small pine tree to school for children to observe. They named it Pineapple and made a class book about their observations of its growth. They subsequently read the book several times during the thematic unit. Mrs. Kay read a book about products of trees and assigned children homework to make a list of items in their homes made of cardboard. She also read a story about a lotus seed that was planted and grew into another flower.

Interestingly, some units were implemented at the same time. For example, while they were still studying plants, Mrs. Kay began a study of animals. While they were studying animals, Mrs. Kay began a study of Asia. She read books to the children to support both of these themes.
Also, some of the themed books were teacher-made big books which Mrs. Kay had seen in basal teacher guides. Other commercial big books were used to coordinate with Mrs. Kay's themes. I noticed that none of the big books were placed in the library for the children to read. Mrs. Kay explained her action by stating, "Big books are expensive; they cost me a lot of money. I don't want to have to replace them. So, they last longer if I don't let the kids read them." She responded with a similar response when I asked her about the big book she made with the children. "I set it out a few times. They were tearing it up. So I didn't put it out any more."

Some thematic books were also used to develop lessons. For example, the children were first asked to make predictions about *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. Mrs. Kay recorded their predictions and then read them. From the prediction chart, Mrs. Kay copied sight words for the children to use in journal writing. Then, after she read the story, the children confirmed their predictions. Mrs. Kay expanded the lesson by reading another version of the story.

On St. Patrick's Day I observed Mrs. Kay read a book about the holiday and implement some special activities for the children. For example, they hunted for the pot of gold (bags of candy) at the end of the rainbow (sandbox). The leprechaun left them clues which Mrs. Kay read as they listened and followed directions. Then, they completed a math graphing activity using Lucky Charms cereal.
Over one half of the books selected for read-alouds were placed in the classroom library for the children to read on their own. Big books, teacher-made books, and borrowed books were not placed in the classroom library.

Reading Activities

The library center was used twice during the class period. First, after the children finished their worksheet and journal writing, they were asked to choose a book from either a small set of teacher-selected books or from the library shelves. The independent reading time varied from one minute to fifteen minutes and did not occur every day. Some children seldom had time to select a book because they had not finished their worksheet and journal writing. Over the period of time I observed, more children had less time to read books. The worksheets became more difficult and children were required to write more in their journals. Thus, independent reading time became a filler for the children who had finished their work instead of a priority for all children in their schedule.

When I asked Mrs. Kay about the varied times she commented:

One of the dilemmas I have is addressing the different capabilities kids have. Some kids get through sooner than others. I think seatwork is important in that they learn to work on their own or cooperatively. Books are wonderful! I've learned that there aren't many books in their homes and there's a variety of books here. . . They can work at a comfortable speed at the table. They can pick out whatever book they want; they can sit wherever they
want. As long as they're whispering I'm not going to say anything.

Interestingly, during the early part of the study Mrs. Kay selected a limited number of books and placed them on the carpet for the children to choose. Often the books were related to the thematic study. When I asked Mrs. Kay to discuss her reason for doing this she explained:

Susan had difficulty with the children using her books because she had little library cards in pockets and she didn't want them to pull them out. It became so much trouble to stay after school each day and put the cards back in the books. I just decided to do it that way. Then she made noises about the kids putting the books exactly where they found them. I don't think our library is the neatest place. So, I look through the books and choose ones that go with our thematic unit. The books she had that fit with our theme I pull out and use. Also, I like to rotate books. There's always something new to look at. I rotate some books so they'll be fresh and the kids won't get tired of them.

The last few weeks of the study the two kindergarten teachers separated their books. At that point the children selected any book they wanted directly from the classroom library. Because there were fewer books from which to choose, their selections were still limited.

Second, during center time the library was used in varied ways. Sometimes, Mrs. Kay had the children listen to a tape, with or without a book, and do a follow-up activity. If they had time they could read books. On other occasions, children were assigned to use the flannelboard and felt figures to tell stories to each other. A timer was used to help them share turns. Other
times children were simply asked to read books of their choice during their center time.

Some of these library activities were teacher directed and limited children's reading choices, like listening to a story on a tape. Other activities were teacher-directed only to the extent that children were assigned a center and told what to do. For example, children had a choice of what kind of flannelboard stories they told and they had a choice about the books they read.

Writing Activities

Children had two opportunities to write during class. First, they engaged in whole group instruction. Mrs. Kay varied their task by engaging them in shared writing or in copying a letter and completing one or two sentences. Usually, the task included writing about either an assigned or a chosen topic in their journals. Generally, children were given the choice of a topic.

Each day the children were given directions on the newspaper. Occasionally, Mrs. Kay engaged the children in writing on a specific topic in which they constructed the text together, then the children copied it. At other times Mrs. Kay generated most of the text and children completed one or two sentences. Generally, though, the children were instructed to write either one or two lines in their journals. They were given both teacher-selected and child-selected assignments.

Second, children went to the writing center and were always assigned a task. The tasks varied from completing a
worksheet to writing a story about a painting they had completed at the art center. Topic choice at this center was totally teacher-directed.

**Case Study Summary: Mrs. Kay**

Mrs. Kay earned degrees in elementary education with an emphasis in fine arts and psychology and guidance. Her teaching experiences included five years in secondary and seven years in elementary schools. Six years of her elementary teaching were in kindergarten.

Mrs. Kay based her teaching on a combination of traditional readiness and emergent literacy practices and utilized thematic units to organize her curriculum. Noteworthy was the fact that two of her own personal interests emerged in her teaching, theater and languages.

Mrs. Kay utilized read-alouds in the classroom and they were centered around the thematic studies, specific lessons, and holidays. She read mainly fiction genre and a few poetry and nonfiction selections.

An examination of independent reading activities showed Mrs. Kay varied the times for children to read, generally from one to 15 minutes daily. Some of the time she selected a limited number of books for the children to read. Other times she permitted the children to select books directly from the classroom library which occurred mostly when there was less of a selection.
She conducted writing activities with the entire class writing at the same time and organized small groups during center time. She usually assigned journal writing four days a week with both teacher- and child-selected topic choice. Four days a week she assigned children in small groups to writing center and selected the topic.

An Interview: Mrs. Tinna, the Librarian

Read-Aloud Beliefs And Practices

I have included the librarian in this discussion because she participated in the read-aloud experiences with this group of children. Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, read one or two books to the children once a week. On several occasions the children did not have library for varied reasons or they watched a video on a big screen television. When I asked Mrs. Tinna how she selected the books she read for the kindergarten children, she replied, "I selected books that I used with my own children or ones I did not use in the first grade curriculum. Basically, I just look at a book and say, 'Oh, that's a good book.' She read many fiction books but no nonfiction books. She read several poetry books with nursery rhymes and expressed the belief that nursery rhymes were important. "I did a lot of nursery rhymes. I think it has a lot of patterning." Mrs. Tinna related that she would continue to focus on the genre of nursery rhymes for kindergarten children because she believed that's what they needed to hear.
In general, none of her selections were coordinated with the classroom teacher's thematic studies even though she seemed very willing to act as a resource person. When I asked her if she coordinated her plans with classroom teachers to implement thematic studies, she said, "Not in kindergarten. I don't have a specific curriculum. Teachers don't realize that we have so much to give."

Finally, I asked Mrs. Tinna if books were made available to the children after they had been read aloud. She stated that she read aloud the same books to all four kindergarten classes so obviously they were not made available to them until she was finished reading. She commented, "They are, but they may not be that day. They do choose the books teachers read."

The librarian provided read-aloud experiences for the kindergarten children once a week. Generally, she provided a less interactive style with the children than the classroom teacher provided. She did not interact with the classroom teacher in coordinating thematic instruction. Thus, her reading selections were based on her personal choice of primarily fiction and poetry (Appendix J).
CHAPTER V

Case Studies of Three Kindergarten Children

Three case studies of kindergarten children were presented here. The cases included brief biographical sketches, their text preferences, and a description of the relationship between the classroom literacy activities and the children's text preferences.

Case Study: Allan

Biographical Sketch

Allan was an active five-year-old child in Mrs. Kay's afternoon kindergarten class. He lived with his mother and sister in an apartment in an urban middle-income neighborhood. His grandmother babysat him while his mother worked as a porter at a local hotel.

Mrs. Kay recommended Allan for the study because she was confident he had a wide range of literacy experiences in his home. Mrs. Kay, in fact, stated that his mother often took him to the library to look at books because he was so inquisitive. My initial interview with Allan confirmed his teacher's observations.
Initial Interview

Allan stated that he had about 100 books of his own. Of those, he reported that both his mother and grandmother read *Whales* to him while his grandmother also had read a space book and *Bread And Jam For Frances* to him. When I asked him what different kinds of books he liked, he answered, "I like dinosaur books. I like octopus, tiger sharks, sperm whale." This extensive exposure to books and supportive home environment contributed to Allan learning to read at an early age.

He also had a vast store of knowledge about many subjects. The first time I interviewed Allan, he expressed some strong text interests. He stated, "I love books about bats. I like animals." He provided support for this statement by explaining that his favorite book at home is about bugs, bees, termites, and spiders, called *The Animal Home*.

To gain a broader understanding of his interests, I asked him if he collected things. He responded, "Yes, I collect bugs. They die theirself." These books and activities reflected a strong interest in science and animals. Even his favorite television program, *Care Bears*, reflected his interest in these fictitious animals.

His responses suggested he preferred informational books about animals rather than fictional stories about them. The books he chose to have read to him were mainly informational books.
Read-aloud Experiences

Allan's strong individual interests in science topics and animals often intersected with Mrs. Kay's read-aloud choices. Nine (25.7%) of her 35 read-alouds were about animals. Five of those nine books were science related. Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, also read aloud to the children. Of the 14 read-alouds, seven (50%) were about animals; none (0%) were science related.

Thematic Studies

Mrs. Kay used the majority of her read-alouds to develop thematic studies. Mrs. Kay's proficient use of discussion before, during and after reading to her children allowed them to share their knowledge and individual interests. One thematic study was about animals. When Mrs. Kay read a poem, Humphrey the Wrong Way Whale, Allan used his prior knowledge by commenting, "That's a sperm whale." On another day, Mrs. Kay read part of Bear's Bargain, a story about a bear and a bird, and developed a prediction chart with the children about what would happen. Allan predicted, "The bird might grow." Upon completing the story, Mrs. Kay remarked about Allan's prediction being close to what actually happened in the story.

Specific lessons

Mrs. Kay also used read-alouds over several days to develop specific lessons. When she read Rosie's Walk, a book about farm animals, Mrs. Kay asked the children if the frogs
were happy about the fox falling in the water. Allan gave an evaluative response. "They're scared," he said.

Following Mrs. Kay's reading of *Rosie's Walk*, I asked Allan to discuss the story with me. He looked at the pictures and gave me a description. Allan cited: "A fox. We call these chickens. It has apple trees and here's a chicken coop, a wheel, flowers, and a nest. Grass."

I then asked him what happened in the story? He said, "I'll read it and you'll find out." Anytime I asked Allan to retell a book he had read or heard read, he wanted to read it aloud to me which he did quite well. However, during this reading he made comments or responded to questions I asked him.


Allan really enjoyed the book and had considerable literacy skills to bring to this experience. He commented that it was a book he would choose to read. His comment about what he liked best about the book supported these feelings.

The fox gets all the bad things. I'll show you. (He showed me the picture of the bees stinging the fox.) That's the best part. I love it!
When we discussed whether this book had anything to do with what they were doing in class, Allan said no, but when I asked him if they were studying animals he agreed they were.

**Combination of thematic and specific lessons**

When the class studied fairy tales, Mrs. Kay presented several lessons about the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*. She asked children to discuss how the different versions were alike or different. Allan responded, "Different." He referred to the book she had read the previous day. Then, Mrs. Kay and the children discussed the setting. Upon being asked to decide if it took place in the city, the country, or a school, Allan replied, "In the country." They then looked through the book for pictures of trees to verify his comment.

On another day, when they had reread the *Little Red Hen*, Mrs. Kay asked if the little red hen was nice or mean. Allan stated, "She was being rude. She wouldn't have friends." Mrs. Kay asked what would have happened if she had shared. Other children responded while Allan remained very thoughtful.

During the read-aloud, when Mrs. Kay read *Peter and the Wolf*, she asked the children what could make it dangerous in the meadow. Allan replied, "Scorpions." He had heard a news story that scorpions were being brought to this area in pine trees. It was, in fact, the topic of a news story he was asked to write for class. His limited experience of living in a desert did not aid him in discriminating between a meadow and the desert.
After the read-aloud I asked Allan to tell me about the book. As he had on previous retellings, he insisted upon reading the book to me which he proceeded to do. I then asked him what the book was about. He succinctly replied, "It's about Peter tricking the big old wolf." He proceeded to tell me he had also seen the movie on the Disney channel. When I asked him if he would choose to read this book, he responded, "Sure!" He saw no connection of this book to anything they studied in class. However, as we talked about other fairy tales they had studied and the play they were practicing, he agreed it did have some relationship. While the thematic study involved fairy tales, all three books discussed were also about animals which served to enhance Allan's individual interest.

Reading Activities

Independent Reading

In spite of his excellent literacy knowledge, Allan's reading time was limited because he spent more time on his journal writing and doing his worksheet. When he did select a book, he actually read the book and spent more time with it than most children. He did not just look at the pictures, but actually perused the pictures and read the print. Thus, the quality of the time he spent reading was at a high level. While most of the time he read silently to himself, there were times when he read aloud to himself or another child. Of the times he selected books to read, he read a few more fiction than nonfiction books. Consistent with his preferences when I previously interviewed
him, Allan chose animal books 12 times and science books four times. A few times he read a book related to the thematic study and two times read a book Mrs. Kay had read aloud to the class. His text preferences definitely influenced his choice of books.

Children were allowed to check out books from the school library if they brought back the books they had checked out the previous week. Allan did not consistently take advantage of using the school library for reading material. Of the two books I observed him check out, one was fiction and one was nonfiction. One of those two books was about animals. Neither book was one the librarian had read aloud to his class.

Two books he chose to reread were *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *I Can Read About Reptiles*. Interestingly, both books were about animals and were science related. Six books contained a repeated pattern in its text like "You're not big enough." He chose two books that contained a format factor; they had a hole in each page while two other books had half pages that represented a door.

I asked Allan to choose three books he had read during the first month of the study to discuss with me. From those books I asked him to choose which one he wanted to talk about first, second, and third. He first chose *I Can Read About Reptiles*, a nonfiction book with a descriptive structure. He pointed to the cover and said, "That's Iggy. That was my iguana's name and he died. That's sad." When I asked him why he chose this book he said, "Lizards are in it. And I had a turtle once."
I read the book to Allan and, when I asked him to retell the book, he insisted upon reading it. He read a few lines with difficulty and I reiterated that he could just tell me about the book as if I hadn't heard it before. He said, "Guess what? I want to tell just what they eat." He went through the book page by page and explained it to me in great detail. Further, he added other information about "hiss ants" which wasn't in the book. The pictures aided him in reporting a sequential recounting of the text and his reading ability allowed him to read exact descriptions of the reptiles he was discussing. It was evident Allan made connections from his personal experiences, other books he had read, and this text.

When the class studied animals they pasted pictures on a chart which classified animals. Reptile was one of the classifications Mrs. Kay used on the chart.

The second book he chose to retell was How To Draw Cats and Kittens. His explanation for choosing this book related to his own experience with his cats. He said, "Because the kitten is cute and it's doing a funny thing. Taffy and Suki, they play with little egg tops from Easter. They're plastic."

After I read it to him, Allan was more willing this time to just tell me about the book. He told me what cats ate. He talked about the cat he owned and explained it had killed his lizard. Then he talked about eagles and their feathers, feet, and flying habits.

Allan obviously did not follow the organizational text of the book, nor did he talk about its content. His personal experiences
with his own cats were significant to him. A comment he made reminded him of eagles which he then discussed at length. Allan was very knowledgeable, yet did not stay focused on the current text. *How To Draw Cats and Kittens* gave extensive and explicit sequential directions for drawing many different kinds of cats. It was the kind of informational book I would use as a resource for learning about and drawing specific cats; it was not a book I would read entirely at one time. The book topic was also the topic of a thematic study, animals, one of Allan's individual interests.

Third, Allan chose a fiction book, *The Giving Tree*. When asked why he chose this book, he simply stated, "Because it gives." After he read the book to me, he retold the book:

> The tree would always never speak to a stranger. Trees really don't speak. The boy came to the tree and played. He collected her leaves. And he made crowns. He climbed her trunk and swung from her branches. And ate apples. Played hide and seek. When he was tired he laid under her shade in between her roots. And he gave her hugs. He loved the tree very much. Two people loved him. The little boy grew too much. He can't believe him. He came there to sell apples. He wanted a house. He wanted a boat. He grew too old. He sat down on the stump. The End.

The class studied plants extensively and trees in particular. They adopted trees on the playground and observed a pine tree in their classroom for a long period of time. They measured it periodically and recorded its growth in a big book they made together. They further listened to a book about the products of trees. They engaged in classroom activities and homework to identify items made from trees.
In addition to discussing the three books Allan had chosen from the first month of the study, during the third, fourth, and fifth months, I asked Allan to discuss a book he had read in the classroom. The first book he chose was *Who's Behind The Door At My House?* which he read to me. He then told me it was about a bear family and happened in a bear village far away. He said Bob had read it to him a long time ago and he read it just because he wanted to. He saw no relationship with this book to anything they were doing in class. This book, part of a set, was very popular. It had a patterned text and was very appealing to him.

The second book he chose was *Who's Behind The Door At My School?*. After reading it to me he told me what it was about.

Allan: There's fun things. It shows who's behind the door. Bears behind the door and animals behind the door. There's a mouse anytime. we see it.
Mrs. Johnson: What kind of doors are in this book? Is everybody behind the same door?
Allan: Well, there's EXIT and there's two kids and a teacher and a school dog and a library and a principal and a big brother.
Mrs. Johnson: Where were these people?
Allan: In a big place. I don't know. At school.

He said he read the book because he had not read it nor heard it. He did not think the book had anything to do with what they did in the classroom other than they attended school.

The third book Allan chose was *If You Give A Moose A Muffin*. He read the book and then summarized it by saying, "It's about a moose who eats jam with his muffin." He said he read
the book because it was funny and he had heard it before. He stated it had nothing to do with what they were doing in class.

The three books he chose were about animals and had a patterned text. The first two books had a format with half pages that represented a door which especially appealed to Allan.

**Library Center**

I observed Allan at the classroom library center on several occasions. One time when he was engaged in free reading, he chose *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, placed it on the floor, and lay on a pillow on his tummy. He talked to Jay, another child assigned to library center. He then became engrossed in the book and began reading the words aloud. He then studied the cocoon on the page for some time, sat up, finished reading the book and returned it to the shelf.

Two days previously Mrs. Kay read this same book aloud to the children. Also, a few weeks earlier, a child brought many caterpillars from a neighboring state for the children to observe. They were placed in containers on their tables where the children daily observed them going through various stages. Allan was very interested in understanding the process he was observing firsthand. After he returned the caterpillar book, he got *The Foolish Tortise* off the shelf, lay on his stomach again, and read silently until cleanup time.

On three occasions, I observed Allan sitting at the listening table with his group. (The listening table was in the library center.) His group was directed to listen to the tape,
Three Piggy Opera, and draw a picture of their favorite part. He listened to the tape and drew a picture of a wolf with long, long claws. He told me, "The wolf is trying to reach for the pigs. The pigs are in the closet."

The second time I observed Allan's group they listened to Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs and colored a picture as they listened. Allan began to color his picture when he noticed another child in his group coloring. He did not interact with the other children but played with his crayon as he continued to listen. When I asked him about his picture, he correctly identified the step-mother who was dressed as a peddler, the poison apples, and Snow White.

Third, Allan's group listened to Alice In Wonderland and looked at the book. Allan kept his place with the tape and the other two children asked him to show them the place. Without discussion, he showed them and returned to looking at his book. While he listened he sang along with the tape. He then correctly completed a worksheet as he listened to the directions on the tape. For example, one question asked them to draw a line around the picture of the food which changed Alice's height.

The three listening activities were related to the thematic study, fairy tales. Allan had not expressed an interest in fairy tales, yet one of them, Three Piggy Opera, was about animals, one of his strong individual interests.
Writing Activities

Whole Group Writing

One particular day early in the study, Mrs. Kay had emphasized the letter o and discussed an octopus. She then conducted a shared writing activity on the chalkboard with the children about the octopus. She asked the children to write their own sentence or copy one from the board. Allan used the sight words in the room and wrote his own sentence, "Volcano can octopus."

Allan was very aware of the other children in his group and often talked with them about his writing. He vacillated between concentrating on others and his own task. For example, children were given two sheets of paper to write a news story on one page and to illustrate it on the other. Allan watched Rusty, one of the children in his group, begin his story. Allan decided on a topic and began writing. He asked Mrs. Kay how to spell scorpion. Then Sandy, another child in his group, visited with him about a scorpion.

Allan: It is a bark scorpion. It is white and yellow and can kill people in thirty seconds.
Sandy: Does it go in the water?
Allan: No, it's everywhere.

Allan again asked Mrs. Kay how to spell scorpion. She told him she would write the story and he could draw the picture. Satisfied with her response he wrote, "A new! sqwrpib." Mrs.
Kay wrote as he dictated, "A new scorpion is in the world. The name of the scorpion is Bark Scorpion. Allan."

The quality of Allan's journal writing was superior to most of the other children's work. While some children had found a formula sentence that would work with any ending, like "I see a ____" or "I like a ____", Allan did not always rely on that format; writing was a meaning driven activity for him. He actually wrote stories and illustrated those stories in detail. For example, one day he wrote, "I am always worried about kittens." He had asked Mrs. Kay to write worried, kitten, and about at the top of his page so he could copy them. When I asked him why he wrote what he did, he explained they had kittens at home and he worried about them getting hurt.

Most of his journal entries reflected his personal experiences and individual interests and about half of them reflected classroom situational interests. For example, of entries reflecting individual interests he wrote, "My pet hrmit crab." and "I have pet dinosors." Another entry based on his personal experience was, "I have a train set." I learned that his train set was extremely important to Allan. In addition to the train set, he had a set of books and videos about trains.

The journal writing activities were meaningful to Allan, providing him a classroom opportunity to create text about his personal experiences, individual interests, and classroom
situational interests. When he had choice of topic, he was very thoughtful about integrating the requirements of the class assignment with his individual interests.

On three different occasions during this study, I asked Allan to choose a journal entry he would like to discuss with me. He chose the first entry and read: "My pet hermit crab. It has claws and it lives in the sea." We discussed why he wrote about a hermit crab.

Allan: (He pointed to the top of the page.) "This is a hermit crab."
Mrs. Johnson: Do you still have it?
Allan: I just wanted to write about it.
Mrs. Johnson: You don't really have one.
Allan: I can't have one.
Mrs. Johnson: Why?
Allan: My mommy says I can't have one.

The second entry he discussed was about kittens. He explained that he wrote about them because "they were cute and they mewed." He said all the black ones were named Jasmine and were at his grandpa's house.

These first two entries were topics Allan chose to write about and discuss. However, the third entry he chose to discuss was a topic Mrs. Kay assigned the children to write about. First, they discussed a storm that had occurred the previous evening and together the class generated a list of sight words for the children to use. Then children were asked to write two sentences about the storm. Allan wrote, "I see the thunder. I see the lightening." He said he wrote those sentences because he
had to write about the storm. He further elaborated about the storm, "I saw the rain fall on my apartment. A star was on the apartment and it went up and down shiny."

Generally, along with detailed drawings, Allan used inventive and conventional spelling when he wrote about topics from personal experiences and individual interests. However, when he wrote about classroom situational interests, he used mostly conventional spelling and occasionally used invented spelling and copied environmental print with his intricate drawings.

Writing Center

Children were usually assigned a topic at the writing center. Assignments varied; some I would not classify as writing activities. For example, children were assigned a worksheet of -rhyming words in which they cut and pasted the words that matched. On another rotation of centers, the children were assigned two letter games to use. Allan couldn't decide which game he wanted to use, so with the other two children in his group he matched beginning letters to pictures. Allan then played a spelling game. His card contained the words, shell, canoe, boat, crab, and spade which he correctly read except spade. Before clean up time, he placed the correct letters of the first two words on the card.

Early in the study, while the class was studying ocean animals, Allan's group was assigned to cut out a "happy fish" and write a story about the fish. They glued their fish together to
make a fish book. Allan's individual interest in animals motivated him to respond to the assignment to make a fish book and write a story about an ocean animal.

Case Study Summary: Allan

Allan, an energetic five-year-old kindergarten child, lived with his mother and sister in an apartment in an urban neighborhood. Allan's mother and grandmother supported his literacy development by reading to him and often took him to the library in response to his quest for knowledge. Allan's two strong individual interests, animals and science, were consistently reflected in interviews and in his topic choice of reading and writing activities.

Many of the read-aloud activities in the classroom and in the library were about fictional animals and only a few of them were science related. One thematic study and several specific lessons about animals were supported through the use of read-alouds. Allan's extensive prior knowledge allowed him to make valuable contributions to class discussions about the read-alouds and often responded with reflective remarks. Other read-alouds, which made use of thematic studies and specific lessons, further reflected animal topics in fairy tales. Allan maintained a high level of involvement in listening and discussing these stories. Weekly the librarian also read aloud to the children often about animals.

Reading activities included independent reading and library center. Often, Allan did not participate in independent
reading because he had not finished his worksheet and journal writing. When he did participate, more than one half of the books (53%) he selected were fiction and less than one half (47%) were nonfiction. Twelve were about animals and four were science related. He selected two books to check out from the class library, one fiction book about animals and one nonfiction concept book. Of three books he read during the first month of this study, Allan chose two nonfiction and three fiction books about animals and one fiction book about trees to discuss.

In the library center, I observed Allan participate in free reading once and at the listening center three times. Again, the books he chose to read were fiction books about animals; one of them was science related. The children were required to listen to and engage in followup activities about three fairy tales, part of the thematic study. One of those three fairy tales was about animals.

Writing activities involved whole group writing and writing centers. Children were assigned topics as well as given free choice for writing. Allan had ample opportunities to use his text preferences in his writing. He wrote about animals when he chose the topic and a science related topic when he was assigned the topic. Most of his journal entries reflected personal experiences and individual interests. Allan used invented spelling and conventional spelling along with drawings when he made these entries. About half of his journal entries reflected classroom situational interests in which he used conventional spelling and some environmental print with his drawings.
Allan's text genre preference of nonfiction text was not readily evident in the three literacy events, read-alouds, reading activities, and writing activities. However, his topic preferences were clearly evident in the three literacy events. Allan loved learning and obviously enjoyed events related to his literacy development. His opportunities to develop his individual interests and to consider new interests through the classroom experiences were greatly enhanced.

Case Study: Patty

Biographical Sketch

Six-year-old Patty, an only child, lived with both of her parents in an urban middle-income neighborhood. Her mother, part Hispanic and part Native American, worked as a secretary for a city agency; her father worked for airport security. Both parents were avidly interested in computers and shared this interest with Patty. She had the distinct advantage of having her own computer with a color monitor in her bedroom. She liked people and generally demanded to be the center of attention and sometimes had a difficult time sharing attention in a classroom setting.

Mrs. Kay believed Patty had a wide range of literacy experiences in her home and recommended Patty for the study. She stated that Patty had been attending preschools since she was two-years-old. During my initial interview with her it was obvious she had extensive preschool and home experiences with print.
Initial Interview

Patty stated that she had about 32 books in her room and her family had a library in their home. She reported her mother read a concept book, *What's There*, to her which she did not enjoy, and *Sleeping Beauty*, which she did find of interest. She also stated she liked her mother to read *Mother Goose* but they didn't have it in their home. When I asked her about her favorite book, she replied, "It's a man that has a funny poodle." When I asked her what different kinds of books she liked, she said, "I like *Lady and the Tramp*, *Little Mermaid*, and *Beauty and the Beast*." Through her self-report, Patty had broad experiences with print and had been read to on a regular basis.

Based on the interview questions, I asked her if she collected things and she responded, "Yes, seashells." However, she had no books about them. Further, her television interests included the Disney channel. She especially liked *Charlie Brown* and *Mighty Ducks*.

The books she discussed reflected a definite interest in commercialized versions of fairy tales which suggested her preferences had been influenced by movies and television. Lesser interests were reflected in animals and poetry. All of her choices reflected a stronger interest in fiction than in nonfiction print.
Classroom Literacy Activities

Read-aloud Experiences

Patty's strong interests in fairy tales intersected with Mrs. Kay's read-aloud choices; 13 (37.1%) of Mrs. Kay's 35 read-alouds were fairy tales. Patty's interest in animals also overlapped with nine (25.7%) of Mrs. Kay's read-aloud selections. Additionally, Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, read seven (50%) selections about animals. Patty also expressed an interest in Mother Goose which corresponded to Mrs. Tinna's belief that it was very important to read nursery rhymes to kindergarten children which she did on five (35.7%) occasions.

Thematic Studies

Mrs. Kay read The Very Hungry Caterpillar to the children when they were observing caterpillars change into moths. The children also made individual sequence books about the stages of a butterfly. While Mrs. Kay read the book the children began reciting the predictable part of the text with her as she read. They chanted, "...but he was still hungry." After reading the book Mrs. Kay asked the children to discuss the foods the caterpillar had eaten. Patty responded on two occasions. First she stated, "He ate beans." and then she said, "A watermelon."

When the class was studying several versions of the Three Billy Goats Gruff, Mrs. Kay asked the children to discuss how the books were alike or different. Patty stated, "The troll is ugly. It's the same. The troll is ugly in both books."
After reading the fairy tale, *The Little Mermaid*, Mrs. Kay asked the children how the book was different from the movie. Patty answered, "You didn't have to wait until fifteen." (She referred to the age the mermaids could go to the top of the water.) She also stated, "The sea witch in the cartoon isn't a mermaid." Her responses required her to critically think about details of both the movie and the book. She further gave an evaluative response after Mrs. Kay finished reading the book. She asked them if the book was happy or sad. Patty said, "Sad, because she dies."

After reading *Peter and the Wolf*, Patty discussed the book with me.

Mrs. Johnson: What was the book about?
Patty: It's about a kid and his grandpa. Can I tell about the characters?
Mrs. Johnson: Yes, you can tell anything you want to.
Patty: There's a kid, a duck, a bird, cat. Did I say the grandpa?
Mrs. Johnson: No
Mrs. Johnson: Okay. Do you want to tell anything else about this book?
Patty: No.

After Mrs. Kay read the book she engaged the children in a discussion about the characters. In the above discussion, Patty repeated what the class had done. She explained that she had not heard the book prior to when Mrs. Kay had read it to the class.

Interestingly, Patty said she would not choose to read this book because she didn't like the wolf. When I asked her what
she liked best she explained, "I liked the bird because she sings so beautiful." She saw no connection between Mrs. Kay's oral reading of Peter and the Wolf and their thematic study of fairy tales. However, when I asked her if they were studying fairy tales, Patty said, "There is a wolf."

Of the thematic lessons discussed, one was about animals and three were about fairy tales. These experiences gave Patty the opportunity to contribute to class discussions based on her prior knowledge and her individual interests.

**Specific Lessons**

Mrs. Kay asked the children to identify a problem in Rosie's Walk. Patty responded, "The bag of flour fell on him." (She referred to the fox in the story.) I noted Patty became very involved in this story. It was fun for all the children and corresponded with one of Patty's interests, animals.

After reading Rosie's Walk, I asked Patty to discuss the story with me. In response to being asked what the book was about, she hesitated. Then asked, "What happened to the fox?" She began looking at the pictures and replied:

The fox goes after Rosie and gets hit by a rake and then she goes by a pond. Then he fell in the pond. She goes over a pack of hay and the fox goes in the hay. She goes on the sugar and he goes through it. And it goes on him. Rosie goes where the honeysuckles are and he goes on a wagon and he goes down on a beehive and they chase him all around. Then she gets home safely. The End.
Patty said she had heard the book "tons" of times. When I asked her how many times tons is, she said, "Five." She seemed to enjoy the book and said she would choose to read the book. She commented that the part of the book she liked best was the fox getting chased. When we discussed whether Rosie's Walk had anything to do with what they were doing in class, Patty said no. When I asked her if they were studying animals, she said, "I don't know." Patty was not able to make implicit connections between activities and the theme they were studying in class.

Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, read nursery rhymes several times to the children. Part of the time she asked them to choose which ones they would like to hear. Patty replied, "The one with the little boy and the candle." Even though she did not know the name of the nursery rhyme was Jack Be Nimble, she could describe it.

The specific lessons again corresponded with Patty's individual interests of animals and nursery rhymes. These lessons served to heighten Patty's interest in her classroom literacy experiences.

**Combination of Thematic And Specific Lessons**

Before reading another fairy tale, The Little Red Hen, Mrs. Kay asked the children to close their eyes and think about what they saw in the pictures. Patty said, "The little red hen's friends ate bread together." She did not seem to know the story since her response was opposite of what actually happened in the story.
Reading Activities

Independent Reading

Patty did not always finish her journal writing and worksheet and have time to read books. Some days, when she did have reading time, she had difficulty settling down to the task. Rather, she chose to walk around the room to see what other children were doing. On days when she became interested in reading books, she read by herself or interacted with other children, usually Sandy.

Of the times Patty selected books, she mostly read fiction books and a few nonfiction and poetry books. Twelve of her selections were about animals and two were about nursery rhymes. Her major preference, fairy tales, was reflected in her book choices.

Four of her choices were books Mrs. Kay had read aloud to the children. Two had repeated patterns in the text, and two had a format factor, such as a hole in the page or a page halved to represent a door. However, Patty selected books about plants, animals, and Asia, thematic topics which enhanced Patty's interest in classroom situational interests.

I observed Patty check out five books from the school library. Two of those were fairy tales and one an animal selection. Four were fiction and one was nonfiction.

I asked Patty to choose three books she had read during the first month of the study to talk about with me. From those books, I asked her to choose which one she wanted to talk about first, second, and third. She first chose a fiction book, The Little
Kitten. When I began reading it, she attempted to read. She encountered difficulty with the book and asked me to read. She told me about the book as she used the pictures to assist her.

Jennie had the little kitten. She looked for a little place they can live in. And the straw was in the barn. Jennie made a little cozy thing for the kitten. The first one peeked out was the first one to hop out. He looked out and whoop, he fell out. Jennie got him. Then Jennie's mother said, "You can keep one." She wanted the littlest one and she named him Pickle. The cat was too big. The kitten drinks his milk and he puts his paw in it. No more messes. Then he dumped over. Then whoop. He knocked over the flour and he was white. Then Jennie got him some catnip. He was licking it, smelling it, pawing it, biting it. Then he was too tired and he slept real good. Then she had an idea. She put on balloons so she could see him.

The fiction book was about an animal. However, Patty said this was a true book because there were real kittens. She believed it was real because the illustrations were photographs.

The second book Patty chose was Who's Behind The Door At My House? Even though this book was fiction, she thought it was true because there was "so much about a stranger." After I read it to her she used the pictures as prompts to discuss the story. She also asked questions related to specific print.

Patty: Someone in there. It's my dad. It's a train set. It's the train set he gave me for my birthday. Someone is in the shower. Someone may be baby sister chewing on soap. Yukk! It's just my dog. He's watching TV. Someone's in my shop guarding. I hear z-z-z-z. It's just my Uncle Arthur. He came over and borrowed the lawnmower this afternoon. He's asleep. Someone's in the kitchen. CRASH! It's just my cat. What's his name?

Mrs. Johnson: Flash.
Patty: It's just my cat, Flash. Someone is in the laundry room. What does that say?
Mrs. Johnson: Splash, whoosh, hiss!
Patty: Splash, whoosh, hiss! It's just Mom washing and ironing.

As she retold the text she used a repeated pattern most of the time. During this time the class studied animals as one of their thematic units.

The third book Patty selected was a nonfiction book with a cause and effect structure, Discovering Earthquakes and Volcanoes. When I asked her why she chose the book she explained, "Because it looks like there is a picture of people and they are taking a bath. And they are naked." She first stated it was make-believe but changed her mind and then said it was true. She thought it was true because a long time ago there used to be a volcano but there were no volcanoes today. After I read the book to her, she began looking at the pictures as she said:

Patty: I remember lava came out and it smelled like gas. And it killed everything. I remember when the rocks crash together the earthquake spreads apart. Can I skip this page?
Mrs. Johnson: Yes.
Patty: Steam comes out and gas comes out.
Mrs. Johnson: What does it come out of?
Patty: The volcano.
Mrs. Johnson: Yes.
Patty: Even under water there's volcanoes.
Mrs. Johnson: What's happening here?
Patty: There's big waves.
Mrs. Johnson: That's right.
Patty: And the earth.
Patty had a general understanding of volcanoes. Her retelling became more of an interactive activity to enable Patty to sustain her discussion. While this nonfiction book seemed an unlikely choice, the class had been studying Japan as part of a thematic unit about Asia. Mrs. Kay had shown children pictures of a volcano in Japan and the class had discussed volcanoes.

In addition to discussing the three books referenced above, once a month during the third, fourth, and fifth months, I asked Patty to discuss with me a book she had read in the classroom. The first book she chose was *Who's Behind The Door At My School?* I read the book to her and asked her to tell me what it was about. She explained, "It's about all the people at the school. I don't know about it." I encouraged her to use the pictures to aid her retelling. Even though it was obvious she understood the book had a repeated pattern from a previous retelling of a book in the set, she focused on the sounds in this book and did not repeat a pattern. Further, she identified four characters in the book and gave expanded information about two of them. She said she chose the book because she liked it and had not heard it before. She did not see any connection between this book about school and her school experience.

The second book was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. I read the book to Patty and she then used the pictures to give an extensive retelling and seemed to step into the role of Snow White as she used first person to respond to the queen. When it came to the passage in the book that repeats, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall. . ." Patty asked me to read it again and then she read it.
She decided the dwarfs looked for gold so they could put her name in gold on the coffin. She also incorporated the dog into the story and ended the retelling with, "Then her and the prince got married and the dog stayed with her." She said she read the book because she liked it. She also stated that she had not heard the story before but had seen the movie. She saw no connection between the book and what the class was studying even though the class was studying fairy tales.

The third book Patty chose was Sleeping Beauty, another fairy tale, which was a strong preference of hers. I read the story to her and she used the pictures to give an elaborate retelling. She intermittently asked questions to clarify details such as the length of time she slept. She ended this fairy tale with "... and they lived happily ever after."

Patty told me she had not heard the book but had seen the movie. Once again she read the book because she liked it. Even though her class was practicing three days a week for a play, Three Piggy Opera, she did not think they were doing anything in class related to Sleeping Beauty. When I asked her if the play was like a fairy tale she answered, "That's not a fairy tale."

Of the three books Patty chose, two were fairy tales. Because the last thematic unit was fairy tales, it strongly fit her individual interests.

Library Center

I observed Patty at the classroom library center on several occasions. With her assigned group, she listened to Three Piggy
**Opera.** They were instructed to draw and color their favorite part of the play. They had been singing it in class so they were familiar with the songs. She drew her picture and colored it as she sang. Upon completing the picture she talked with me about it. "This is a pig, the third pig. That's the sun."

On another occasion, her group was assigned to listen to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.* She immediately began to color a picture of Snow White and the queen dressed as a peddler. She colored the apples in two parts to indicate the poison portion. She did not interact with the other children but made a comment to Mrs. Kay about the picture. When she finished coloring, she leaned back and rocked as she listened. She correctly identified the queen, the apples and Snow White.

On a third occasion, Patty's group listened to *Alice In Wonderland.* The children each had a book and she and Rusty interacted with each other to find the correct place in the book. Allan showed them the place. Patty sat on the table and listened to the book; she frequently moved around while listening and looking at the book. She listened to the directions on the tape and correctly followed the directions about the story.

All three of these stories were fairy tales, Patty's strong preference. She had the opportunity to develop this preference in the classroom setting.
Writing Activities

Whole Group Writing

Early in the Spring, Patty drew pictures and sometimes wrote a word for her journal entries. When she talked with me about them, one half of her entries reflected personal experiences and individual interests and seemed to be meaning-driven activities. Additionally, one half of her entries reflected classroom situational interests. For example, Patty copied words from the sight word chart that were not sentences, but she explained to me what she wanted to write. For example, she wrote, "like, see, butterfly, help." She said, "I wanted it to say, 'I helped the butterfly." Mrs. Kay had read The Very Hungry Caterpillar to the class and they were observing caterpillars change into moths in the classroom. When the moths emerged from the cocoons, the children took them outside and let them fly away. She later wrote, "I like to bite rice." which is how she read the entry. At the time the children were studying Asia. Mrs. Kay posted sight words they had generated from discussions in the room.

Two of Patty's later entries reflected personal experiences not related to school experiences. She wrote, "I had fun fishing." and "Today I am going to the carnal." She read both sentences to me. She had gone fishing with her parents during track break and planned to go to the carnival with them.
On three occasions, I asked Patty to choose a journal entry to discuss with me. She read, "I had fun. I runned. I went to Leaps and Bounds." We had a lengthy discussion about Leaps and Bounds because I had never been there. She explained going there was something that really happened and she wrote it because she was allowed to choose what to write in her journal.

"I had fun. I went fishing. I had fun fishing." was the second journal entry Patty discussed with me. She explained she was going fishing with her parents on Saturday to the mountains where it was cold and there was a stream. She explained she wrote it as a story but it really could happen.

The final entry Patty discussed was, "I like my mom. I see a hen." She said she thought it would be neat writing something different. She elaborated by explaining that when she told her mom, "I love you," her mom asked her what she wanted. What she wanted was a Lion King lunchbox for first grade and would be able to buy it if she put her allowance in the piggy bank. She explained she wrote about the hen because they kept some at school and she was allowed to go see them sometimes. We also discussed about the time Mrs. Kay had read The Little Red Hen to the class. She explained these entries were about things that really did happen. Her entries reflected personal experiences, individual interests, and classroom situational interests.

Generally, Patty's purpose in writing was to convey meaning. She used the opportunity of topic choice to write about experiences in her home and school life. It was obvious that she had many varied experiences outside of school and lived in a
stimulating environment. However, her preference for fairy tales was barely reflected in her writing while her interest in animals was.

Patty used mainly invented spelling when she wrote about personal experiences. She used mostly environmental print and some invented and conventional spelling when she wrote about individual interests. However, when she wrote about topics related to classroom situational interests, she mainly used the environmental print in the room.

**Writing Center**

Early in the study Patty was assigned to write a picture story using rubber stamps. Patty dictated her story to me.

Once upon a time there was a bunny and he hopped again and again until he got better. Then a question came to him. The bunny wanted to go see the dolphin. Then he wanted to go see the tiger, the tiger show. And then he wanted to go see the lobster show. And then he wanted to go to the bird show. Then he wanted to go to the bird show. Then he wanted to go see the fish show, jump up and down. Then he wanted to go see the lion, he wanted to see the crab. Then he wanted to go see the zebra. Then he wanted to go home and rest all day and all night. He had a busy time. "I'm tired," he said.

At first glance, Patty's paper appeared to just be stamped pictures of animals. When she translated its meaning into words there was a definite story structure.
Case Study Summary: Patty

Patty, a creative and energetic 5-year-old kindergarten child, lived with her parents in an urban neighborhood. She had a wide range of home and school experiences and was afforded the opportunity to become computer literate with two parents as tutors and her own computer. Her parents supported her literacy development by reading to her and providing many interesting experiences.

Patty had one strong individual interest, fairy tales, which was reflected in her interviews and her independent reading experiences. However, her fairy tale preference was not supported as much in her writing activities while her interest in animals was.

Many of the read-aloud activities in the classroom and the library were about fairy tales, a thematic study. Patty's intense interest allowed her to expand her understanding of this particular genre. Also, many of the read-alouds were about animals, another thematic study, which was an additional interest Patty expressed. Her interest in animals provided an opportunity for her to make contributions to class discussions. Specific lessons about animals were also used during read-alouds. The librarian also read books about animals and several times had lessons about nursery rhymes. These activities enabled Patty to maintain a high level of involvement in the classroom.

Reading activities included independent reading and the library center. Occasionally, Patty did not spend time reading
books because she was engaged in journal writing and worksheets. At other times she paid attention to other children instead of to the books. The books she read by herself or with a friend were mostly fiction. A few books were nonfiction and poetry. Eight books were about animals and two were poetry. Most of the books she chose were related to the themes being studied during that month, animals, plants, and Asia. Of the five books I observed her check out of the school library, four were fiction and one was nonfiction. Two were about fairy tales and one was about animals. Of three books she read during the first month of this study, Patty chose two fiction books about animals and one nonfiction book to retell.

Patty was asked to discuss three books she had read during the last three months of the study. Of the three books she chose, two were fairy tales, her preferred topic choice. Because the last thematic unit was fairy tales, it strongly fit her preference.

In the library center, I observed Patty participating in listening activities on three occasions. All three of these stories were fairy tales. She had the opportunity to expand her understanding of this preference in the classroom setting.

Writing activities involved whole group writing and writing centers. Children were both assigned topics and given free choice for writing. Children were usually allowed topic choice in their journal writing. During my observations, Patty progressed from drawing pictures and writing words to writing multiple sentence stories. Her journal entries were related to her
personal experiences, individual interests, and classroom situational interests.

Patty used mainly invented spelling when she wrote about personal experiences. She used mostly environmental print and some invented and conventional spelling when she wrote about individual interests. However, when she wrote about topics related to classroom situational interests, she often used the environmental print in the room.

Children were assigned topics or activities when they went to the writing center. One particular activity was writing a picture story with rubber stamps. Patty related a story about it that contained a definite story structure and reflected her individual interest in animals.

Patty's text preference for fairy tales was evident in two literacy events, read-alouds and reading activities. Individual interests in animals and nursery rhymes were also reflected in all three literacy events.

Case Study: Barbara

Biographical Sketch

Six-year-old Barbara lived in an urban middle-income neighborhood with her baby brother and mother, a supervisor at a local medical center. According to Mrs. Kay, since her baby brother's birth, Barbara had displayed behaviors of baby talk and helplessness. In addition, she did not initially display many of the self-help skills expected of kindergarten children when she entered school such as going to the bathroom by herself.
Throughout the study, I observed Mrs. Kay repeatedly discuss with Barbara the procedure for disposing of a completed assignment. Regardless, she often took a completed paper to Mrs. Kay instead of placing it in the assigned basket.

Barbara was initially shy and Mrs. Kay reported that she was unable to sing in front of a group when they presented their Christmas program. I observed, however, that at the end of the school year she appeared to enjoy performing in Three Piggy Opera. She had also previously been very uncomfortable sharing a Show and Tell item and participating in the take-home journal activity with the class. These experiences seemed to become easier for her the last month of school. While she was more comfortable in these situations, her ease in communicating was not.

Mrs. Kay recommended Barbara for the study because she believed that Barbara had not had extensive literacy experiences. She supported this belief by citing the lack of parental support for Barbara's homework assignments. For example, children were asked to read little books at home to their parents and return them the next day. While the majority of children had read a set of 50 books and part of another set, Barbara had read only six books. Also, during their track break they were assigned journal writing which they were to turn in when they returned to school. Barbara did not return her journal and told me she didn't do it.
Initial Interview

Barbara stated she had many books at home but was unsure of the exact number. She reported her mother read "dance books" to her. When I asked her what different kinds of books she liked, she said, "Make things books, shape books, little chicky books." She could not give me the names of these books. However, she reported her favorite book was Cinderella.

Using the interview question, I asked if she collected things. She replied, "Trolls." When I asked her how many she had, she replied, "Ten." However, she responded that she did not have any books about trolls. Her choice of television programs included the Disney channel, cartoons, and movies. Her stated interests were diverse. They reflected interests in fairy tales, crafts, animals, fine arts, and concepts. Her interests reflected a minor influence of movies and television and indicated choices of both fiction and nonfiction books.

Classroom Literacy Activities

Read-aloud Experiences

Two of Barbara's diverse interests intersected with Mrs. Kay's read-alouds. Mrs. Kay read 13 (37.1%) fairy tale and nine (25.7%) animal selections. Also, Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, read seven (50%) animal books. Some of Barbara's interests were unique and did not fit with the thematic studies or lessons the teachers presented.
Thematic Studies

During a thematic study, Mrs. Kay developed a class book about a pine tree the children observed over a period of time. Mrs. Kay recorded the children's dictation in the book. The children focused on the bark and discussed it. Barbara described the tree by stating, "It has branches."

In another instance, Mrs. Kay read several versions of Three Billy Goats Gruff to the children. After Mrs. Kay read one version of Three Billy Goats Gruff, she asked Barbara where the story happened. Barbara replied, "In the country." This thematic study fit with both animal and fairy tale interests Barbara had expressed.

Specific Lessons

Before Mrs. Kay read Rosie's Walk she asked the children to make predictions about the story. She specifically asked Barbara where she supposed the story took place. Barbara answered, "Near a barn." Because Barbara never raised her hand and volunteered information, Mrs. Kay occasionally called on her directly to elicit her participation in discussions.

After reading Rosie's Walk, I asked Barbara to discuss what the book was about. She looked at the pictures.

Barbara: The fox gets hurt.
Mrs. Johnson: How does he get hurt?
Barbara: I don't know. He's gonna chase Rosie. He gets hit by the rake. He gets hit on the nose.
Mrs. Johnson: So, that's how he got hurt?
Barbara: Uh-huh. He's chasing him again.
Mrs. Johnson: And then what happened?
Barbara: He fell into the water. She's walking away. He fell inside. He fell into the sugar. Then he got into the wagon. Then he ran into the bees. Now the bees chase him. Now she's home.
Mrs. Johnson: What happened to the fox?
Barbara: He got hurt.
Mrs. Johnson: How did he get hurt?
Barbara: Because he's falling down.

Barbara needed prompting to relate what she knew about the story. She inaccurately concluded the fox got hurt because he fell down rather than because he was stung by the bees. However, she did say that the part of the book she liked best was the bees. Barbara seemed uncomfortable with the fox getting hurt. That impression was confirmed when I asked her if she would choose to read *Rosie's Walk*. She said, "No, I didn't like the book very much." When we discussed whether this book had anything to do with what they were doing in class, Barbara shrugged her shoulders. However, when I asked her if they studied animals, she said yes.

The fairy tale and the animal book responded to Barbara's individual interests. Yet, it was interesting to note that this particular book about animals was not one she would choose to read independently.

**Combination of Thematic and Specific Lessons**

When the class was studying fairy tales, Mrs. Kay reread *The Little Red Hen*. The children read along with her when the text was repeated. After reading the book, Mrs. Kay asked them to explain what the story was about. Barbara commented, "She planted the wheat." The thematic study of fairy tales was
further used to develop specific lessons. Mrs. Kay developed prediction charts with the children from the pictures. She read the book for several purposes and led the children to evaluate the actions of the characters. Mrs. Kay did not elicit a response from Barbara nor did Barbara choose to contribute to the discussion.

Reading Activities

Independent Reading

Barbara was often the first child finished with her journal writing and worksheet. Thus, she had more time than most children to choose books to read. She did not, however, always use that time to look at books. Some days she was very restless and wandered around the room or flipped through several books. Other days she went over to see if Cindy, her friend, was finished with her work. On other days, she selected a book and sat with her back to the children and looked at it for some time. When Cindy joined Barbara on the carpet, they read together in a parallel manner; other times they read the same book and talked about it.

Barbara's selections included primarily fiction and a few nonfiction poetry books. There was some correspondence between her preferences when I interviewed her and the books she chose to read. She chose animal books 16 times, an art book one time, and concept books three times. She also chose fairy tales eight times. In addition to the fairy tales, other thematic
books she selected were about plants and animals. Books she chose to reread included three about animals and two fairy tales.

The children were given opportunities to check out books from the school library once a week. Of the three books I observed Barbara check out, one was nonfiction and two were fiction. Again, her individual interests were reflected in her selections as one was a concept book and one an animal book.

Barbara chose four books Mrs. Kay had read aloud. Also, she chose three books with repeated patterns in the text and seven books with a format factor. For example, one day when she chose *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, she commented to me that she liked the part where the caterpillar ate and showed me the holes in the page.

Of the books the children had read in the classroom during that month, I asked Barbara to choose three of them to discuss with me. I then asked her to choose one of the three books to discuss first. She first chose one of the fiction books she had reread, *The Little Kitten*. She indicated to me that she had the book at home but no one had read it to her. After I read the book aloud, I engaged her in a discussion to elicit a retelling from her. She needed many prompts and needed to use the pictures to relate the story.

*Mrs. Johnson:* Tell me about this book like I hadn't heard it before.
*Barbara:* The little kitten.
*Mrs. Johnson:* What happens first.
*Barbara:* I can't remember.
*Mrs. Johnson:* Look at the pictures.
Barbara: She's gonna find somewhere to put her babies.
Mrs. Johnson: Yes, that's important. Okay, what's going to happen?
Barbara: She had six babies.
Mrs. Johnson: That's a lot, isn't it? Who's this guy?
Barbara: A kitten. He's curious.
Mrs. Johnson: What does that mean?
Barbara: He wants to look around.
Mrs. Johnson: Yeah, he wants to know what's going on.
And then what happened?
Barbara: She picked him up.
Mrs. Johnson: Okay.
Barbara: Then he fell asleep and woke up. Then . . .
Mrs. Johnson: Then what happened? Do you know what this stuff is?
Barbara: What?
Mrs. Johnson: It's flour.
Barbara: Flour. And then she gave him a little toy. Then she put him in a pot. Then he wandered off.
Mrs. Johnson: What did he see?
Barbara: A turtle. Then he saw a caterpillar. Then he got stuck and she picked him up.
Mrs. Johnson: She got him out of being stuck, didn't she?
Barbara: He climbed a tree.
Mrs. Johnson: Then what happened?
Barbara: He couldn't get down. So she helped him down. Then she brought her to a birthday party. Then he wandered into a doghouse.
Mrs. Johnson: And what happened?
Barbara: He got tied to a balloon.
Mrs. Johnson: Why did he get tied to a balloon?
Barbara: Because she didn't want him to wander off.

Barbara was highly interested in this book and appeared to feel a strong sense of ownership in it. She later told me about her own cats at home and this personal experience, along with her expressed text interest in animals, enhanced this literacy experience for her.
The next book she chose to discuss was a poem about animals, One Green Frog. She also chose this book to read on several occasions when they had free reading time. She discussed this book without the interactive prompts from me but still used the pictures to guide her discussion.


Despite her short choppy responses she expressed considerable detail and obviously enjoyed the book. In addition to being a book about animals, it had a high-interest format factor. Each page contained a hole which was the eye of the frog; Barbara seemed to really enjoy this factor. The book also developed number concepts, which she clearly noticed.

The third book she retold was also a poem, Today Is Monday. This concept book had more than one theme: food, days of the week, and animals. Barbara focused on two of those themes, food and animals. Concepts and animals definitely reflected her individual interests. When I asked her the interview question, "What kind of book is this?", she said it was a food book. As before, she used the pictures to guide her discussion.

The snake is bringing the steak and the elephant is eating zupp. They are eating tape or something. They are eating fish. The _____ is eating chicken. The monkey is eating ice
cream. The birdie is yelling ow! Everybody can eat the food. There's a song.

All three books had animals as a topic. One of the three books was a fiction story while the other two books were poetry.

In addition to discussing the three books referenced above, once a month during the third, fourth, and fifth months, I asked Barbara to discuss a book she had read in the classroom. The first one she chose was Who's Behind The Door At My School? She told me no one had ever read it to her but she read it herself. I engaged in an interactive discussion to glean from her what the book was about. She looked at the pictures and gave short descriptive responses identifying who was in the book and sometimes what they did. She saw no connection between the book and what she did at school, yet the book was about school.

When we discussed the second book, Beauty And The Beast, Barbara gave a short response: "It's about Beauty and the Beast. Her father tells her to go to him. If he doesn't bring her to him, he's going to kill the man." I asked if the beast killed her father and she responded, "No." She stated she couldn't remember anything else. She told me she had never heard the book before, but she had seen the movie. She saw no connection between reading the book and studying fairy tales in class.

The third book Barbara selected was The Grouchy Ladybug, a fiction book about animals. We engaged in an interactive discussion about the book. She was especially interested in the time on the clock on each page. She also detected how the ladybug looked smaller on each page. She stated that she read
the book because she liked it. Unlike her other two selections, she had heard Mrs. Kay read it to the class.

**Library Center**

I observed Barbara on several occasions in the library center. During the first observation, she and two boys were assigned by Mrs. Kay to use flannelboard materials which consisted of farm animals, buildings, and equipment. They took turns sharing the materials and talked about the animals that matched, such as the horse and colt. This experience coincided with one of Barbara's interests, animals.

On another occasion, with the same two boys, Barbara listened to a tape about sounds and marked the object that made the sound on a bingo card. For example, when a bell rang the children placed a marker on a picture of a bell. When the tape was finished, Barbara selected *Who's Behind The Door At My School?* She had about one minute to look at the book before clean up time.

On a third occasion, Barbara's group was assigned to listen to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* as they colored a picture of Snow White and the queen dressed as a peddler. There was almost no interaction among the children as they listened and colored. Barbara tapped her headphone as if keeping time to the music. When I asked Barbara to tell me about her picture, she didn't know who the peddler was and she didn't know where Snow White got her apple. However, she did identify Snow White.
These classroom activities provided an opportunity for Barbara to expand her individual interests of animals and fairy tales. The flannelboard activity gave her an opportunity to explore farm animals and one listening activity gave her an opportunity to learn about a fairy tale with which she was not familiar. As indicated from her discussion with me, she had little understanding of that particular fairy tale.

Writing Activities

Whole Group Writing

Early in the study Barbara had her choice of topic and was instructed to write one line in her journal. She wrote, "I see a HOiRTo." When I asked her to read it to me, she read, "I see a hat." A few days later she wrote, "I see a cipeir." She read to me, "I see a cat." Many times she used the pattern, "I see a ___." and added a word she copied from the sight word chart. She read the three words but frequently could not read the last word to me. Barbara relied heavily on environmental print when she wrote about classroom situational interests. Of her 43 entries, 37 reflected classroom situational interests even though most of the time she was given the opportunity to choose her own topic.

Insert Table 5 here

When the children wrote news stories in May, Barbara drew a picture of a sun, two clouds, a house, a girl, and a cat. She wrote, "aHoSYosoNFdR, CoRSaXoDit." I asked her to read her
story to me. She responded, "A cat got lost and hurt. A kid got lost and the parents found him." She was very involved in the activity and it seemed to be a meaning driven activity for Barbara. On the six occasions when the topic reflected personal experiences, Barbara used invented spelling and environmental print three times each. Barbara's individual interests were also reflected in her journal entries. She used mostly environmental print and some conventional spelling and drawing in these entries.

On three occasions I asked Barbara to select a journal entry to discuss with me. First, she chose the word, butterfly. Mrs. Kay had directed the children to write one line in their journals. When I asked Barbara what she wrote, she said, "Animals." She did not recognize the word she had written. When I asked her why she had written that response, she said that she wrote a story because she felt like it. She did not, however, verbalize any connection between her writing and what the class was studying. Mrs. Kay had read The Very Hungry Caterpillar, they had made a book about butterflies, and they had observed caterpillars change into moths.

The second journal entry Barbara chose to discuss was "I see a bridge." Mrs. Kay had encouraged the children to write sentences about stories and to use sight words. When I asked her why she wrote what she did she said, "I wanted to." I then tried to determine why she wrote that sentence. When I asked her if a bridge was in the story, Three Billy Goats Gruff, she agreed there was. I asked her if she copied the word from the
sight word chart and she said, "Yeah." She further agreed that she wrote the sentence when they studied the Three Billy Goats Gruff.

"I see a red snowman." was the final journal entry we discussed. She laughed and said she made up the sentence because she wanted to. She said she copied snowman from the sight word chart. The other words she already knew how to spell. She also wrote, "I see a cat." She said she wrote that because she has cats. She elaborated by explaining her cat's name was Amos and was a boy. She said her other cat's name was YoYo and was a girl. She continued by talking about her dog and dwarf rabbits.

The journal entries she chose to discuss reflected her individual interests. Two entries were about animals and one was about a fairy tale.

Writing Center

I observed Barbara's group when they were asked to write a story about an art picture they had painted the previous week. Very intent upon her work, Barbara began writing. She looked at the chart of sight words at the writing center. Using a print set, she stamped a turtle, an elephant, a whale, a duck, letters N, H, R, L, F, S, and a question mark on her paper. She copied the words starfish, bat, butterfly, and teeth from the sight word chart. When I asked her to read her story for me, she read the letters, read star for starfish, and teeth. She shrugged her shoulders instead of reading the other words. She explained that
her art picture was a star. I saw little relationship between her intent and what she actually wrote with the exception of saying star.

At a later date, Barbara made a May Day book and wrote a story in the book. She wrote, "Alecia, zebraEts, Figenses, deer, flowers R, and big." When I asked her to read her story she read, "Alecia, zebra, I don't know, tiger." She shrugged her shoulders for the last three words. She copied words from the sight word chart at the writing center.

On another day, the children in Barbara's group were instructed to choose a picture from a box on the table and write a story about it. Barbara chose a baby, glued it on, and used three crayola markers to write. Mrs. Kay asked her to read it and then asked her to write more. She played with some unifix cubes in the desk. Then she read what she had written and began writing again. She then showed the paper to Mrs. Kay; she returned to her seat and began writing again. She wrote, "I see a cat. I see a dog. I see a bad. I see a canx. I see a drb." She also drew a picture of a girl sitting in a chair and a ball. When I asked her to read her story, she read, "I see a cat. I see a dog. I see a baby. I see a can. I see a bird." Barbara had a 2-month-old baby brother at home and Mrs. Kay encouraged Barbara to write about him. Instead, Barbara responded by copying sight words and repeating a sentence pattern she had found successful in her journal writing.
Case Study Summary: Barbara

Barbara, a shy 6-year-old kindergarten child, lived with her mother and baby brother in an urban neighborhood. She relied on adults for direction and was uncomfortable being the center of attention. It did not appear that she received much support in her literacy development at home; writing and reading activities assigned as homework were seldom completed.

Barbara had diverse interests with no strong preference for any particular genre or topic. She displayed some interests in both fiction and nonfiction text and in topics of fairy tales, animals, concepts, crafts, and fine arts.

Many of the read-aloud activities in the classroom were about animals and fairy tales which supported those interests. One thematic study was about animals and was supported through the use of read-alouds. Barbara participated only to the extent Mrs. Kay specifically asked her questions during class discussions. Specific lessons about animals were also used during read-alouds. Barbara again did not volunteer information nor contribute to discussions unless called upon. The librarian read aloud to the children weekly and many of her read-alouds were also about animals.

Reading activities included independent reading and library center. Barbara chose mostly fiction and a few nonfiction books and poetry books during the study. She chose animal books 16 times, an art book one time, and concept books four times.
In the library center, I observed Barbara participate in a flannelboard activity using farm animals and one listening activity about a fairy tale. These activities responded to her individual interests.

Writing activities involved whole group writing and writing centers. Children were assigned topics and given free choice for writing. The majority of Barbara's journal entries reflected classroom situational interests in which she copied environmental print to complete the assignment. Her entries and responses reflected some attempt at creative writing and ownership and individual interests were reflected in her journal writing. These entries were completed by using mostly environmental print. Additionally, the journal entries she discussed reflected her individual interests. Two entries were about animals and one was about a fairy tale. I observed assigned writing center activities during which she wrote about an art painting, a picture of a baby, and a May Day story. The picture of the baby supported Barbara's personal experience with her 2-month-old brother.

Barbara's text interests were somewhat evident in the three literacy events: read-alouds, reading activities, and writing activities. She participated in the literacy events in a marginal manner. Her sole purpose during writing activities seemed to be to finish the task. Occasionally, though, she experienced an activity which was highly meaning driven. More in-depth explorations with Barbara were needed to enhance her individual interests through classroom literacy events.
Cross Case Comparison Of The Text Preferences
Of The Three Children

Initial Interviews

The three case study children, two girls and one boy, lived in an urban neighborhood and attended their middle-class neighborhood school. Mrs. Kay's recommendations and my interview results indicated that Allan and Patty had a wide range of literacy experiences while Barbara had a limited range of literacy experiences.

Allan learned to read early and had an avid interest in animals and science topics and satisfied his curiosity about them through direct experiences and through reading and being read information books. Patty lived with parents who were interested in computers and even provided Patty her own computer and printer in her bedroom. She had a definite interest in fairy tales which were influenced by television and movies and had markedly less interest in animals and poetry. Her choices clearly reflected a preference for fiction books.

Barbara had a less supportive home environment and smaller range of literacy experiences. For example, she completed fewer homework assignments and her mother was less involved with school activities. Her stated interests were diverse and reflected choices in fairy tales, crafts, animals, fine arts, and concepts. She indicated choices of both fiction and nonfiction books.
These biographies portray three children who have different home environments and experiences. They further reveal three children with diverse genre and text interests. Yet, they shared a similar school experience which serves to both respond to and limit their interests.

**Classroom Literacy Activities**

**Read-aloud Experiences**

I observed that nine (25.7%) of the 35 read-alouds by Mrs. Kay were about animals which intersected with all three children's topic interests. Five of those nine were science related which reflected Allan's interest while 13 (37.1%) were fairy tales which intersected with Patty's and Barbara's interests. In all, 22 (62.8%) of the 35 read-alouds intersected with one or more of the three children's interests.

Seven (50%) of the 14 read-alouds I observed Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, read were also about animals which reflected all three children's interests. She read nursery rhymes on five (35.7%) occasions, which reflected Patty's interest.

The read-aloud topics and the three children's topic interests were often the same which provided opportunities for the children to contribute to the read-aloud events. Many times Mrs. Kay engaged the children in extensive discussion. While Allan and Patty freely contributed information during discussions, Barbara only contributed when Mrs. Kay called upon her. The discussions, in turn, served to support those individual interests by expanding their vocabulary and knowledge.
While those primarily fiction read-alouds supported Patty's and Barbara's genre preferences, they did not support Allan's preference for nonfiction text. These experiences somewhat limited his opportunity to contribute more fully with his rich vocabulary and prior knowledge because many of the discussions were centered around the elements of narrative text. However, these discussions expanded his knowledge and vocabulary. For example, when Mrs. Kay read *Rosie's Walk*, they discussed farm animals. During a retelling of the books, Allan referred to the chicken coop in the story.

**Thematic Studies**

Mrs. Kay's extensive use of discussion allowed the children to share their knowledge and individual interests. She read and discussed *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Humphrey the Wrong Way Whale*, and *Bear's Bargain*. These books reflected the three children's interest in animals.

Patty's and Barbara's interests were also fairy tales. Mrs. Kay read aloud the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, *The Little Mermaid*, and *Peter and the Wolf*. Two of those three fairy tales were also about animals, the three children's interests. As the girls retold and discussed books of their choice, both of them reported they had never heard or read some of the stories before this classroom experience.
Specific Lessons

When Mrs. Kay read Rosie's Walk, it reflected the children's interest in animals. All three children retold the story to me. Allan intermittently read and discussed the book. With the use of pictures, Patty related a sequential retelling of the fox and Rosie. Barbara, on the other hand, even with the aid of pictures, had to be prompted by questions throughout the retelling. All three children responded to the retelling in a unique manner. Interestingly, none of the children associated their study of animals to the lessons of Rosie's Walk.

Mrs. Tinna, the librarian, read nursery rhymes several times to the children. Patty's interest in these lessons was heightened by her individual interest in nursery rhymes.

Combinations of Thematic and Specific Lessons

For several lessons, Mrs. Kay read The Little Red Hen, the Three Billy Goats Gruff, and Peter and the Wolf. While only Patty and Barbara preferred fairy tales, all three children preferred animals. Repeated experiences in the classroom afforded the children opportunities to express and expand their knowledge about their individual interests. Through discussions they engaged in conversations about characters and the setting in which they made evaluative responses. For example, when Mrs. Kay asked the children to decide if the Three Billy Goats Gruff took place in the city, the country, or school, Allan replied, "In the country." Also, the children discussed how different
versions of the book were alike or different. Patty stated, "The troll is ugly. It's the same. The troll is ugly in both books."

**Summary**

The read-alouds were mainly fiction which supported Patty's and Barbara's genre preferences. However, Allan's preference for information books was not supported through the read-aloud experiences. In fact, none of the children were given extensive experiences to expand their understanding of the text structures of nonfiction text and only limited experiences with poetry. These children were read what had traditionally been read by parents and early childhood teachers.

The topic interests of all three children were used in the classroom read-alouds. Topics of animals, fairy tales, and nursery rhymes were read by both the classroom teacher and the librarian. Fiction interests of Patty and Barbara were used most of the time.

**Reading Activities**

**Independent Reading**

The amount of reading time the children were given depended on how quickly their written work was completed. Allan and Patty did not always finish the written work and often did not have time to read books. However, Barbara usually was the first one finished with her written work and had the most time to explore the library books.
Inconsistent with Allan's expressed genre preference, he selected more fiction than nonfiction books to read but chose his topic preferences of animal and science books most of the time. Patty primarily read fiction books and a few nonfiction and poetry books. Animals, fairy tales, and poetry were topics reflected in her book choices. Both genre and topic choices were consistent with her stated preferences. Barbara's selections were mostly fiction and corresponded with her topic preferences of animals, art, concepts, and fairy tales. In addition, all three children checked out school library books sporadically and chose books which reflected their stated preferences in topics and diversity in genre. Through observations, I determined all three children read the books based on different developmental stages of reading. These informal opportunities allowed them to engage in reading without the pressures of a formal reading situation.

I asked all three children to talk with me about three books they had chosen to read in the order of their preference. Allan first chose *I Can Read About Reptiles*, a nonfiction book with a descriptive structure, and retold it in great detail. He then selected *How To Draw Cats and Kittens*, an information book which gave sequential directions for drawing many different kinds of cats. Allan did not retell information from the book but recounted personal experiences with his own cats and gave unrelated information about eagles. Both of these books reflected Allan's stated preference for nonfiction books and animals. The third book he chose was a fiction book, *The Giving Tree*. He read this book and then retold it.
The first book Patty chose was a fiction book, The Little Kitten. I read it to her and she retold it as she used the pictures to assist her. Patty thought it was a real book because the pictures were photographs. The second book was fiction which she also thought was true. After I read Who’s Behind the Door At My House?, she retold it using the pictures as prompts. She also asked questions related to specific print. Both of these books matched Patty’s preferences of fiction genre and animal topics. The third book Patty selected was a nonfiction book with a cause and effect structure, Discovering Earthquakes and Volcanoes. She first thought the book was make-believe but changed her mind. Her retelling became more of an interactive discussion to enable her to complete the activity. She clearly did not understand the cause and effect structure of the text.

Barbara also chose The Little Kitten, a fiction book. After I read it to her and, with many prompts, she used the pictures to retell the story. The next book she chose was a poem about different numbers of animals, One Green Frog. She used the pictures to retell the book giving short choppy responses but full of detail. The third book she retold was also a poem, Today Is Monday. She identified two of several themes of the book and used the pictures to guide her discussion. Barbara had expressed interest in fiction genre and concepts and animals reflected her individual interests. Barbara determined none of the books were real but did not specify the genre. The pictures and my prompts were vital in Barbara’s retellings.
The children chose one book a month during the last three months of the study to discuss with me. Allan chose *Who's Behind The Door At My House?*, *Who's Behind The Door At My School?*, and *If You Give A Moose A Muffin*. All three books were fiction books about animals and had a patterned text. The first two books had a format with half pages. He read all three books to me and briefly told me what they were about.

Patty chose *Who's Behind The Door At My School?*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. All three of the books were fiction and two of the books she chose were fairy tales, her preference. I read the books to her and she gave extensive retellings of the books.

Barbara chose *Who's Behind The Door At My School?*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Grouchy Ladybug*. The first book had a patterned text. The second book was a fairy tale which the class was studying at the time. The third book also had a patterned text and was a read-aloud. Two of the books were about animals. We engaged in interactive discussions to determine Barbara’s understanding of the books. She gave short descriptive responses about specific aspects of the books. Both Patty and Barbara listened to fairy tales they had not heard before. This experience provided a schema upon which to expand their knowledge.

*Who's Behind The Door At My School?* was selected by all three children. It had a patterned text and had an appealing format; it proved to be an extremely popular book with many children. All three children also selected all fiction books.
Allan's choices were incompatible with his stated genre preference while Patty's and Barbara's choices matched their genre preferences. However, all three children chose books compatible with their preference for topics. None of the children stated any relationship between the topic of the books and what they were studying in the classroom.

**Library Center**

When the children were assigned to the library center, they engaged in various activities. During free reading, Allan read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *The Foolish Turtle*, fiction books about animals.

On three occasions, Allan and Patty listened to the *Three Piggy Opera*, *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*, and *Alice In Wonderland* while Barbara listened to *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*. The three listening tapes were fairy tales and were related to the thematic study. Additionally, Patty and Barbara had individual interests in fairy tales which provided a natural motivation for them to participate in the activity.

Barbara also participated in using a flannelboard with flannelboard materials about farm animals and in listening to a tape about sounds and marking the object that made the sound on a bingo card. She then selected the book, *Who's Behind The Door At My School?*. The flannelboard materials and the book reflected her individual interest in animals.
Summary

The reading activities facilitated the children's preferences in these literacy events. However, they were limited in their opportunities because many times the activities were so structured that they did not have the quality time to interact with the books nor free choice of the rich classroom library resource.

Writing Activities

Whole Group Writing

Generally, the children participated in journal writing which consisted of writing one or two sentences about a topic of their choice. Mrs. Kay also conducted shared writing lessons with the children and sometimes asked them to copy it.

Allan sporadically used the sight words in the classroom to write in his journal. His entries were stories and were very meaningful to him. His entries reflected his personal experiences, individual interests and classroom situational interests. He discussed journal entries about a pet hermit crab, his kittens, and a storm. Two of the entries were topics he chose and one that Mrs. Kay chose. Along with detailed drawings, Allan generally used invented and conventional spelling when he wrote about personal experiences and text preferences. However, when he wrote about classroom situational interests, he used mostly conventional spelling along with his detailed drawings. Allan used a combination of drawing, invented spelling, conventional spelling and environmental print.
Patty drew pictures and sometimes copied words from the sight word chart for her journal entries early in the Spring. Later entries reflected her use of sentences. Half of her entries reflected her personal experiences and individual interests while half reflected classroom situational interests. Patty discussed going to Leaps and Bounds, going fishing, liking her mom and seeing a hen. These entries reflected her personal experiences with the exception of the entry about the hen which she had seen at school. Also, Mrs. Kay had read *The Little Red Hen* to the children. Patty’s preference for fairy tales was barely reflected in her writing but her interest in animals was reflected. She used mainly invented spelling when she wrote about topics from personal experiences and mostly environmental print when she wrote about topics related to individual and classroom situational interests.

Early in the study Barbara wrote letter strings to represent words in her writing. She repeatedly used the pattern "I see a __ and added a word she copied from the sight word chart. She was usually the first one through with writing in her journal. Normally, when she finished her writing, I asked Barbara to read what she had written. She could read the memorized format but could not read the word she had copied. She relied heavily on environmental print when she wrote about individual and classroom situational interests. On the six occasions when her topic reflected a personal experience, Barbara used invented spelling and environmental print three times each. The three journal entries she discussed with me were about a butterfly, a
bridge, a red snowman and a cat. The entries reflected her individual interests, animals and fairy tales.

**Writing Center**

Children were usually assigned an activity at the writing center. On the occasions I observed Allan at the writing center, he participated in letter games and writing a story about a fish. The assignment about the fish responded to his individual interest in animals. Patty participated in making a story using animal stamps which she dictated to me. It, too, responded to her interest in animals. Barbara wrote a story about an art picture, made a May Day book using a mixture of words and letter strings, and wrote a story about a picture of a baby using the format she had repeatedly used in her journal writing, "I see a ---." with various words and letter strings to represent sentences in her story. These activities reflected her individual interest of animals and personal experience with her baby brother.

**Summary**

The journal writing activities allowed the children to use personal experiences and both individual and situational interests. Their use of writing strategies varied, sometimes with the category of interest being used. The writing center activities only somewhat supported the children's opportunities to use their preferences. Many of the activities failed to afford the children an opportunity to actually engage in writing. Also, the
activities were assigned by Mrs. Kay; choice at this center was virtually eliminated.

Summary of Cross Case Comparisons

By examining and comparing the three literacy events, I determined that classroom literacy events intersected with the children's preferences. The more closely the children's topic interests matched the read-alouds, the better they were able to participate in discussions. Allan and Patty volunteered to participate while Barbara participated when Mrs. Kay called upon her.

When the children retold text that they had been read or they had read themselves, their text structure understanding varied. Allan's and Patty's responses revealed that they did have a clear understanding of fiction but not of nonfiction text structures. Barbara's fiction and poetry retellings were more conversational in nature.

The independent reading and journal writing activities shared one factor that facilitated the children's use of preferences. When they had choice, their use of preference and interests greatly increased. Center times were more constrained because the activities were assigned and choice was limited.

The children's text preferences were evident in all three literacy events. Overall, these three children's text preferences contributed to the literacy events of read-alouds, writing, and independent reading.
The purpose of this study was to explore kindergarten children's preferences for varied text genres within the school environment and how their text preferences contributed to classroom literacy events. The main research questions addressed were:

1. What are young children's preferences for text genre?
2. How do text preferences contribute to specific literacy events in an emergent literacy classroom?

The discussion in this chapter is presented as response to the two research questions which guide this study. Instructional implications relevant to the findings are also presented. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research in the area of children's text preferences.

Question: What Are Young Children's Preferences For Text Genre?

The Kindergarten Class

Twenty-two children have responded to an interview about their text preferences. Seven children prefer animals while nine children favor fairy tales. Other children prefer
fantasy and fine arts topics. Fairy tales and fantasy topics are heavily influenced by recent television shows and movies.

Most compatible with my study were the findings of Mason and Blanton (1971). They concluded that children aged 3 to 5 most often preferred fairy tales. Animal stories were second and television characters were third. Further support of this study was provided by Chiu's (1984) study. He found younger children most frequently chose make believe. In addition, Swanton (1984) found both gifted and regular children indicated Dr. Seuss and fairy tales were types of books they liked best when they were younger.

Findings of this study were also similar to those of Greenlaw (1984) who compiled the first six years of titles of Children's Choices. She found primary children first preferred books classified as humorous. Make-believe, people, and animal stories were second in preference while real things, rhymes, and mystery were third choice. Last choice were fairy tales, sports, and how-to-do-it books. While the topics were the same as the present study, the preferred order was different. Fairy tales were first in my study but last in Greenlaw's (1984) study. Based on the titles the children reported, these findings suggest the current influence of television and movies accounted for the shift in this preference. For example, The Little Mermaid was selected by several children; it had recently played at the movie theater.

The 22 children in my study also recorded their book choices during independent reading time in the classroom for one
month. Based on the size of the classroom library, I expected the children in my study would have a wide range of text choices in the classroom. Even though a diversity of texts was in the classroom, they were offered by the teacher to the children in a limited manner. Mrs. Kay selected books from the classroom library and ones that I provided from the public library which matched the thematic study. Three major themes were used during that month: animals, plants, and the Asian culture.

Nineteen children chose more fiction than nonfiction or poetry while only one child chose more nonfiction than the other two genres. Overwhelmingly, the children in this class generally preferred fiction genre. These findings were not consistent with those of Pappas (1993) who found that during pretend readings children preferred information books. She asked children to choose the order to pretend read from fiction or information books that had been read to them. As she repeated the procedure, more children chose the information books first. Her findings suggested that as children became more comfortable with information books, then they more readily chose them over fiction books. The children in my study had limited exposure to the nonfiction genre during read-alouds. Thus, they had little opportunity to gain comfort with this less familiar text structure.

Because of the complexity of determining why children chose books, I attempted to explore other reasons in addition to genre and topic for selections. Books read aloud by Mrs. Kay, patterned texts, and books chosen for various format factors were examined. Approximately one-half of the 22 children
selected books based on these criteria and were supported by findings of several studies. Kiefer (1983) found first and second graders chose books that the teacher had read. However, more than one-half of the books read aloud in my study were not made available to the children for choice, thus limiting those findings.

Weiss (1982) determined that children used format factors when selecting text. While she identified specific format features, I only identified the frequency of books with format features. Some books with specific format factors were very popular with the children in this class. Over half of the children selected books with format factors 38 times. This high rate suggested that format factors greatly influenced young children's text choices. What is not clear is, when these format books were also about the preferred genre or topic, why the books were chosen. In a few instances, children made overt gestures that indicated their fascination with the format factor. In other instances, children made explicit comments about the format factor which indicated that was why the book was chosen.

Case Study Children

The three case study children were part of the larger group of 22 children interviewed to determine their text preferences. Findings from interviews and the record booklet indicate that Allan preferred nonfiction text genre; Patty chose fiction; and Barbara chose both fiction and nonfiction. These three children each displayed a unique pattern in their text preferences.
Generally, studies about young children indicated that they preferred the fiction genre. Pappas (1993) was the one exception; she reported children preferred information books.

The case children's topic preferences matched those of other studies. Allan preferred science and animal topics. Patty preferred animals, fairy tales, and nursery rhymes. Barbara preferred fairy tales, animals, crafts, fine arts, and concepts. The findings from studies which reported topic interests matched these three children's interests (Chiu, 1984; Greenlaw, 1984; Mason & Blanton, 1971; Swanton, 1984). These findings suggested that the children's interests in my study matched the universal interests for kindergarten children.

**Question: How Do Children's Text Preferences Contribute To Specific Literacy Events In An Emergent Literacy Classroom?**

I examined three classroom literacy events to determine how the case children's text preferences contributed to these events. The children's instruction was generally organized around thematic studies. Interest researchers suggested that use of thematic studies created classroom situational interest. While situational interest only had a short term effect, it also served to create new individual interests (Hidi, 1990).

**How Do Their Text Preferences Contribute To Read-aloud Events?**

Robinson (1990) reported in her study of kindergarten teachers' read-alouds that the teachers read primarily narrative text and some expository text which fit district-mandated
curriculum or seasonal events. Similarly, in my study, Mrs. Kay's and Mrs. Tinna's read-alouds were mainly fiction genre. In addition, the read-alouds topics coincided with one or more of the three children's interests. Knowledge about these topics enabled the children to more fully participate in classroom discussions and activities which involved them in a richer socially mediated learning experience. Their contributions further engaged them in co-constructing meaning with the teacher and children in their classroom.

Allan's nonfiction text interests were usually not expanded during the read-aloud event. He was able, though, to make contributions to topics related to the book being read which expanded other children's understanding of the topic and vocabulary. Further, even when fiction books were read, Allan expanded his vocabulary. For example, during a retelling of Rosie's Walk, he mentioned the chicken coop, a term the class used in discussing the book.

His nonfiction interests were limited because many discussions were structured around fiction story elements. However, Allan benefited from many of those discussions by expanding his schema for different settings. For example, Mrs. Kay engaged the children in discussing a meadow. Allan related his own experience with the desert to the discussion and stated that a scorpion might be in the meadow.

Additionally, when the class studied plants and trees, the thematic study expanded Allan's opportunity to gain knowledge and develop a new interest. This supported the notion of the
interactive process between individual and situational interests (Hidi, 1990).

Patty's topic and genre interests more closely matched classroom read-alouds structured around themes and specific lessons. She did not always make those important connections between her individual interests and the classroom activities. Therefore, it would have been helpful if Mrs. Kay had made explicit these connections for her. Many of the read-alouds related to her individual interests motivated Patty to participate in the literacy event. She engaged in many conversations about the characters and the setting in which she made evaluative responses. For example, when Mrs. Kay asked the children to discuss how versions of Three Billy Goats Gruff were alike or different, Patty stated, "The troll is ugly. It's the same. The troll is ugly in both books." Further, through read-alouds Patty became more familiar with her preferred fairy tales. She stated that she had not heard several of the books before, but had seen the movie. During retellings and discussions she used the familiar, "And they lived happily ever after." ending.

Barbara's topic and genre interests also generally matched the classroom read-alouds. Her interests were more diverse and not as well defined. However, two of her interests, animals and fairy tales, were used in read-alouds. She responded to questions about the read-alouds during discussions. For example, when Mrs. Kay asked her where Three Billy Goats Gruff happened, Barbara replied, "In the country." Another time Mrs. Kay asked Barbara to predict where Rosie's Walk took place.
Barbara answered, "Near the barn." These discussions provided the opportunity to expand her understanding of narrative text structure engage in socially interactive activities using these individual interests. She needed many opportunities, however, to explore and expand her interests and upon which to better define her individual interests. These opportunities were extremely important to Barbara's future literacy development.

How Do Their Text Preferences Contribute To Independent Reading Events In The Classroom Library?

Researchers suggested that the use of thematic studies facilitated situational interest which, in turn, served to create new individual interests (Hidi, 1990). Mrs. Kay, the classroom teacher, created an environment in which she determined the themes for study and predetermined children's book choices limited mainly to these themes. It is in this context that the choices made by the children were examined for this month. While there is some overlap between children's individual interests and classroom situational interests, I expected children would temporarily become engaged in these classroom situational interests. The findings supported this temporary interest. What is not clear is whether these situational interests created new individual interests for any of the children.

During Allan's limited reading time in class he selected more fiction than his preferred nonfiction books but chose his preferred topics of animals and science. Patty read mostly fiction and a few nonfiction and poetry books about animals,
fairy tales, and poetry. Barbara selected mostly fiction books about animals, art, concepts, and fairy tales. Many of their choices matched the thematic study and contributed to the children's knowledge. Their independent reading time also gave them opportunities to reread the books in a more informal manner. While all three children were in different developmental stages of reading, these independent reading experiences provided them the opportunity to engage in reading at their own developmental stage without the pressure of a formal reading group.

When the children retold books that had been read to them or they had read themselves, Allan and Patty chose both nonfiction and fiction text. Allan identified whether the books were fiction or nonfiction and, as he retold the two nonfiction books, he reflected a limited understanding of the text structure of these books. While he had a much broader experience of being read to and reading nonfiction books than the other two children in the study, his experiences did not support his use of the text structures in his retellings. In contrast, when he retold the fiction book, he followed the sequence of the story. Spiro and Taylor (1980) corroborated these findings. They stated that narrative was easier for young children because of their vast experience in prereading and beginning reading. They also stated that children had difficulty with expository text because they did not have the necessary structural schema for it. In addition, expository text had a greater variety of structures than did narrative text. To become proficient in understanding the
structure of nonfiction text, Allan needed many experiences in being read and reading these books.

Patty was confused about whether the books she chose were fiction or nonfiction. She retold her fictional choices using the pictures as prompts. Sulzby (1985, 1988) found that one strategy young children used was to give oral recounts using pictures. Patty also struggled with retelling a nonfiction book about volcanoes which fit with a thematic study of Japan. Mrs. Kay had shown pictures of a volcano in Japan and the class had discussed volcanoes. This situation expanded Patty's knowledge and gave her an opportunity to develop a new interest.

Barbara stated that the books she chose were not real; she chose fiction and poetry/concept books to retell. The books Barbara selected reflected her preferences of fiction genre and animal and fairy tale topics. Barbara used the pictures and required many prompts from me to retell her books. Generally, she gave short descriptive responses and was more conversational in her retellings. Sulzby (1982) found that children low in reading-related abilities were more conversational in telling their stories. Interestingly, this retelling behavior matched the overall evaluation Mrs. Kay has about Barbara's literacy development.

The retellings of the children indicated that they were sometimes unclear about fiction and nonfiction. They also revealed that they were generally familiar with fiction text but not with fiction text. The retellings also indicated the children
had not had much experience with retellings and needed considerable support to accomplish the task.

All three children participated in literacy events of listening to tapes, using flannelboard materials, and free reading in the library center. Each child had occasions to use their interests during these literacy events. Their preferences contributed to the events by providing the natural motivation for participating in the activities. Their preferences also contributed to the literacy events by providing a schema upon which to expand their knowledge. For example, when Barbara used animal flannelboard materials, she matched mothers to babies and placed them in their appropriate place, like a barn for the cow and her calf.

The opportunity for these children's preferences to contribute to the literacy event of independent reading was mostly due to one factor: children were allowed choice of books. Even though Mrs. Kay limited their choices, they were still allowed choice of any book she provided. In addition, the priority Mrs. Kay placed on their time to read limited their opportunities to read books. Instead of this particular time being planned as the reading time like sustained silent reading, journal writing and the worksheet were more highly valued.

How Do Their Text Preferences Contribute To Writing Events?

When Allan participated in journal writing, it was in a thoughtful reflective manner. He spent considerable time drawing elaborate illustrations which matched his text. Having
the opportunity to choose his topic allowed him to use his preferences in this literacy event. His use of invented spelling in these entries suggested his efforts to convey meaning were much greater than in entries about classroom situational interests. Nonetheless, in most of his entries considerable effort was made to convey meaning.

Patty's writing entries reflected personal experiences, individual interests, and situational interests and were meaning driven activities. She primarily used invented spelling when she wrote about topics of personal experience and individual interest and copied from environmental print when she wrote about situational interests.

Interestingly, both Allan and Patty used more invented spelling when they wrote about personal experiences which seemed to be more meaningful to them. Renninger (cited in Hidi & Anderson, 1992: 234) stated, "Self-selected personal topics are more likely to lead to superior writing performance because they represent children's individual interests and thus combine high knowledge and high value."

Barbara approached journal writing as a task to be finished and often did not focus on the notion that her words communicated a message. Early in the study she used letterstrings and later used a memorized sentence format in her writing. Generally, she used the sentence format with an added word copied from environmental print when she wrote about situational interest. She used invented spelling and environmental print when she occasionally wrote about her
personal experiences. She rarely used the time in such a way that demonstrated that writing was a meaningful activity for her. On a regular basis, I asked Barbara to read her journal entries when she finished writing. Usually, she read the memorized part of her sentence but could not read the last word she had copied from the board. Thus, Barbara's use of her preferences did not contribute extensively to this literacy event. It also is not clear whether her entries which related to classroom situational interests expanded her individual interests. Hidi and Anderson (1992) suggest situational interest was difficult to write about in expository writing. Children needed to acquire knowledge about a topic before they wrote about it. Mrs. Kay was building a knowledge base about the themes with the children and at the same time asking them to write about the themes. While Barbara participated in the activities, she may not have had a sufficient knowledge base to communicate her understanding of the topic in written form.

Summary

The children's text preferences contributed in meaningful ways to the three literacy events: read-alouds, independent reading, and writing. During read-aloud activities, prior knowledge about these topics enabled the children to more fully participate in classroom discussions and activities which involved them in a rich socially mediated learning experience. Their contributions further engaged them in co-constructing meaning with the teacher and children in their classroom. For example,
Allan was able to discuss topics related to the book being read which expanded other children's understanding of the topic and vocabulary. Further, even when fiction books were read and discussed, Allan's vocabulary was expanded.

Also, thematic studies expanded the children's opportunity to gain knowledge and develop a new interest. The read-alouds contributed to increased knowledge and vocabulary about the theme. For example, through read-alouds Patty and Barbara became more familiar with their preferred fairy tales.

Many of the read-alouds related to their individual interests motivated the three children to participate more fully in the literacy event. Also, they engaged in many group conversations with Mrs. Kay about the characters and the setting in which they made evaluative responses. These discussions provided the opportunity to expand their understanding of narrative text structure. All three children engaged in socially interactive activities using these individual interests. These activities enhanced their awareness of stories related to their interests.

Their preferences contributed to the independent reading event by providing the natural motivation for participating in the activities. Their preferences also contributed to the literacy events by providing a schema upon which to expand their knowledge. Many of the children's choices matched the thematic study which further contributed to their knowledge. Their independent reading time also gave them opportunities to reread the books in a more informal manner. While all three children
were in different developmental stages of reading, these independent reading experiences provided them the opportunity to engage in reading at their own developmental stage without the pressure of a formal reading group. By having the opportunity to choose their own books the children's preferences contributed to this literacy event.

The three case children demonstrated a limited understanding of nonfiction text structure of and a well developed understanding of fiction books. However, Patty was confused about whether the books she chose were fiction or nonfiction.

Allan's and Patty's writing entries reflected personal experiences, individual interests, and situational interests. Their journal entries reflected the writing event was meaning driven. When all three children wrote about personal experiences the writing event seemed to be more meaningful to them. These findings support Renninger's (cited in Hidi & Anderson, 1992: 234) statement, "Self-selected personal topics are more likely to lead to superior writing performance because they represent children's individual interests and thus combine high knowledge and high value."

Barbara also used personal experiences in her journal entries but to a lesser extent. However, use of individual interests and situational interests were also evident in her journal entries. She tended to rush through the activities and preferred to use a memorized format in her entries. Barbara's use of her preferences did not appear to contribute extensively
to this literacy event. It also was not clear whether her entries which related to classroom situational interests expanded her individual interests. Hidi and Anderson (1992) suggested situational interest was difficult to write about in expository writing. It was necessary for children to acquire knowledge about a topic before they could write about it. Mrs. Kay was building a knowledge base about the themes with the children and at the same time asking them to write about the themes. While Barbara participated in the activities, she may not have had a sufficient knowledge base to communicate her understanding of the topic in written form.

All three children used their preferences in the literacy events. Generally, their interests enhanced and expanded these literacy events.

Influences Of Teachers' Beliefs And Practices On Children's' Text Preferences

A global picture of what actually happened in this study could only be seen by discussing the teachers involved in the study. Teachers' beliefs and actions had a powerful influence on children's learning (Blanton & Moorman, 1993; Duffy, Roehler, & Wesselman, 1985; Kinzer, 1988; McGill-Franzen, Lanford, & Killian, 1994; Magiliaro & Borko, 1985; Meyerson, 1993; Mitchell, Konopak, & Readence, 1991; Roser, Hoffman, and Farest, 1990; Rupley & Logan, 1985; Smith, 1992; Wilson, Konopak, & Readence, 1992).
Mrs. Kay was recommended by her principal as a kindergarten teacher who implemented emergent literacy practices. Mrs. Kay, however, did not identify herself as an emergent literacy teacher. Throughout the study, I observed Mrs. Kay implemented a dichotomy of literacy strategies, emergent literacy strategies and traditional readiness skills, which generally fit with her stated beliefs. These findings concurred with McGill-Franzen, Lanford, and Killian's study (1994) of kindergarten teachers who found that teachers implemented instructional strategies that matched their beliefs about how children learn.

**Instructional Themes**

Mrs. Kay's kindergarten curriculum was based on themes she predetermined, the district's curriculum requirements, and her personal interests. Her curriculum only coincidentally intersected with the children's interests. On a weekly basis she stated that she focused on some of the children's interests. While I had no knowledge that she knew what these children's interests were I did not observe her respond to their specific interests, but rather in a general manner. For example, most of the children preferred fiction genre; her read-aloud selections consisted of mainly fiction. Most of the children preferred animals and fairy tales; two of her thematic studies were about animals and fairy tales. In fact, several weeks were devoted to fairy tales and the children learned the *Three Piggy Opera* and performed it for their parents and the school. While she
believed many of the children had strong science interests which were reflected in her plans, I did not find evidence of the high interest in science topics from the children's book choices and interviews I conducted.

Further, the librarian, Mrs. Tinna, planned curriculum for this class based solely on what she believed kindergarten children needed. She stated, "I selected books that I used with my own children or ones I did not use in the first grade curriculum..." She expressed the belief that nursery rhymes were important. In practice she read primarily fiction and some nursery rhymes to the children. Likewise, half of the fiction books were about animals. Mrs. Tinna's read-aloud choices often coincidentally intersected with the children's interests as did Mrs. Kay's choices. Their preferred genre was fiction; their preferred topic was animals.

Mrs. Kay's use of themes provided an opportunity for the children to explore situational interests. These situational interests were stimulated by thematic studies within the classroom and shared among other children. In turn, these situational interests possibly emerged into individual interests (Hidi, 1990). I observed that the read-alouds were often the focal point of thematic lessons. Further, she provided support for the children's writing attempts by generating a list of sight words with the children about the thematic study. Books about the thematic topic were placed in the library for the children to read. Thus, all three literacy events provided the children an opportunity to build upon and expand their interests.
While none of her selections were coordinated with the thematic studies of the classroom, Mrs. Tinna was very willing to perform this service. A more integrated experience for the children could be forthcoming if the two teachers choose to work together in planning and implementing thematic studies.

**Instructional Strategy Decisions**

Mrs. Kay's use of discussion greatly enhanced the children's opportunities to use their knowledge and express their interests. It further facilitated development of vocabulary and knowledge as they shared information and ideas. For example, when children asked questions about specific terminology, such as the names of the stages of the butterfly, or to clarify understandings, such as why the caterpillar wove a covering around itself, both their vocabulary and their knowledge were expanded. Further, children's contributions expanded other children's vocabulary. For example, Allan commented, "That's a sperm whale." when Mrs. Kay read a poem, *Humphrey the Wrong Way Whale*. The opportunity to discuss the text and ask questions was an important aspect of literacy development (Clay, 1975; Heath, 1983; Wells, 1986).

Mrs. Kay spent considerable time using big books to develop children's predictions during the shared reading process. She often asked children to predict what might happen in a story. Mrs. Kay also involved the children in extensive discussions which required them to evaluate or make judgements about the story. After reading the fairy tale, *The
Little Mermaid, Mrs. Kay asked the children if the book was happy or sad. Patty said, "Sad, because she dies."

Conversely, when Mrs. Tinna read aloud, she generally read the books and made comments about the pictures or the text. She did not encourage discussion before or after reading the book. The children were limited in participating with discussions based on their knowledge or interests. Thus, while the children were exposed to new books, opportunities to enhance literacy development through discussing the text and asking questions were not available to these kindergarteners (Clay, 1975; Heath, 1983; Wells, 1986).

**Instructional Time**

Early in the year Mrs. Kay stated she believed guided reading was an instructional time and she attempted to read a story each day to her children. She used the read-alouds as the focal point of thematic lessons and planned lessons to specifically teach strategies, such as setting or characters. In this manner, she enhanced the children's understanding of narrative text structure. For example, after Mrs. Kay read Three Billy Goats Gruff, she asked Barbara where the story happened. Barbara replied, "In the country." On another occasion, Mrs. Kay spent considerable time discussing the characters in Peter and the Wolf. During a retelling of the book, Patty chose to discuss the characters as Mrs. Kay had done with the class instead of retell the story.
Later in the year, however, Mrs. Kay stated that she read to her children if she had time because they needed to do their academic work first. I observed this shift in emphasis in her curriculum. As the end of the school year became closer, she emphasized more skills instruction and omitted more read-alouds from the curriculum. Her shift in emphasis seemed to result from influences outside the classroom. Most first grade teachers in her school taught from basals and were more skill-oriented; her children would be promoted into those classrooms. Further, she stated her principal expected the children to know the skills on the district reading progress sheet. Her behavior was supported in the research on literacy decision-making. Researchers found institutional and school culture constraints often inhibited teachers from implementing their beliefs (Meyerson, 1993; Smith, 1992; Wilson et al. 1992).

Likewise, I observed the same shift in emphasis in the amount of time she allowed for the children to do independent reading. Toward the end of the year, she required the children to write more in the journals and to do harder worksheets which took more time. Thus, many children received little or no time to read. Again, when I asked her about this, Mrs. Kay expressed concerns about the children's knowledge of skills and cited the problem of children working at different rates. She did not discuss that worksheets appeared to become the priority over actual reading as the year drew to a close.
Instructional Choice

Mrs. Kay's and Mrs. Tinna's literacy decisions about choice was important factors that influenced how these children's preferences were used in literacy events. First, on no occasion during my observations did Mrs. Kay read a book selected by a child brought from home or from the classroom library. Reading aloud to the children was not a spontaneous activity but rather a planned one with a specific purpose. As a result of this approach to read-alouds, the opportunity for children to contribute to this literacy event in this manner was somewhat limited. Yet, when Mrs. Tinna read nursery rhymes she usually asked the children which one they wanted to hear. In one instance, Patty replied, "The one with the little boy and the candle." She referred to the nursery rhyme, Jack Be Nimble.

Also, Mrs. Kay chose not to make available many of the books from read-alouds for the children to reread or check out for home reading. She explained the books and magazines belonged to her and the other kindergarten teacher with whom she shared the classroom. They did not allow children to check out books from the classroom library because they did not always bring them back. Also, children were not allowed to read the big books Mrs. Kay read to the class. When I asked Mrs. Kay about these materials she stated, "... they last longer if I don't let the kids read them." One big book the class had made was also unavailable to the children. She responded similarly: "I set it out a few times. They were tearing it up. So I didn't put it out any more." Over half of the books selected for read-alouds were
not placed in the classroom library for the children to read on their own. Big books, teacher-made books, and borrowed books were not placed in the classroom library. Lack of opportunity to read these books first-hand limited the children's development of interests and knowledge. Martinez and Teale (1988) observed children chose familiar books, predictable books, and big books more often than unfamiliar and average-size books.

Both Mrs. Kay and Mrs. Tinna read aloud primarily fiction books with a few nonfiction and poetry books; this severely limited the children's experiences with varied genre. While their read-aloud choices corresponded to most of the children's interests, the children did not have the opportunity to internalize the text structure of nonfiction books. It was not clear, however, whether children in the study would have made nonfiction text preferences if they had been given more experiences with them as Pappas (1991, 1993) found in her studies.

During the early part of the study Mrs. Kay selected a limited number of books and placed them on the carpet for the children to choose. Often the books were related to the thematic study. When I asked about this practice, Mrs. Kay explained that Mrs. Susan, the other kindergarten teacher, had difficulty with the children using the books because they didn't put the library cards back in the pockets. Mrs. Kay solved the problem by limiting the number of books from which the children chose books to read. During the last part of the study the two kindergarten teachers divided their books. At that point the children selected any book they wanted directly from Mrs. Kay's
classroom library, but there were overall fewer selections. Both situations created limited choice of reading materials for the children. At the same time, this narrow choice also limited children's use of preferences and interests in this literacy event. This was a constraint placed on Mrs. Kay from the school culture as the result of sharing a room with another teacher (Meyerson, 1993; Smith, 1992; Wilson, et al. 1992).

Mrs. Kay believed children should have many different experiences in reading in addition to just reading books. In practice, Mrs. Kay provided those experiences. Children participated in flannelboard activities, listening to tapes, and playing games. Through these activities the children had many opportunities to use their preferences and expand their understanding of them. For example, Patty and Barbara listened to fairy tales they had not heard before but had seen the movie and they heard other fairy tales only in class. However, most of the activities were teacher-selected and limited children's reading choices.

Generally, children were given the choice of topic in their journal writing and from the books Mrs. Kay selected, their choice of books to read. This extensive opportunity to choose their topic greatly facilitated children's individual interests and writing performance (Hidi & McLaren, 1991).

In contrast, the children were always assigned a task during center time. At writing center, the tasks varied from completing a worksheet to writing a story about a painting they had completed at the art center. At the library center, children
were assigned to listen to a story or use flannelboard materials. While these teacher-selected literacy events somewhat limited children's use of individual interests, the activities often intersected with their text preferences. For example, all three children had interests in animals. They wrote stories, used stamps, played with flannelboard materials, and listened to stories about animals. Thus, these literacy experiences provided hands-on experiences for the children to interact with materials related to their preferences.

Summary

Mrs. Kay and Mrs. Tinna greatly influenced how the children's text preferences were influenced in the read-aloud, independent reading, and writing events. Their choice and use of materials mainly supported their genre preference for fiction text. Additionally, these decisions responded to some of the children's topic preferences. Mrs. Kay's use of time, her choice in making materials available, and her decisions about teacher-selected and children-selected activities both supported and limited the children's use of their text preferences in these literacy events. Institutional and school culture constraints influenced some of her literacy decisions. These decisions, in turn, constrained the children's use of their text preferences in the classroom. Mrs. Kay's use of thematic studies, however, helped the children experience topics other than their interests and thus provided the opportunity for them to expand their interests.
Instructional Implications

Individual interests are a powerful motivator. The problem for educators is how to incorporate them into the classroom setting. Several teaching suggestions emerged from this study they may inform classroom teachers how to better serve children's individual interests. While these suggestions may be most critical for children with limited literacy experiences, they may facilitate the literacy development of all children.

First, simply give children choice of topic when they write; it is an effective way for teachers to facilitate their interests as in the case of Allan. Next, allow children choice of reading material; it is another way to enhance their individual interests. Classroom teachers can determine what children's interest are by using an interest survey and then match materials with the appropriate reading level and interests of the children. Obviously, a rich classroom library will make the classroom teacher's job easier. If the reading and writing activities that facilitate interests are valued, classroom teachers will provide class time for them. Children will be recognized for developing and sharing those interests. Also, to sustain these individual interests classroom teachers should make materials available for rereading over a long period of time.

When classroom teachers read aloud to children, they can allow children to sometimes choose the books to be read. After
the books are read aloud they should be made available for children to check out and read.

Use of thematic studies provide an opportunity for children to develop situational interests. The selection of materials are important. These materials should provide children opportunities for exploration of the topic and should be made available to the children over an extended period of time. Children who have limited experiences outside of school need many diverse experiences to develop individual interests. These classroom experiences may facilitate that development. When interests develop, they can be used to promote literacy development.

Additionally, teachers need to make explicit the thematic study. While they are clear about the topic, it is important to help children make the connections between the topic and what they are learning.

Children may be limited in their interests and not know how to acquire new ones. Classroom teachers can provide children a strategy to develop individual interests. The children can be led to start collections of various kinds. It may be bottle caps, sports cards, dolls, shells, buttons, or anything that will interest the children. They can be encouraged to develop hobbies such as cooking, crafts, or sports. They can be encouraged to join clubs such as scouting groups or special interest groups.

Classroom teachers are a powerful influence in perpetuating children's individual interests in the classroom.
Teachers' beliefs about literacy development greatly affect what they practice in the classroom. A belief in using a constructivist model, of creating curriculum with children, is of utmost importance when children's interests are considered. When curriculum is predetermined, children's interests are not taken into account.

The use of thematic studies further provides opportunity for children to develop situational interests. The additional emphasis on providing a balance of genre in reading experiences will greatly facilitate children's knowledge and use of these materials. Having the materials present in the classroom is not enough; children need more explicit guidance in the use of these materials. For example, the classroom teacher can use information text, biography, and poetry on a regular basis along with fiction text during read-alouds. Also, explicit discussions about text genre are necessary. Mini-lessons will support children's efforts to understand their reading materials. Encourage children to use these text structures in their writing activities.

Engaging children in discussions before and after reading is very important to develop their knowledge. The discussion of reading materials also improves children's understanding of text structure. This comfort with text structure encourages more exploration. As a result, the more exploration in which children engage, the wider will be their range of interests.

Interests can also develop through classroom experiences with other children. When children share their interests, it can
spark a child to explore a new interest. The classroom teacher can facilitate this process by providing class time and opportunity to display their interests in meaningful ways in the classroom.

The classroom teacher should structure time to allow for exploration of interests. The teacher must prioritize class time to match what is valued for children. If interests facilitate literacy development, it is a worthwhile endeavor.

**Future Research**

As a result of this study, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted. This study attempted to determine how young children's preferences were evident in an emergent literacy classroom. While the classroom was selected based on the teacher's stated beliefs of emergent literacy, she practiced a dichotomy of traditional readiness and emergent literacy. Her instructional practices and use of materials are what I would classify as a dissemination model. It would be useful to observe a teacher who uses a constructivist model. Therefore, a subsequent study in a similar classroom could be informative.

Further, because the children in the present study had either a wide or limited range of literacy experiences, the findings were diverse. It may be informative to conduct a study with only children of limited literacy experiences to determine how interests contribute to literacy development. While these children were all in the same classroom it may be informative to study the same literacy events in several classrooms. Would
findings be similar or different for children with a limited range of literacy experiences?

Finally, it may further be informative to examine the three literacy events in this study of older elementary children who have limited literacy experiences. Older children may have different interests. However, I would expect their literacy skills to be more developed. Consequently, it may be more informative to determine how their preferences and interests contribute to literacy events in the classroom.

It is recommended that future research is needed on the use of a classroom library to facilitate children's interests. It can specifically inform classroom teachers how best to use this resource. It is suggested from the present study that just having the materials in the classroom is not enough. The classroom library in the present study was extensive. However, its use was limited. How the classroom teacher uses the classroom library makes it a viable part of instruction.

Future research may be beneficial to examine how children's interests are manifested in the writing events of kindergarten children. The findings in this study suggested children used different stages of writing development according to the topic. A more in-depth study of this phenomena may be informative for classroom teachers.

It is also recommended that a narrower study of the read-aloud event in an older elementary classroom could be informative. The teacher in this study chose the read-aloud in a purposeful manner as an integral part of her instruction. It
would be informative to determine how allowing children to choose books for read-alouds would enhance development of children's interests.

The results of this study indicate there is a need to further research the interactive process of situational interest and individual interest. While the teacher in the present study clearly used well developed themes which enhanced situational interests, the question arises whether the children actually expanded their present individual interests.

A longitudinal study of the three case children is recommended for two reasons. It will determine if their interests have remained stable or changed. Further, it may answer the question of whether there is evidence of new individual interests reflected in the situational interests they experienced.

The results of this study also suggest there is a need to determine if, and how, school librarians and classroom teachers interact to facilitate children's interests. If the school librarian is a vital part of children's literacy program, it follows that those services should be used effectively. Several questions arise from this study. How do teachers view the school librarian's role? How does the school librarian view his/her role? How do the classroom teacher and the school librarian interact to facilitate children's interests?
Appendix A

Agreement Between Classroom Teacher and Researcher

1. The teacher will assist me in receiving permission from the parents of the children to participate in the study.
2. The teacher will provide the children's birthdates in order for me to determine the mean age of the group.
3. The teacher will discuss the themes to be used in the classroom for the five months from January through May. Based on these themes I will purchase $300 worth of books which represent varied genre for the classroom library. During the study I will place twenty books at a time on the library shelf and replace them periodically as themes change during the study. On completion of the study the books will remain in the classroom library.
4. All children will have a dated booklet to record book choices. Numbered dots will be used by children to indicate any free choices of text.
5. Audiotaped interviews and videotaped observations of three literacy event with four case study children will be conducted.
6. The selection of the four case study children will include teacher recommendation, formal interviews, and observations. Audiotaped interviews with these children and videotaped observations of classroom literacy events will be conducted. Artifacts of children's work will also be collected.
Copies of these artifacts will be made and the originals will remain in the classroom.

7. The teacher will maintain a normal classroom environment. The teacher will conduct the class as if I were not present. I will make no attempt to influence classroom instruction, including lesson plans.

8. I will visit one week in the class to become acquainted with the classroom routine, the teacher, and the children. During this time I will take field notes. I will be in the classroom three days a week.

I have read the above agreement and consent to allow the researcher to interview me and conduct research in my classroom.

________________________
Teacher's signature
Appendix B

Teacher Belief Interview

1. How much of your time is spent on housekeeping and management?

2. How much of your time is spent on literacy instruction?

3. How often do you read with your students?

4. How much of the class time do children listen?

5. How much of children's time is spent doing worksheets and workbooks?

6. How much time do children engage in play in the classroom?

7. How much of your time is spent with small group instruction?

8. How is children's time varied between quiet and active routines in the classroom?

9. How much of the class time is spent with whole group instruction?

10. How much opportunity is there for students to talk during the day?

11. When students talk, do they talk only when you call on them?

12. How much time do you spend listening to student-initiated talk?

13. Is there a particular philosophy you follow in your teaching?

14. Tell me about your classroom library.

15. Tell me about the children's writing activities.

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Appendix C

Observation Checklist of Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Little of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Time spent on housekeeping
- Time spent on management
- Engage in literacy instruction
- Time children spend listening
- Children do worksheets
- Children do workbooks
- Children engage in play
- Time in whole group instruction
- Time in small group instruction
- How much children talk
- Students initiate talk
- Teacher initiates talk
- Teacher listens to students
- Engage in literacy events
- Engage in reading and writing
- Work in learning centers
- Description of classroom environment.

Description of materials used during the class.

Strickland and Ogle, 1990
Appendix D

Case Study Children's Structured Interview

1. Do you go to the public library?

2. How often? What do you do there?

3. Tell me what you do when you are at home?

4. Do you have paper, pencils, and crayons at home?

5. What do you do with them?

6. What are some things you read at home that aren't storybooks?

7. When you are in the car with your family, do you see things you can read? Tell me about them.

8. What are some things you learn about? How do you learn about them?

9. Do you have encyclopedias at home? A dictionary?

10. What do you write at home?
Appendix E

Children's Structured Preference Interview

1. Tell me your name and how old you are.

2. What sports do you like?

3. What do you like about school?

4. What kind of books do you like to read or have someone read to you?

5. Do you have books at home? How many?

6. What is your favorite book?

7. Do you like to collect things? What are they? Do you have any books about them?

8. Does someone read to you at home? Who reads to you? Who picks what to read?

9. When someone reads to you, what do they read?

10. Tell me some different kinds of books you like.

11. What kind of television programs do you like?
Appendix F

Case Study Children's Structured Interview

To Determine Understanding of Text

Interviewer: This is the list of books you chose to read last month from the classroom library. I'll read them to you. As I read, decide which three books you prefer to talk to me about.

(After books are obtained from the library, proceed with the interview. Repeat the procedure with each book.)

Which book do you want to talk about first?

Why did you choose this book?

Have you read this story before?

Has anyone ever read it to you?

(Read the book with the child.)

What kind of book is this?

Tell me about this book like I hadn't heard it before.
Appendix G
Quantative and Qualitative Retelling Analysis
Of Narrative and Expository Text

ALLAN-Book 1 (Following procedures from Appendix F)
Which book do you want to talk about first?
"I Can Read About Reptiles." That's Iggy. That was my iguana's
name and he died. That's sad.
Why did you choose this book?
Because lizards are in it. And I had a turtle once.
Have you read this story before?
I looked at it once.
Has anyone ever read it to you?
No.
(Read the book with the child.)
"I want to read it." What is a reptile? Is it a long skinny snake
or a lizard that can grow two tails. Is it?
You don't have to read it. You can just tell me about it.
What kind of book is this?
Tell me about this book like I hadn't heard it before.
Guess what. I want to tell just what they eat.
Alligators ate people.
The smallest of the lizards had sharp spikes on their back.
Like the spiny lizard. It ate bugs and the horny toad ate ants.
like army ants, fire ants, and the smallest ants, hiss ants. They
were the smallest ants in the world. They helped the fire ants
and had a lot of time. They had a big job. They were poisonous and had a lot of time to go around the world. Short legs but they were fast. And sharp pinchers. But the fire ant was bigger than the hiss ant. The army ant. Fire ants and army ants fought when they met each other. They fought until they hurted each other. They then went away and told their queen. Then the queen said army to get all the fire ants away and kill them. Sometimes they eat sugar, but sometimes they eat _____ Like when lizards were dead the hiss ants attacked. Sometimes the hiss ants got and sometimes the fire ants got to them so they could eat the mice and anything else that was sweet. They even ate stickers that were yellow. They hurt and they poked. But they didn't do much good but they could have a lot of times together. They gave all the food to the queen. Well, reptiles have spikes and lungs that work like humans. But they had a backbone and humans did, too. Alligators and crocodiles, they ate people. Dinosaurs were reptiles but hugher. On my tape, tomorrow if my teacher brings in the VCR, we could all watch The Biggest Dinosaur. There's teams of reptiles, lizards, tutara, snake, crocodile, turtle. Lizards ate moths or some kind of meat. They had scales that helped them. They could have any kind of thing. Colored kinds of lizards went to kinds of things of colors. So they could have an enemy and catch the bugs. Lizards wanted to eat it and they saw it. They'll just go away and they'll think it's just a leaf or anything. And the carbonon ge zees. The lionelle one was the only one that had three spots on it and more spikes on its tail. Gila monsters are poisonous. Snakes ate
anything like eggs, crickets, other lizards, frogs, insects. Sometimes they killed with. They could never ever ever get a hold of it. A rattlesnake gets a hold of it’s skin. Its rattle grows long. Crocodiles, alligators, gainvilles eat the same foods. Crocodiles slowly up to drink water and then when they got hold of its head, like a horse’s head, drag it in the water. They're so strong and it even has to go to the queen. Well, maybe turtles are slow, probably mean. Cause sometimes the turtles can get things, can get insects that try and steal and eat their eggs. And if they found a lot of things they could just have a good time. Sometimes, birds pick their eggs and when the babies move slowly away into the water where the birds didn't want to go. Some turtles ate dragonflies or worms or anything.

Frogs and toads ate flies and worms, but sometimes grasshoppers and crickets.
I CAN READ ABOUT REPTILES -Description
David Cutts

Introduction:
What is a reptile?
Is it a long, skinny snake, or a lizard that can grow two tails?
Is it a tiny turtle in a pond, or a giant tortoise that stays on land?
Could it be a crocodile that can't chew its food, or an alligator guarding its nest?
Is it a tiny dragon, or a huge prehistoric dinosaur?
All these creatures are reptiles, because they are alike in certain ways.
Do you know how they are alike?

Characteristics:
All reptiles have backbones.
They also have lungs to breathe air.

You have a backbone and lungs, and you breathe air. But you are not a reptile. A reptile is different from you.

Their skin is different. Reptiles are covered with scales or bony plates.

Reptiles are cold-blooded. This means their temperature goes up in warm weather and goes down in cold weather. Your body temperature stays about the same all the time. If it gets too hot or cold, many reptiles hide in the shade, or go underground.

Most reptiles are hatched from eggs. Baby reptiles are able to take care of themselves as soon as they are born.

Past:
The dinosaurs were reptiles. And all dinosaurs, big and small, were hatched from eggs. Some were pretty big eggs!
Some dinosaurs ate plants and leaves. Other dinosaurs ate meat and attacked the plant-eating dinosaurs.

All the dinosaurs died long ago. But, other reptiles, like turtles, managed to survive.

Present:
Today, there are four groups of reptiles still living on Earth. One group includes all the snakes and lizards. The three other groups are the turtles, the crocodiles, and the tuatara (too-ah-TAR-ah).

Tuatara:
Scientists call the tuatara a "living fossil" because it hasn't changed in millions of years. It has a row of large, sharp scales down its neck and back, which makes it look like a dragon or a very fierce lizard.
Lizards and snakes:
Lizards and snakes look very much alike. But you can usually
tell them apart. Most lizards have four legs, and snakes have no
legs at all.
But sometimes you can be fooled. A few lizards, like one called
the glass snake, don't have legs. So, you see, the glass snake is
not a snake after all.
Characteristics:
The best way to tell lizards from snakes is by their eyes. Lizards
have eyelids that open and close. Snakes have no eyelids. They
eyes stay open all the time—even when they are sleeping!
Snakes and lizards have dry skins covered with scales. Several
times a year, they grow a new skin, and the old skin dries up and
comes off.
Most lizards change their colors. Chameleons change colors
quickly to hide from their enemies or to show that they are
angry. Sometimes they are dark brown, and sometimes bright
blue or green!
Different lizards move in different ways. Some have special pads
on their feet so they can climb up trees and walls.
The collared lizard can run on his hind legs.
The little "flying dragon" glides through the air with flaps of skin
that looks like wings.
Most lizards don't grow very big, but the rhinoceros lizard is over
four feet long. And the Komodo dragon can grow to be ten feet
long and weigh hundreds of pounds.
Here's a strange trick some lizards play on their enemies. If they
are caught by the tail, they just break it off, and run away. Then
they grow a new tail. Sometimes only part of the old tail breaks.
Then, when a new one grows in, the lizard has two tails!
Only two lizards are poisonous--the Mexican beaded lizard and
the Gila (Hee-la) monster. The Gila monster lives in the
southwestern deserts of the United States. His poison is strong
enough to kill small animals, but not people.
Lizards eat all kinds of things. Some eat insects they find on
trees or catch in the air with their long, sticky tongues. Other
lizards eat vegetables, leaves, and fruit.
But snakes usually eat mice, toads, insects, and sometimes even
lizards. Some snakes eat eggs. How can they do it? They open
their mouths very wide, swallow the whole egg, and then spit out
the empty shell.
Many snakes kill animals by coiling around them and squeezing
until the animal can't breathe. They are called constrictors. The
longest snake in the world—the python is a constrictor. Pythons can grow to more than 30 feet long. Poisonous snakes kill their prey by biting it. The poison comes out of their long hollow teeth, called fangs. When the animal is dead, the snake swallows it whole. He can digest everything except feathers and fur. The rattlesnake is poisonous, but he gives a warning before he bites. On the end of his tail is a rattle made of dead scales. It makes a whirring, buzzing sound when he shakes it. Each time the rattlesnake grows a new skin, his rattle gets longer. Even without arms or legs, snakes can move very fast. The sidewinder rattlesnake moves along in a funny, sideways motion. This helps him get across slippery mud or sand. Some snakes move by pushing against grass and pebbles. Other snakes coil themselves up, push their heads forward, and then pull up the rest of their bodies.

Crocodile Family:
Three different creatures belong to the crocodile family: the crocodile, with a long, narrow head; the alligator, with a stubby, rounded head; and the gavial (GA-vee-yil), with a very skinny head.

Characteristics:
All of them live in swampy areas near rivers. They have long tails and short, stubby legs. In the water, they tuck their legs under them and swish their heavy tails back and forth to swim.

Crocodile:
A crocodile has rough, bony plates on his back. When he floats in the water, a crocodile looks just like an old log. His eyes and nose are high up on his head so he can see and breathe while he's hiding in the water.
When a crocodile sees a small animal on the bank of the river, he swims up to it slowly and quietly. Then he grabs it, pulls it into the water, and kills it. But the crocodile can't chew his food, so he swallows rocks! They bump and bump in his stomach and grind up the food.

Alligators:
Alligators seem lazier than crocodiles. They often lie all day in the warm sun.

Gavial:
The gavial lives in Asia. His head may be very skinny, but his jaws are strong and his teeth are sharp. He likes to eat fish.
**Turtles:**
Turtles are reptiles, too. Those that live on land are called **tortoises**. Others live in ponds and streams and are called **fresh-water turtles**. Sea turtles live in the ocean.

**Sea Turtles:**
Sea turtles have flippers instead of legs. The leatherback turtle is covered with a tough, leather-like skin on his back instead of a shell. Leatherback turtles can weigh 1500 pounds. They are the heaviest reptiles in the world.

Although they live in the ocean sea turtles lay their eggs on land. When the eggs hatch, the baby turtles dig out of the nest and try to reach the sea. But they move very slowly, and sometimes hungry birds catch them first.

**Fresh-water Turtles:**
Fresh-water turtles have webbed feet. And some have pretty designs on their shells. These turtles eat insects, leaves and small fish.

A turtle has no teeth. He uses the sharp edges of his jaws to bite and chew food.

**Tortoises:**
Land turtles, the tortoises, move very, very slowly, on short, stubby legs. Most tortoises are small, but the giant Galapagos (Ga-LAP-a-gus) tortoise is more than 5 feet long and often weighs over 500 pounds.

Turtles can't move very fast, but their hard shells protect them from their enemies. The shell is built right on the turtle's skeleton-- and he can't take it off.

The box turtle pulls his head and legs all the way into his shell. Then he closes it so tightly that nothing can get in.

Scientist say that the turtle has been on the earth for almost 200 million years. The turtle's protective shell is one reason why this reptile has been able to survive for such a long time.

Mighty reptiles like the giant dinosaurs died millions of years ago. But the slow-moving turtle, safe in its shell, seems to have changed very little.

Expository Structure Retelling Analysis
Description - I CAN READ ABOUT REPTILES

Child's name ___________________________________________
Age _________________________________________________
Title of book __________________________________________
Date __________________________________________________

Sense of Description Structure

Introduction
I. Reptiles
   A. Characteristics
      1. Backbones
      2. Lungs
      3. Scales or bony plates
      4. Cold-blooded
      5. Hatched from eggs
   B. Past
      1. Dinosaurs
         a. hatched from eggs
         b. ate
            1. plants
            2. meat
      2. Turtles
   C. Present
      1. Tutatara
         a. row of large sharp scales down its neck and back
      2. Snakes and lizards
         a. Characteristics of lizards
            1. 4 legs
            2. eyelids that open and close
            3. dry skin covered with scales
            4. changes colors
            5. moves in different ways
               a. climbs
               b. runs
               c. glides through the air
            6. size
               a. small
               b. Rhinoceros - 4 ft.
               c. Komodo - 10 ft.
7. tricks
   a. break off tail
   b. grow new tail
8. Poison lizards
   a. Mexican beaded
   b. Gila monster
9. Eat
   a. insects
   b. vegetables, leaves, fruit

b. Characteristics of snakes
1. no legs
2. no eyelids
3. dry skin with scales
   a. sheds skin
   b. grows new skin
4. eats
   a. mice, toads, insects, lizards, eggs
5. kills prey
   a. coil and squeeze
   b. bite with poison
      1. rattlesnake
      2. grows new skin, rattle gets longer
6. move
   a. sideways motion
   b. push against grass and pebbles
   c. coil, push with head, pull body

3. Crocodile family
   A. 3 kinds
   1. Crocodile
      a. long narrow head
      b. Bony plates on back
      c. Eyes and nose high on head
      d. Breathes in water
      e. Kill prey in water
      f. Swallows rocks to grind food
   2. Alligator
      a. stubby rounded head
      b. seem lazier than crocodile
   3. Gavial
      a. skinny head
b. jaws strong
c. teeth sharp
d. eat fish

B. Characteristics of all crocodiles
1. live in swampy areas near rivers
2. long tails and short, stubby legs
3. swish their tails to swim

4. Turtles

A. 3 kinds:
1. Sea turtle
   a. flippers
   b. lay eggs on land
      1. babies try to reach sea
      2. move slowly, hungry
         birds eat

2. Fresh-water turtle
   a. webbed feet
   b. eats insects, leaves, and small fish

3. Tortoise
   a. move slowly
   b. short, stubby legs

B. Characteristics
1. No teeth
2. Shells protect from enemy
   a. Shells built on skeleton
3. Reason for survival

Highest score possible ______________

Child's score ____________________
Allan - Book 1
I Can Read About Reptiles - Description

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Allan - Book 3 (Following procedures in Appendix F)

Which book do you want to talk about first?

The Giving Tree

Why did you choose this book?

Because it gives.

Have you read this story before?

I looked at it. I read it a little bit.

Has anyone ever read it to you?

Shakes head no.

(Read the book with the child.)

What kind of book is this?

It's not true because trees don't give. They don't speak.

Tell me about this book like I hadn't heard it before.

The tree would always never speak to a stranger. Trees really don't speak. The boy came to the tree and played. He collected her leaves. And he made crowns. He climbed her trunk and swunged from her branches. And ate apples. Played hide and seek. When he was tired he laid under her shade in between her roots. And gave her hugs. He loved the tree very much. Two people loved him.

The little boy grew too much. He can't believe him. He came there to sell apples.

He wanted a house. He wanted a boat. He grew too old. He sat down on the stump. The End.
THE GIVING TREE- Narrative
Shel Silverstein

Setting:
Once there was a tree and she loved a little boy.

Main Character:
a tree

Other Character:
boy

Theme:
Every time the boy came to the tree, he needed something from the tree.

Plot Episode:
And every day the boy would come and he would gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play king of the forest. He would climb up her trunk and swing from her branches and eat apples. And they would play hide-and-go-seek. And when he was tired, he would sleep in her shade. And the boy loved the tree...very much. And the tree was happy.

Plot Episode:
But time went by. And the boy grew older. And the tree was often alone. Then one day the boy came to the tree and the tree said, "Come Boy, come and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy."
"I am too big to climb and play," said the boy. "I want to buy things and have fun. I want some money. Can you give me some money?" "I'm sorry," said the tree, "but I have no money. I have only leaves and apples. Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in the city. Then you will have money and you will be happy." And so the boy climbed up the tree and gathered her apples and carried them away.
And the tree was happy.

Plot Episode:
But the boy stayed away for a long time...and the tree was sad. And then one day the boy came back and the tree shook with joy and she said, "Come, Boy, climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and be happy."
"I am too busy to climb trees," said the boy. "I want a house to keep me warm," he said. "I want a wife and I want children, and so I need a house. Can you give me a house?"
"I have no house," said the tree. "The forest is my house, but you may cut off my branches and build a house. Then you will be happy."
And so the boy cut off her branches and carried them away to build his house. And the tree was happy.

**Plot Episode:**
But the boy stayed away for a long time. And when he came back, the tree was so happy she could hardly speak. "Come, Boy," she whispered, "come and play."
"I am too old and sad to play," said the boy. "I want a boat that will take me far away from here. Can you give me a boat?"
"Cut down my trunk and make a boat," said the tree. "Then you can sail away... and be happy."
And so the boy cut down her trunk and made a boat and sailed away.
And the tree was happy... but not really.

**Plot Episode:**
And after a long time the boy came back again.
"I am sorry, Boy," said the tree, "but I have nothing left to give you— My apples are gone."
"My teeth are too weak for apples," said the boy.
"My branches are gone," said the tree. "You cannot swing on them--"
"I am too old to swing on branches," said the boy.
"My trunk is gone," said the tree. "You cannot climb--"
"I am too tired to climb," said the boy.
"I am sorry," sighed the tree. "I wish that I could give you something... but I have nothing left. I am just an old stump. I am sorry."

**Resolution:**
"I don't need very much now," said the boy, "just a quiet place to sit and rest. I am very tired."
"Well," said the tree, straightening herself up as much as she could, "Well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come, Boy, sit down. Sit down and rest."
And the boy did.
And the tree was happy.
The End

Story Retelling Analysis

Child’s name _________________________________
Age _______________________________________

Title of story ________________________________
Date _________________________________________

Sense of Story Structure

Setting
a. Begins story with an introduction ______________
b. Names main character _________________________
c. Number of other characters named ______________
d. Actual number of other characters ______________
e. Score for other characters (c/d) ________________
f. Includes statement about time or place ___________

Theme
Refers to main character’s primary goal __________

Plot Episodes
a. Number of episodes recalled ________________
b. Number of episodes in story ________________
c. Score for plot episodes (a/b) ________________

Sequence
Retells story in structural order: setting, theme, plot episodes, resolution. (Score 2 for proper, 1 for partial, 0 for no sequence evident) _________

Highest score possible ____________
Child’s score ____________

(Morrow, 1990)
Qualitative: The Retelling Profile

1. Retelling includes information directly stated in text.
2. Retelling includes information inferred directly or indirectly from text.
3. Retelling includes what is important to remember from the text.
4. Retelling provides relevant content and concepts.
5. Retelling indicates reader's attempt to connect background knowledge to text information.
6. Retelling indicates reader's attempt to make summary statements or generalizations based on text that can be applied to the real world.
7. Retelling indicates highly individualistic and creative impressions of or reactions to the text.
8. Retelling indicates the reader's affective involvement with the text.
9. Retelling demonstrates appropriate use of language (vocabulary, sentence structure, language conventions).
10. Retelling indicates reader's ability to organize or compose the retelling.
11. Retelling demonstrates the reader's sense of audience or purpose.
12. Retelling indicates the reader's control of the mechanics of speaking or writing.

(Morrow, 1990)
Appendix H

Case Study Children's Structured Interview

About Literacy Events

Read-aloud: Following a read-aloud, ask the child:
What's the name of this book?
What is the book about?
Have you ever heard this book?
How many times, if any?
Would you choose to read this book?
Is there anything you are doing in the classroom that has anything to do with the book?
What do you like best about this book?

Writing event: Choose one of your writings to tell me about.
What did you write about?
Why did you write about that?
Is this a story, about something that really happened, or a poem?
Is there anything you are doing in the classroom that has anything to do with your writing?

Independent reading: Choose a book from the classroom library you have read recently.
What is the name of this book?
What is the book about?
Why did you read this book?
Have you ever heard this book before?
Is there anything you are doing in the classroom that has anything to do with the book?
Appendix I

Individual Categorical Form By Genre

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<th>GENDER</th>
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NARRATIVE TEXT

EXPOSITORY TEXT

POETRY
Appendix J

Teachers' Read-Aloud Selections

Mrs. Kay, the Classroom Teacher

Tuesday, March 8, 1994
Humphrey, the wrong way whale. Poetry


Thursday, March 17, 1994

Monday, April 4, 1994
Tuesday, April 5, 1994
Tree (Title unknown) - Nonfiction

Wednesday, April 6, 1994
The lotus seed - Fiction


Thursday, April 7, 1994

Tuesday, April 12, 1994

Friday, April 15, 1994

Tuesday, April 19, 1994
Pineapple (Class Made Book) - Nonfiction - Big book

*book in classroom library
(appendix continues)
Tuesday, April 19, 1994
Wednesday, April 20, 1994

Wednesday, April 20, 1994

Thursday, April 21, 1994

Friday, April 22, 1994

Tuesday, April 26, 1994

Wednesday, April 27, 1994


Tuesday, May 3, 1994
Over in the meadow (version from a teacher's book) - Fiction
-Big book teacher-made

Thursday, May 5, 1994
(Shared by Taka)

Monday, May 9, 1994

*book in classroom library
(appendix continues)
Wednesday, May 11, 1994
*Pineapple* - Nonfiction - Big book

Friday, May 13, 1994

May, 1994

Monday, May 16, 1994
*The three pigs* - Fiction

Friday, May 20, 1994

Monday, May 23, 1994

Tuesday, May 24, 1994

Wednesday, June 22, 1994

Friday, June 24, 1994

Monday, June 27, 1994
Tuesday, June 28, 1994

* book in classroom library  
(appendix continues)
Wednesday, June 29, 1994

Tuesday, July 5, 1994
Wednesday, July 6, 1994

Thursday, July 7, 1994

Friday, July 15, 1994

Friday, July 22, 1994

Mrs. Tinna, the Librarian

Thursday, March 10, 1994

Tuesday, April 12, 1994

Tuesday, April 19, 1994

* book in classroom library
(appendix continues)

Thursday, April 21, 1994

Thursday, April 28, 1994


Thursday, May 5, 1994

Thursday, May 19, 1994
How Cindy Bear learned to be kind. ( Substitute's daughter wrote book. Citation unavailable.) - fiction

Thursday, June 23, 1994
Video

Thursday, June 30, 1994

Thursday, July 14, 1994


Thursday, July 21, 1994
Appendix K

Permission Letter to Cite Paper in Dissertation

Department of Reading

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

January 24, 1995

Linda J. Johnson
2517 Baltintore Ct.
Henderson NV 89014

Dear Ms. Johnson:

You have permission to cite our draft article, "Case studies of literature-based textbook use in Kindergarten: Teachers' instructional practices and children's literacy and literary development."

Yours truly,

Cynthia Lanford

(and Anne McGill-Franzen)
TO: Linda Johnson
FROM: Dr. William Schulze, Director, Office of Research Administration
DATE: 13 December 1993
RE: Status of Human Subject Protocol entitled: "Children’s Preferences for Text and How Those Preferences Evolve"

This memorandum is official notification that the protocol for the project reference above has been approved. This approval is for a one year duration. At the end of the year, you must notify this office if the project will be continued.

If you have any questions or require any assistance, please give us a call.

Office of Research Administration
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451037 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1037
(702) 895-1357 • FAX (702) 895-4242
Table 1

Data Collection And Analysis Schedule

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Children's Text Choices By Topic (N = 22)

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<td>10</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall Tales</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultures</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairy Tales</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Total of 271 books exceeds number of books because some books were placed in more than one topic category.)
Table 3

Allan's Journal Entries (N = 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal Experiences</th>
<th>Text Preferences</th>
<th>Situational Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invented Spelling</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional Spelling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Print</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some journal entries represent one or more stage of writing and one or more category of entry.
Table 4

**Patty’s Journal Entries** (N = 1)

<table>
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<th>Personal Experiences</th>
<th>Text Preferences</th>
<th>Situational Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drawing</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invented Spelling</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventional Spelling</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Print</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some journal entries represent one or more stage of writing and one or more category of entry.
Table 5

**Barbara's Journal Entries** (N = 1)

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Personal Experiences</th>
<th>Text Preferences</th>
<th>Situational Preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drawing</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invented Spelling</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventional Spelling</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental Print</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some journal entries represent one or more stages of writing and one or more categories of entry.
Bibliography


Relationships to decision about reading outcomes. Reading Psychology. 6, 145-156.


