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## An Experimental Investigation of the Effect on Interest of Reading Children's Literature to Sixth Grade Students in Aberdeen, Washington

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AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT ON INTEREST  
OF READING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TO SIXTH  
GRADE STUDENTS IN ABERDEEN, WASHINGTON

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
Donald R. Grieb  
August, 1969

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James Monasmith

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Few would argue that teaching children to read is a major concern of the elementary school. For most teachers, the teaching of reading presents the biggest challenge of the school day. Despite effort and skill of teachers, too many children leave their elementary school years behind them not being able to read well and not necessarily having an interest in reading for pleasure.

Experience and good teaching methods emphasize the importance of motivation in reading instruction. Reading aloud to children is said to have a positive effect upon their interest in reading. While this concept is seldom disputed, there is little in the way of factual evidence and data in support of it.

During the primary school years, youngsters usually have an exposure to children's literature. Reading to children at this age is common. Yet as children mature and become more self sufficient in their reading ability, the amount of exposure to children's literature decreases. However, there is currently an interest in, and revival of, teaching children's literature to all levels of elementary school children. Consequently, this

study is timely and appropriate, for its concern was in presenting literature to sixth grade students.

## I. THE PROBLEM

### Statement of the Problem

To determine the effect of a teacher's reading literature upon the interest in reading books among sixth grade students, one group (experimental) participated in a twenty-eight week program of scheduled daily time during which they listened to literature read by their teacher. A second group (control) were not exposed to literature in this manner but otherwise participated in a similar school program.

The experimental group listened daily for fifteen minutes to a variety of literature chosen by their teacher. Measurement of difference in reading interest between the two groups was determined by the number of books each group checked out of the school library on a weekly basis.

### The Hypothesis

Comparison of the number of books checked out of the school library by sixth grade children will indicate no statistical significant difference in reading interest between the experimental group, who were read to aloud by

their teacher on a daily basis, and the control group who participated in a similar school program but who were not exposed to literature in this manner.

### Importance of the Study

From the beginnings of public education in this country, literature has held a place for children in the school curriculum. However, the status enjoyed by literature for children has neither been too high, nor has its use always been encouraged in schools with the ever crowded curriculum.

In recent years, a great number of children's books have found their way into the hands of children and teachers. Much of this literature available to children is noted for its literary quality. Educators have taken notice of the current interest in children's literature in education. This is conspicuous in several ways. New books have been written for teachers concerning the teaching of literature and increasing attention is given during teacher training in this field by teacher training institutions. Recent years has also seen emphasis in increasing the number of elementary libraries and particularly librarians. Especially noticeable in this respect has been the part played by the federal government in

funding libraries, library material, and Institutes for training teachers and librarians in children's literature.

The increased emphasis in using children's literature in education has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in research in this field. Compared to other areas of research in education, there is in fact a marked lack of research in this area (4:193). Therefore, the recent attention and interest in children's literature combined with the existing need for research in this area prompted this study.

#### Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study were the relatively small number of students used and the short period of time in which the study was conducted.

Another limitation is the assumption that interest in reading was measured by the number of books checked out of the library.

The study is further limited in that the questionnaires used were applied to the experimental group but not the control group.

Many of the variables which were not controlled could have influenced the results of the study. Such unmeasurable factors as home environment, the effect of

previous teachers, personal experience, and previous exposure to literature. The overall difference in teaching techniques, room atmosphere, and lesson structure between the experimental and control group teachers may have had an influence on children's reading interest.

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

### Literature

Literature was meant to be books of fiction, non-fiction, biography, and picture books most of which has been written for children. Trade books are included but textbooks and magazines were excluded. The term is meant to include books which children voluntarily select for purposes of enjoyment or fulfilling an interest.

### Reading Interest

The type of reading matter, particularly books of children's literature, that attract and hold the attention of the reader.

## III. ORGANIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF THE THESIS

A brief overview of research in children's literature related to this study is presented in Chapter II. The advantages and implications of using literature in education were presented with guidelines for effective oral reading.

Chapter III presented a description of how the experiment was conducted and data obtained.

An analysis of the data obtained was presented in Chapter IV.

The final chapter contains a summary of the study, conclusions drawn, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Until somewhat recently, most writing related to children's literature and teaching circumscribed generalities rather than empirical evidence. This was particularly true regarding studies related to literature and young children. In a comprehensive study of research in literature in elementary and secondary schools from 1961-1963, Brown (4:187) and Early (8:178), 1963-1966, concluded that research related to teaching literature is comparatively light. In addition, it was noted that of the thirty studies in Early's report only eight were studies at the elementary level. Of other empirical studies found, the majority involved high school pupils. These studies were considered not applicable to the present study due to the differences of interests in reading between high school and elementary school pupils.

Huus (18:780-89, 19:56-67), surveyed research in the area of development of taste in literature in elementary grades. Her investigation included research done related to children's literature and included reference to studies as early as 1915. Yet she concluded that well-grounded research in this field remains a fertile area to develop.

## I. THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE IN EDUCATION

Contemporary mass media such as television and movies clearly tend to overpower children's interest in reading. Yet, in our society these media bring to children, albeit vicariously, their contact with many of man's basic activities of life. These experiences and real experiences form the basis upon which learning takes place; a foundation block which needs to be strengthened and can be reinforced by exposure to man's past experiences as related to literature (17:8, 30:573-78).

Bruner (5:186) expresses the need for literature when he stated:

I would urge that a grasp of the basic plights through the basic myths of art and literature provides the organizing principles by which knowledge of the human condition is rendered into a form that makes thinking possible, by which we go beyond learning to the use of knowledge. I am not suggesting that the Greek myths are better than other forms of literature. I urge simply that there be exposure to, and interpretation of, literature that deals with the human condition. I have learned as much from Charley Brown of Peanuts as I have learned from Perseus.

Therefore, to utilize children's background and experience to the fullest toward their adjustment, use of knowledge, and education, an exposure to literature plays an important part.

While some advocates of literature delimit its worthiness to that of transmitting man's universal truths,



traditions, and heritage; other values have emerged. For example, Fader (9:11-14) in his recent use of literature in the forms of paperback books, magazines, and newspapers with disadvantaged and delinquent youths; showed that using a form of literature which was interesting, pleasurable to read, and relevant to the background and experience of these people; served as a method of motivation upon which language arts skills could be constructed. He has stressed the implications of his study for educators who are confronted with a large number of public school students who have not been motivated to learn and with whom conventional methods of teaching have been relatively ineffectual. He also indicated the association which exists between wide reading and learning to write. This latter concept is held by Welt (31:615). She summarized how hearing a variety of literature will help children bridge the gap between talking and written language. Verbal interaction among students following listening to literature will enable children to relate their individual language through their own experiences with language they have heard in literature. Thus, hearing a variety of good literature will provide models demonstrating the function of words. Meckel (25:966-68) reported similarly, that

children associate the structure of their written composition to examples found in literature.

Cohen (7:209-13) conducted an experimental study in New York City with a large number of culturally deprived second grade children. The treatment was teachers reading to their classes from a selection of fifty books. The conclusions of the study based upon statistically significant data was that a strong relationship exists between an exposure to listening to literature and a strengthening of language power.

A study similar to the present study in which the teacher read daily a variety of good literature to fourth and fifth grade children for "one period," showed a measurable gain in expansion toward increased and varied reading within the group (11:451-60). The subjects of the study were given other treatment however which was likely to have influenced the results.

According to two writers in the area of children's literature, Huck (17:659) and Arbuthnot (2:378), reading aloud to children is one of the best ways to interest them in books. Others support this opinion (10:28-29, 19:65). While reading aloud has been accepted practice in teaching primary grade children, the practice declines or does not exist in the intermediate grades. Grann (14:215-19) has reported that reading habits are established

early and that as a student progresses through school, reading of their own accord reaches a high point at junior high school declining thereafter. It is increasingly difficult to motivate children to read as they proceed through school, however motivation to read is directly effected by the school's ability to develop habits of reading and the availability of adequate library facilities. Therefore, the value of reading aloud to children at the elementary levels, should not be underestimated.

While the implications of these studies cannot be said to necessarily apply in all cases, or to the study at hand, they do seem to indicate the importance of reading to children or in other ways exposing them to literature.

## II. EFFECTIVE ORAL READING

"A poor reader is just another pain for them (children) to endure and forgive if they can." This criticism by May Hill Arbuthnot (2:394) seemed to summarize a point of view shared with others who have concerned themselves with children's literature. It was felt appropriate therefore to include in this chapter a few brief comments on reading to children. This may

help the reader understand factors considered in conducting this study and point the way to more detailed information which has been presented in other writings.

A multitude of children's books have been published and are available. Of these, some are very good--many are mediocre or poor. Assuming that reading aloud to children will enlarge their interests and upgrade their literary tastes, careful choice of the book or selection to be read is critical. Maib (24:180) suggests the following factors in selecting a book:

1. Will the book fit a basic need of children?
2. Has the book been considered an outstanding children's book?
3. Does the selection fit children's maturity level?
4. Will the book be appropriate for a particular group of children?
5. Will it be likely to offend any member of the group?
6. Will the book add variety to the children's experiences in literature?

Arbuthnot (2:383) has noted that the choice of book must fit the reader. If so, the story may be enhanced. For example, London's Call of the Wild or Kipling's Mowgli's Brothers may be better suited for reading by a man. Huck (17:659-661) notes that the book should appeal to the reader. A selection which the reader does not enjoy

reading should not be chosen. Mahar (22:24-25) suggests that reading to children can and should be an entertaining creative experience for both the reader and listener. This need to become personally involved in the story will influence the listener. Sawyer (28:59) adds that the reader needs to internalize the story to the point where he has a feeling for the theme and characters in the story which can be intangibly transposed out of the story to the listener. It is therefore essential the story chosen be carefully prepared for reading and be liked by the reader. The dislike of a story cannot be withheld from the listener. This preparation also allows the reader to capture the mood of the story; anticipate new events, characters, and changes in action; and to be familiar with the story to allow easy contact with the audience.

In introducing books to a group, it has been found best not to use: "This book is about . . ." or "You will like this book." Instead, the class should become involved in discussion and be made curious about the selection. Characters and setting may need introduction (6:138-140).

Literature is often read or heard for pure enjoyment. Yet, a discussion or sharing with a group following reading is often desirable. Heaton (15:280) and

Welt (31:611-17) emphasized the importance of discussion in using literature as a teaching tool. Children will learn discussion techniques when they begin with simple stories and are led to feel that discussion is important. Heaton has suggested a method of planned sequence for discussion:

1. Factual recall of the story.
2. Analyze what happened in terms of feelings of the characters.
3. Identify with feelings of characters in other stories familiar to the children.
4. Explore the consequences of certain feelings or behavior.
5. Come to a conclusion or generalization so that conceptualization is sharp and effective.

In addition to these points, Huck (17:661) felt that the author and illustrator of books should always be mentioned,

Of no less importance than the foregoing considerations, qualities of the readers appearance and voice have been essential features of effective oral reading. A reader should be comfortable, natural, and free from distracting elements of apparel or mannerism which may detract the listener from the story (2:382). A readers voice needs training or sufficient practice to assure good listening enjoyment (28:134-38).

### III. SUMMARY

The relatively small number of studies available regarding the presenting of literature to children seems to indicate literature can be effectively used in contemporary education. Especially noted is the effect literature may have in imparting knowledge, creating interest in reading, and building other language skills.

Effective oral reading to groups of children requires attention to: choice of book or selection to be read, being familiar with the book, introduction of the selection, discussion of the selection or book, and the appearance and voice of the reader.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE AND GROUPS STUDIED

The study was done to measure what effect a teacher's reading aloud to one group of sixth grade children would have upon their interest in reading compared to another group of sixth grade students who were not read to but who otherwise were exposed to a similar school program.

The study setting, selection and description of the groups studied, and details of conducting the study are set forth in this chapter.

#### I. PLACE OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted at The Robert Gray Elementary School in Aberdeen, Washington. Aberdeen is a seaport city located in the southwest region of Washington. The city has a relatively constant population of about twenty thousand people despite seasonal and economic factors which tend to contribute to periodic fluctuations in the area's economy. Forest products, fishing, tourism, and exporting are the basic elements of the city's economy. This city also serves as a trading area for a rather large coastal region.



Robert Gray School has a normal enrollment of five hundred to five hundred fifty pupils from kindergarten through grade six. People living within the boundaries of this school find employment in forest products industries such as logging and mill work. Others are employed in related industries or work as fishermen, longshoremen, and employees of local merchants. The school does not serve the more wealthy or prosperous people of the community, rather the predominantly middle and lower class neighborhoods. The school enrollment has no noticeable change in enrollment either during or between school years. The library within this school contains 5,449 books. The number of books in categories were: 70 poetry, 26 myth and legend, 312 biography, 1190 picture books, 2236 non-fiction and 1615 fiction. Other instructional media were stored in the library.

## II. LENGTH OF THE STUDY

The study began the week of September 23, 1968, and continued throughout the school year through the week of April 28, 1969.

## III. SUBJECTS SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

Subjects for the experiment were students from two sixth grade rooms at Robert Gray School. The principal

of the school selected the students for each classroom. This is customary practice and was not considered to have contaminated the experiment for several reasons: The investigator had no control over the selection of the students, selection was made prior to the principal having knowledge that the experiment was to be conducted, the principal was new to the school and did not know the students, the students were selected by ranking all the sixth grade students according to each child's battery median on the Stanford Achievement Test given the previous year and then alternately assigned to groups. Teachers were randomly assigned to groups after they were formed. Considering these circumstances and the school setting in which the experiment took place, the two groups were equal in many elements which might affect the experiment and which could reasonably be controlled.

A comparison of the two groups is shown in Table I. Lorge Thorndike Intelligence Test Form 4A was given to both groups April 15, 1969. All data is applicable to that date and includes the students who continued in school throughout the experiment.

TABLE I  
COMPARATIVE DATA OF THE EXPERIMENTAL  
AND CONTROL GROUP

	Experimental Group	Control Group
Boys	12	14
Girls	16	13
Mean age	12-3	12-3
Mean I.Q.	106	104
I.Q. range	82-136	80-133

#### IV. METHOD OF CONDUCTING THE STUDY

For a period of twenty-eight weeks beginning in September and continuing through April, children in the experimental group were read to by their teacher, the investigator, for a fifteen minute period each day. During this period, members of the control group were not read to by their teacher but took part in a similar school program. A weekly analysis of library records of each group was made to tabulate numbers and types of books checked out during the library period. In addition, a survey of the experimental group student reading interests was conducted at the beginning and end of the experimental

period. Parents of the experimental group children responded to a questionnaire which was designed to give an indication of any noted change in their child's reading habits at home.

### The Experimental Group

The twelve boys and sixteen girls in the E group listened to a variety of literature for a fifteen minute period following their morning recess. This provided a good time for this since there were few interruptions and it fit in well with the regular school schedule.

The books read to the subjects were chosen by the investigator. Relatively few books can be read orally even during an entire school year. Careful consideration therefore was necessary in selecting books to be read. For purposes of this experiment, the investigator chose books which might provide a new form of literature as well as variety for many of the subjects in the group. An attempt was made to enlarge as well as increase their interests in reading. Therefore, what the children wanted to hear was not a main criteria for choice. Mystery and horse stories, very popular with this group, were not read for this reason. In choosing books, consideration was given to books recommended to be read aloud to this age and grade level (17:670, 23:264-65).

As suggested, these lists should not be solely relied upon but used as guides since groups of children differ as to intellectual level and interests. Literature which the investigator felt suitable for this group was chosen. Appendix A shows a list of the books read to the group. The seventeen books or selections read to the group included three realistic fiction, two modern fantasies, three picture books, three animal stories, three books of myth and legend, two non-fiction books, and one poetry book.

To create a positive influence upon children's reading interest, reading aloud to them must be done with skill and enthusiasm by the reader. To acquaint the investigator, each selection chosen for this experiment was read in detail or carefully skimmed to get the feel and flavor of the selection before presentation to the class. Attempts were made to apply the techniques of good oral reading which would make listening effective and interesting for the children (18:660).

While the purpose of this study was not to involve the children in an analysis of elements of literature and writing, some effort however was made to point out to the children such elements as author's style, purpose of writing, and comparing one selection

to another. This was done, if for no other reason, to stimulate their interest and thinking about books and reading. This seemed most appropriate for more mature or the avid readers among the group.

Implementation of the program however warranted the use of library material correlating with children's instruction in social studies and science. Actual use of the library by the children required by these types of study activities was minimized by having available appropriate room collections for their use. Such collections of books in classrooms are not unusual, however every attempt was made to maintain and provide an adequate supply of books and reference material to eliminate undue use of the library.

### The Control Group

The control group was exposed to a similar curriculum with the exception that the fourteen boys and thirteen girls of the control group were not read to by their teacher either before or during the experimental period. The daily class schedule, the textbooks used, amount of time spent on each subject was similar.

Like the experimental group, the control group had available in their room a suitable collection of books which could be used in science and social study activities

in the classroom. This did not entirely eliminate, but did substantially reduce, the use of the library other than during their regularly scheduled library period.

### Use of the Library

The school library is normally used by classes on a scheduled basis. Each classroom in the school makes a thirty minute visit to the library once each week. In upper grade classrooms, children are usually permitted to visit the library with the teachers permission at times when it is not in use.

Both groups of children used in this study had use of the library the same amount of time during the experiment and under similar conditions. The school librarian is present at the school every other week. However, a library aid is present at all times at the library. Therefore, when classes visited the library during the year, they had the services of the librarian half of the time and library aid full time. Teachers were required to accompany their classes on all scheduled trips to the library.

The librarian was not usually actively involved helping upper grade children select books when they visited the library. The librarian helped children who asked for assistance in finding books but did not "push"

children into books. Collections of books were frequently arranged in the room and children were informed of these when they came to the library.

The difficulty of having the librarian influence the results of the experiment was therefore reduced. The librarian was aware of the experiment being conducted and agreed to give equal treatment to each group.

A similar arrangement was agreed upon between the control group teacher and the investigator when their classes were in the library. Their job was to accompany the children, help maintain order, and help the librarian maintain the proper environment in the library. No special urging or requesting children to take books was done. Assistance was given a child when requested or when for purpose of order or control a child was made to select a book, sit at the table and read. No effort was made to have books checked out.

#### Collecting the Data

The basic data was the count of the numbers of books checked out of the library at the scheduled library period. A total count was made as well as a count of the types of books in certain categories checked out. Books were categorized as: picture books, non-fiction, biography, myth, poetry, and fiction.



The count was made following the library period. The possibility of including in the count books checked out at times other than at the regular library period was avoided.

#### V. QUESTIONNAIRES USED

Two questionnaires were used in the experiment. Their purpose was to serve as indicators of any change in reading interests of the children.

At the beginning of the experiment, the experimental group children indicated what their reading interest had been since starting the fifth grade. They indicated what types of books they had read as well as what they considered the first and second choice of favorite reading. At the end of the experimental period, an identical list of book types was given to them. This was to measure any change in reading interest which may have occurred since the start of the sixth grade. Appendix B shows copies of the questionnaire forms used by the children.

Upon conclusion of the study, parents of the experimental group children were asked to indicate their opinion of any change they had observed in their child's reading habits during the school year. Appendix B shows a copy of this questionnaire.

## VI. TREATMENT OF THE DATA

A t-test was applied in each category of books and the total of all categories on the weekly mean number of books checked out of the library. Differences between the groups were compared to determine if differences existed and if such differences were statistically significant.

The questionnaires were analyzed to furnish supplementary evidence on what effect the treatment had on the amount of reading done at home and of changing interests in types of reading for the experimental group.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The study was conducted for the purpose of comparing the effect of a teacher's reading to sixth grade children from various types of children's literature upon the children's interest in reading books. Their degree of interest was measured by the number of books checked out of the library and questionnaire responses from the children and their parents.

Two groups of fifty-five children were participants in the study. The experimental group of twenty-eight sixth grade children were read to by their teacher for a twenty-eight week period. The control group of twenty-seven sixth grade children were subject to a similar school program but were not read to by their teacher.

Primary evaluation of the study has been based upon data gathered during the experiment. From the data, total number of various categories of books checked out of the school library per week were tabulated for both the experimental and control groups. Weekly mean scores were computed and analyzed. A t-test was applied to determine the existence of significant differences between the weekly mean scores of the two groups studied. All results from the t-test analysis have been reported

at the .01 level of significance except as noted in the category, myth and legend, which has been reported at the .05 level of significance.

Table II shows the data collected during the experimental period for the experimental and control groups. The table is categorized by picture books, myths and legends, biography, poetry, other fiction, and non-fiction. Weekly totals are shown horizontally; categories are totaled vertically.

Before considering the statistical analysis based on this table, reference to it may be appropriate. In the experimental group, rank order from most to least frequently selected type of books was: fiction, non-fiction, picture books, biography, myth and legend, and poetry. In the control group, a similar ranking was: fiction, non-fiction, picture books, biography, poetry, and myth and legend. It was noted the rank order was similar except that myth and legend was the least read category in the control group.

TABLE II

## BOOKS CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY BY THE EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS

Week of:	Picture Books		Myth & Legend		Biography		Poetry		Fiction		Non-Fiction		Weekly Total	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
Sept. 23	3	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	24	24	17	14	49	38
Sept. 30	3	5	0	0	1	1	1	0	20	14	14	11	39	31
Oct. 7	0	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	19	12	7	9	28	25
Oct. 14	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	20	19	11	8	33	29
Oct. 21	9	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	23	19	10	5	44	26
Oct. 28	3	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	20	16	13	11	36	34
Nov. 4	0	5	2	1	1	2	0	1	22	21	10	12	35	42
Nov. 11	3	5	2	0	2	2	0	1	21	18	18	12	46	38
Nov. 18	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	26	23	15	11	42	38
Nov. 25	2	2	0	0	2	3	0	0	29	14	18	14	51	33
Dec. 2	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	20	18	14	22	35	44
Dec. 9	3	4	2	1	0	1	0	0	26	16	16	22	47	44
Dec. 16	4	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	28	20	19	17	53	40
Jan. 6	2	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	28	19	12	14	45	36
Jan. 13	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	0	31	19	16	11	50	34
Jan. 20	1	0	1	0	5	4	1	0	22	17	15	20	45	41
Jan. 27	2	4	1	0	1	2	0	2	24	17	16	17	44	42
Feb. 3	2	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	27	23	19	13	53	38
Feb. 10	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	26	21	15	10	44	34
Feb. 17	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	14	19	14	8	30	32
Feb. 24	5	0	1	0	4	1	0	1	23	18	16	12	49	32

TABLE II (CONTINUED)

Week of:	Picture Books		Myth & Legend		Biography		Poetry		Fiction		Non-Fiction		Weekly Total	
	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E	C
Mar. 3	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	23	19	17	11	41	32
Mar. 10	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	27	18	18	13	50	32
Mar. 17	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	26	21	16	14	44	39
Mar. 24	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	20	20	12	49	32
April 14	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	30	24	18	12	51	38
April 21	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	23	18	14	10	38	31
April 28	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	27	22	16	13	44	38
TOTAL	47	50	14	4	46	45	7	7	677	529	424	385	1215	993

Table III shows the weekly mean number of books and the t-scores of the experimental and control groups on the total of books in all categories checked out of the library.

TABLE III  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISON OF THE NUMBER OF BOOKS IN  
ALL CATEGORIES CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	35.72	5.10			
				1.58	4.84	2.68
Experimental	28	43.36	6.66			

From an examination of Table III it was observed that the mean number of books of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group. The t-score of 4.84 was indicative of a significant difference at the .01 level between the two groups.

Table IV shows the weekly mean number of books and the t-scores of the experimental and control groups on the total number of non-fiction books checked out of the library during the experimental period.

TABLE IV  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISONS OF NON-FICTION  
BOOKS CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	12.86	4.00			
				.92	3.41	2.68
Experimental	28	16.00	2.82			

From observation of Table IV it was observed that the experimental group mean number of books in the non-fiction category was significantly higher at the .01 level of confidence than the control group mean.

Table V presents the weekly mean number of books and the t-test scores of the experimental and control groups on the total number of books classified as fiction which were checked out of the library by both groups during the experimental period.



TABLE V  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISON OF FICTION  
CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	18.89	2.90			
				.91	5.92	2.68
Experimental	28	24.28	3.80			

As may be observed in Table V, there was statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the mean number of non-fiction books checked out of the library during the experimental period.

The data presented in Table VI shows the control and experimental group weekly mean number of books and t-test scores on the number of books classified as biography which were checked out of the library during the study.

TABLE VI  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISON OF BIOGRAPHY BOOKS  
CHECKED OUT OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	1.61	1.11			
				.28	.14	2.68
Experimental	28	1.65	1.50			

It was observed in Table VI that the mean number of books of the two groups were nearly identical for number of biographies checked out of the library. The difference between the means obtained a t-value of .14 which was less than the required 2.68 required for a significant difference.

Table VII shows the weekly mean number of books and the t-test scores of the groups studied on the total number of books classified as myth and legend which were checked out of the library.

TABLE VII  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISON OF MYTH AND LEGEND  
BOOKS CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	.14	.44			
				.17	2.12	2.01
Experimental	28	.50	.73			

Upon analysis of the data in Table VII it can be observed that the experimental group mean was higher than that of the control group. The obtained t-value of 2.12 indicates a significant difference existed on the .05 level of confidence based upon a t-value of 2.01.

Table VIII shows the weekly mean number of books and t-test score of the groups studied on the total number of picture books which were checked out of the library.

TABLE VIII  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISON OF PICTURE BOOKS  
CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	1.79	1.81			
				.51	.22	2.68
Experimental	28	1.68	2.00			

As may be observed in Table VIII, the control group mean for the number of picture books checked out of the library is higher than the experimental group mean. No significant difference was found to exist.

Table IX presented data which shows the weekly mean number of books and t-test scores of the two groups regarding the number of poetry books checked out of the library during the experimental period.

TABLE IX  
WEEKLY MEAN COMPARISON OF POETRY BOOKS  
CHECKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY

Group	N	M	$\sigma$	$\sigma_{DM}$	Obt t.	Req t.
Control	28	.25	.50			
				.14	.00	2.68
Experimental	28	.25	.50			

Table IX mean scores for both groups was .25. The existence of this relationship indicates no significant difference between the experimental and control group in the number of poetry books checked out of the library.

### I. THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Questionnaires were used in this study to supply supplementary data which would serve as indicators of change in the amount and type of reading done by the members of the experimental group. The questionnaires used may be found in Appendix B.

#### The Parents of the Experimental Group

Checking a book out of the library does not necessarily indicate the book has been read, nor does it

include a measure of other reading which may have been available to the subjects of the experimental group. Therefore, the opinion of the parents of the experimental group subjects was felt to be significant since its purpose was to determine any change in the amount of reading at home either of books checked out of the school library or of other reading materials available, e.g., from home library or city library.

The opinions expressed by the twenty-eight parents' responses indicate that fifteen members of the experimental group read more than previously, nine members read the same amount, and four members read less than previously. Of the entire group, thirteen (46.5 percent) of the experimental subjects showed no change or read less than previously, fifteen (53.5 percent) read more than previously.

A further analysis of the questionnaire reveals that twelve (80 percent) of the fifteen subjects reading more, were classified by their teacher as being at sixth grade level or above in their reading ability; while three (20 percent) of the subjects reading more, were classified as below sixth grade level in their reading ability.

Two parents volunteered written remarks on their questionnaires. One parent felt her son had been reading

more and remarked: "He's reading a more varied choice of books now." Another parent who felt her daughter had been reading less remarked: "The reason for this could be the fact she is preoccupied with her horse."

### The Experimental Group

The unpredictable factors involved in utilizing children's opinions from questionnaires may temper the reliability of the data this obtained. Recognizing this, questionnaires were designed for the experimental group which might serve as indication of change in the variety of the groups reading interest and their favorite kinds of reading.

Questionnaires were presented to the children at the beginning of the study in September and at the conclusion of the study in April. Prior to responding to the questionnaires the subjects in the experimental group reviewed with the experimenter the meaning of each of the various categories of children's literature which were outlined on the questionnaires. The children were encouraged to be as accurate and honest as possible in making their responses to the questionnaires.

The basic design and manner of response to both questionnaires was similar. Table X shows the categories of children's literature presented on both questionnaires.

The children noted each category and were asked to mark any of the categories in which they had read over a certain period of time. On the questionnaire given in September, they were to mark any category in which they had read a book of that type since starting the fifth grade in September of the previous year. This was considered approximately a thirty-six week period, but may have also included some summer reading. On the questionnaire given in April, they were to mark any category in which they had read a book of that type since starting the sixth grade in September--a period of approximately twenty-eight weeks. In addition and at both times the questionnaires were presented, the children were to make a first and second choice of their favorite reading. Two choices were thought applicable for simplicity and to possibly avoid overlapping or confusion. Two choices would provide a measure of wider range of interest as well.

Table X shows the number of students who had read books in each of the twelve categories listed and the number of students who gave a given category either a first or second choice. The categories were presented in Table X in approximate decreasing order in the frequency of responses of the number of students who had read in a particular category. An analysis of the data showed no



great change in the type of books the children had been reading. The number of children reading in a given category shows no sharp changes except the relative decline in interest in animal stories (21-15); picture books (14-8); fairy tales (8-3); and an increase in the reading of non-fiction (9-14). Regarding favorite reading by the children, there was a noted decrease in their choice of animal stories which was balanced in some measure by an increase in reading realistic fiction (6-11) and non-fiction (4-9). A less noticeable change was noted in the other categories. Children's high interest in reading mystery stories seemed to remain constant (13-13). It was further noted that the total number of choices children made for reading in different categories were 139 and 128. The mean number of book choices was 3.86 for the September column over the approximate thirty-six week period. The mean number of book choices was 4.57 for the April column over the approximate twenty-eight week period.

TABLE X  
 THE VARIETY AND FAVORITE READING IN CATEGORIES  
 OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AT THE BEGINNING  
 AND END OF THE EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD

Categories of Books	Subjects Reading In A Given Category		Favorite Reading by First and Second Choice	
	Sept.	April	Sept.	April
Animal Stories	21	15	13	7
Mystery	20	20	13	13
Realistic Fiction	18	20	6	11
Picture Books	14	8	2	1
Biography	13	14	8	5
Non-fiction	9	14	4	9
Folk Tales	9	7	2	2
Myths and Legends	8	5	1	0
Fairy Tales	8	3	0	0
Fantasy	7	6	3	3
Poetry	6	5	1	1
Science Fiction	6	11	3	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to measure what effect the oral reading of literature to children had upon children's interest in reading.

Fifty-five sixth grade students from an Aberdeen, Washington, elementary school took part in the study. The study incorporated control of variables practical to the school setting.

The null hypothesis was: Comparison of the number of books checked out of the school library by sixth grade children will indicate no statistical significant difference in reading interest between the experimental group, who were read to aloud by their teacher on a daily basis, and the control group who were not exposed to literature in this manner.

Primary evaluation was founded on comparison of the weekly group means of total books and books in categories checked out of the school library. Secondary data about the amount of children's reading, changes in type of reading, and favorite reading was provided from questionnaire results of the experimental group and their parents.

An analysis of the data in Tables III to IX (pages 31-37), verified: (1) A significant difference ( $t=4.84$ ) existed in the weekly mean number of all categories of books checked out of the school library in favor of the experimental group. (2) A significant difference in favor of the experimental group existed in the weekly mean number of books checked out of the library in the categories non-fiction ( $t=3.41$ ), fiction ( $t=5.92$ ) myth and legend ( $t=2.12$ ). (3) No significant difference was found to exist in the weekly mean number of books checked out of the library in the categories biography ( $t=.14$ ), picture books (.22), and poetry (.00). (4) Parents of the experimental group children expressed their opinions on the amount of reading their child had been doing at home since starting the sixth grade. Fifteen of the parents responded that their child was reading more than usual, nine parents thought their child was reading the same as usual, and four parents felt their child was reading less than usual. (5) Results of the experimental group questionnaires as shown in Table X on page 42, verified no great changes in variety and favorite reading for the group. (6) Results of the experimental groups questionnaires showed the mean number of books read per week for the group was higher at the end of the experimental period than prior to it.

## II. CONCLUSION

A comparison of group totals of books in all categories checked out of the library was more indicative of general interest in reading. It can be observed from an examination of Table III on page 31, a t-score of 4.84 indicated a significant difference in favor of the experimental group. Based on this comparison, it was concluded that reading aloud had a positive effect on the experimental group. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there would be no statistically significant difference in reading interest between one group of sixth grade pupils who were read to aloud by the teacher on a daily basis and a second group of sixth grade pupils who were not exposed to literature in this manner was rejected.

From the analysis of evidence presented in Tables III to IX (pages 31-37) regarding the mean number of books read in each category, it was concluded that reading aloud may have influenced the experimental group in choosing more books of non-fiction, fiction, and myth and legend.

Concerning the category biography, in which no read aloud selection was chosen, both groups showed a near identical mean number (1.61-1.65) of books selected in this category. Read aloud selections by the investigator

was primarily in the categories non-fiction, fiction, and myth and legend. In these categories the experimental group had a higher mean number of books checked out of the library than the control group. This suggests that had treatment included reading from biographies, the mean number of books checked out of the library for the experimental group may have been higher. A similar condition may be noted in the categories picture books and poetry. Read aloud selections in these two categories was relatively light.

Recognizing that the results of the parent questionnaire reflect only their opinion and that an element of inaccuracy or bias may exist, it was concluded that their opinions supported the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Conclusion based on the children's questionnaire have recognized three factors which may tend to minimize conclusions drawn from them. First, the two pre and post questionnaires used do not cover an equal time period. Second, there is a question of reliability of responses from children. While children may be honest, they are not always accurate in their judgment. Third, peer influence may cause similarity in reading interests. However, the conclusions drawn from the results of the children's questionnaire were that little change in type of reading

resulted from listening to a variety of literature. The little change which did occur may have been prompted by an exposure to literature and may re-enforce other conclusions of this study.

Children of this age and school grade tend to select books related to one topic (17:35). Many sixth grade girls are avid readers of horse stories and sixteen girls (57 percent) were in the experimental group. In Table X, page 42, it was noted that animal stories declined in both being read and as a favorite choice, and that fiction and non-fiction increased as a favorite choice. These observations suggest that exposure to other types of literature may have influenced choice. Therefore, the drop in choosing animal stories was considered important.

The general conclusions of this study that the experimental groups reading interest increased appeared to be supported by the children's questionnaire. The weekly mean number in variety of books read in April was 4.57 compared to 3.86 in September. This increase would imply the children had done more reading during the study than before their exposure to literature.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study, other research, and recommendations of authorities in children's literature

state and, at least, imply the benefits of exposing children to literature. Reading to children has been shown in this study to have positive influence on children's interest in reading. The primary recommendation from this study would be that elementary teachers, especially intermediate grade teachers, read to children. Educators should also become aware of recent research concerning the use of literature in education, emphasize the use of literature in teaching language skills, and establish and utilize library facilities.

Research helpful to educators and appropriate at this time would be to design a comprehensive study in which the long range effects of teaching an established literature program to elementary children would be measured. Such a study could provide information relative to the effect of literature on children's reading ability, motivation to read, general knowledge, academic ability, and writing skill.



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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX A

## BOOKS READ TO THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

1. Bulfinch, Thomas. A Book of Myths. Illustrated by Helen Sewell. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958.
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APPENDIX B



September 23, 1968

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT KINDS OF BOOKS DO YOU READ?

- I. Read the list of types of books. Have you read any of these kinds of books since you started the fifth grade last September? If you have, put an X on the line next to each type of book you have read. If you have read none of these types of books, don't put any mark.
- II. Next, decide which of the types of books you have marked are your favorite kinds of book. Which is your first and second choice? On the line write 1 for first choice and 2 for second choice. If you did not check any books, don't make any choice.

## TYPES OF BOOKS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Fantasy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Animal stories
- \_\_\_\_\_ Biography
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poetry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Picture books
- \_\_\_\_\_ Science fiction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mystery
- \_\_\_\_\_ Myths and legends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Non-fiction (fact books)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other fiction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Folk tales
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fairy tales

April 30, 1969

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT KINDS OF BOOKS DO YOU READ?

- I. Has your interest in reading changed? Look at the list of the kinds of books. Have you read any of these kinds of books since you started the sixth grade last September? Please put an X on the line for each type of book you have read. (If you have read no books of these kinds, don't put any mark).
- II. Next, decide which of the types of books you have marked is now your favorite kind of book. Which is your first and second choice? On the line write 1 for first choice and 2 for second choice. If you did not check any books, don't make any choice.

## TYPES OF BOOKS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Fantasy
- \_\_\_\_\_ Animal stories
- \_\_\_\_\_ Biography
- \_\_\_\_\_ Poetry
- \_\_\_\_\_ Picture books
- \_\_\_\_\_ Science fiction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Mystery
- \_\_\_\_\_ Myths and legends
- \_\_\_\_\_ Non-fiction (fact books)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other fiction
- \_\_\_\_\_ Folk tales
- \_\_\_\_\_ Fairy tales

April 30, 1969

Dear Parent,

Since September, the boys and girls in Room 18 have been listening to a variety of children's literature.

I am interested in knowing what influence, if any, this may have had on your child's reading for pleasure (and of his own choice) at home.

Since the beginning of school this year, would you say your child has been reading for pleasure at home (1) less, (2) the same, or (3) more than usual.

Please circle the number which best expresses your opinion.

Thank you.

Mr. Grieb

CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGE

Graduate Division

Final Examination of

Donald R. Grieb

B. S., University of Idaho

1950 .

for the degree of

Master of Education

Committee in Charge

Dr. John E. Davis

Dr. James M. Monasmith

Mrs. Helen D. Patton

College Union Building

Room 204

Wednesday, August 6, 1969

10:00 a. m.

## Courses Included in Graduate Study

### Required Courses

Education	507	Introduction to Graduate Study
Education	570	Educational Foundations
Psychology	552	Human Growth and Development, Advanced
Education	600	Thesis

### Courses in Field of Specialization

Education	115R	Teaching Art in the Elementary School
Education	438	Individualized Instruction
Education	440X	Counseling the Hard to Manage Child
Education	551	Elementary School Curriculum
Education	562	Evaluation of School Program
Psychology	499X	Understanding Child Behavior
History	512	Methods and Materials in History Teaching
History	513	Geographic Background to Teaching History

### Elective Courses

Sociology	346X	Crime and Delinquency in the United States
Education	579	Elementary School Principal
Education	582	Internship in School Administration

## Courses Included in Graduate Study

### Elective Courses (continued)

Education	587	Educational Administration
History	510	Historiography
History	511	Biographical History of the United States
English	320	Children's Literature

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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Undergraduate Study

University of Idaho, 1946-1950.

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University of Utah, Extension Courses 1960-1961.

Three Resident Quarters 1961-1962.

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Professional Experience:

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1962-1969.

Additional Training:

NDEA History Institute at Oregon College of  
Education, Monmouth, Oregon, one summer, 1965.

Certification:

Standard Elementary Certificate.

Provisional Elementary Principal Certificate.