STORY ELEMENTS: WHICH IMPACT CHILDREN'S READING INTERESTS?

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ABSTRACT

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Children use a variety of tools when determining a text's value during book selection. Many studies have determined some of the desirable characteristics of books by interviewing, surveying, and observing students. Research has found many reasons why students select certain stories to read. Although there is an overwhelming amount of research on this topic, there is a lack of information on the impact of story elements in book selection. Because of this lack of research, this study focused on and evaluated which story elements were important to third grade students.

Teachers need to be active in children's book selection. It is important they assist students in selecting books that meet their interests. Many students turn away from reading because they do not find stories of interest. If teachers help students focus on desirable attributes of a book, children can become life-long readers.
I dedicate this thesis to my family and friends for always motivating me to reach my highest potential and pushing me to be my best. Thank you for your love and continuous support throughout all my endeavors.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

George, a fourth-grader, struggles with reading in school. His teacher, Ms. Smith, is just about to give up on him. She has tried everything she can think of to help him develop his reading skills. Ms. Smith has tried using easier material, skill worksheets, tutoring after school, and many other things. Although she has made such an effort, George still is not responding to reading. Most of George’s friends are interested in the latest series with Harry Potter. George wants to read the Harry Potter books too, but everyone tells him that he is not able because he is a weak reader. One day, George checks out one of the Harry Potter books from the library. All of his friends try to discourage him from reading it because they think it will be too hard for him. After a few days, George returns the book to the library. George’s teacher and friends ask, “Did you return the book because it was too hard?” George replies, “No! I finished the book last night. It was amazing!” Everyone was shocked and confused. How could this struggling fourth grade reader read something so challenging? How did this child overcome the reading struggle? Why was this book so powerful to the child? Many teachers, parents, and researchers ask these questions. The answer is usually interest.

According to Shafer (2003), students enjoy stories that are engaging and of interest to them. Interest appears to be the most influential factor in determining children’s reading preferences (Kragler & Nolley, 1996; Mellon, 1990; Shafer). Usually students find a story of interest when there is a personal connection to the text (Johnston, 1999; Samuels, 1989; Shafer). Individual experiences and perspectives on life are generally the personal connection that students make to texts (Rinehart, Gerlach, Wisell, & Welker, 1998). Stories that connect to a child’s home life and lifestyle also help establish a personal link with literature (Johnston). Since
children make a variety of connections with literature, it seems evident that it is important for parents and teachers to connect literature to children’s interests.

Statement of the Problem

Many children have a difficult time trying to find a book that is interesting and at their reading level. Children select inappropriate books for many reasons. Their friends could be reading the book, the illustrations look attractive, or they just lack knowledge of how to select appropriate books. It is hard to conclude exactly why children select unsuitable books; however, being exposed to interesting literature at the correct level may promote a more positive attitude in a reader, which could help promote life-long reading.

In classrooms, teachers should be aware of which books their students are selecting to read and assist them in making appropriate choices. By determining children’s reading interests, teachers can help students find more appropriate material to read and motivate them to become life-long readers.

Research Question

Most teachers wonder exactly what sparks a child’s interest in a book. Since it is important that teachers build a connection between a child’s reading interest and literature, this study addressed the elements of a story that interested third grade children. The three questions addressed were:

1. Is there a difference between boys and girls in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?
2. Is there a difference between races in their selection of stories based on selected story elements? and
3. Is there a difference between major urban and small town school districts in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?

Rationale

Interest in reading material is not only a strong driving force behind reading, but it also has a powerful impact on students’ reading abilities. Determining children’s interest can motivate children to read more difficult reading material (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). Children seem willing to take risks with literature that appeals to their interests. Comprehension is affected by interest, as well. Wolfson, Manning, and Manning (1984) found that students comprehend more when reading material of interest. Therefore, it is important that teachers tap into their students’ interests to help them read at a higher level and comprehend more successfully.

Interest in literature also affects life-long reading, a habit that is more easily acquired if interest is developed at an early age (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). The Matthew effect (Stanovich, 1986) plays a large role in reading. Children who read more frequently have larger vocabularies, have more access to resources, and are more willing to read than those children who lack these characteristics. The gap between the two groups continues to widen as the more developed readers read more and the less developed readers read less (Stanovich). As previously noted, teachers play a key role in helping children locate literature that is aligned with their interests. Students turn away from reading when they read books that are frustrating, boring, or seem unimportant (Carter, 1988). Teachers can help students enjoy reading if they take the time to find out their students’ interests.
Definition of Terms

Terminology valuable to the understanding of this study is defined in this section. The following definitions refer to the school districts selected.

Major Urban: “This group of districts includes all of the six largest core cities [in Ohio]. It also includes urban centers that have high concentrations of poverty” (Ohio Department of Education Office of Policy Research and Analysis [ODEOPRA], 1996, p. 2).

Small Town: “These districts tend to be small economic centers in rural areas of the state [of Ohio] outside of Appalachia. The districts tend to contain both some agricultural and some small town economic characteristics” (ODEOPRA, 1996, p. 2).

The following definitions refer to the elements of a story that will be used for coding purposes.

Character(s): “The [person] people or personified animals who are involved in the story” (Tompkins, 1997, p. 209). Characters can be developed by appearance, action, dialogue, and monologue in a story.

Setting: The location, weather, time period, and/or time of a story (Tompkins, 1997). One or more of the setting elements may be included in a story.


Theme: “The underlying meaning of a story and embodies general truths about human nature” (Tompkins, 1997, p. 214). The theme usually deals with the feelings and values of the characters.
Limitations

This study examined the elements of a story that third grade children used in story selection. According to Tompkins (1997), the elements of a story are characters, setting, plot, theme, and point of view. Student responses were limited to characters, setting, plot, and theme. Only these four story elements were addressed in the study because point of view would be too complex to code. Another constraint of this study was that the school districts were convenience sampled based on location, so the school districts may not represent the population as a whole. The books selected for this study were another limitation. A few books were selected for the study based on their availability, publishing date, variety of characters, and nonstereotypical actions of the characters. Other limitations included access to the participating classrooms, which was dependent on the teachers’ schedules. One last limitation was the nontraditional setting for selecting the literature. Students usually select books by looking through library shelves, not by having someone read a description about the story, as was the case in this study.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many studies have examined children’s reading interests and book selection, but there is no literature on story elements influence in book selection. Because of this, the present study asked the following questions:

1. Is there a difference between boys and girls in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?
2. Is there a difference between races in their selection of stories based on selected story elements? and
3. Is there a difference between major urban and small town school districts in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?

This chapter presents an overview of the professional literature dealing with children’s reading interests, factors in book selection (characterization, physical characteristics, author impact, content, plot, and genre), gender differences in reading selections (boys’ and girls’ reading selections, boys’ reading selections, and girls’ reading selections), responses to literature, and the teacher’s role.

Children’s Reading Interests

Many researchers over the years have tried to understand children’s reading preferences. Studies ranging from what genre students prefer to the differences in reading choices between boys and girls have been conducted (Chrisman & Bishop, 1985; Kincade, Kleine, & Vaughn, 1993; Swartz & Hendricks, 2000). A variety of age groups ranging from young children in preschool to young adults completed preference studies (Carter & Harris, 1982; Kragler & Nolley, 1996; Samuels, 1989). Despite the research completed on this topic, many educators still
do not know their students’ reading preferences. Determining these can help students become
life-long readers.

Interest appears to be the most influential factor in determining children’s preferences
(Kragler & Nolley, 1996; Mellon, 1990; Shafer, 2003). Kragler and Nolley share that a
component of life-long reading is developing interest at an early age. To foster life-long reading
it is important that children receive exposure to reading while they are young. All educators want
children to enjoy reading because it is such an important life skill. Stories that are engaging and
interesting will allow children to enjoy reading (Shafer). Students seem to enjoy literature when
stories, poems, etc., reflect their lives and offer information about their world (Johnston, 1999).

Interest in the story comes from a variety of factors. One important factor is a personal
connection to the actual text (Johnston, 1999; Samuels, 1989; Shafer, 2003) through perspectives
on life (Rinehart, Gerlach, Wisell, & Welker, 1998). A personal connection to the topic also
affects comprehension by improving a child’s recall of the story read (Kincade et al., 1993).
Personal experiences vary from child-to-child. Experiences and background knowledge are
important to students because it helps them understand a book (Hickman, 1984). Rinehart et al.
found that children revealed their emotions while reading books of interest. Experiences or
background knowledge that could help them make links to texts could come from their home
life, lifestyles, conflicts, or attitudes about life (Johnston).

Students often enjoy stories that they can compare to their own lives in some way
(Shafer, 2003). Carter (1988) reported that students “find books that are relevant to their daily
concerns” (p. 19). Samuels (1989) found that young adults liked books about problems that they
or someone they knew had, and Shafer explained that cultural experiences were important to the
young adults he studied. Some teenagers were interested in stories that could help them with
their own life problems like growing up, according to Strang (1946). Other teenagers read to fulfill a special interest like learning about people or how to do something (Mellon, 1990).

In Carter’s and Harris’ (1982) study, junior high students used the word “interesting” to describe books they chose to read. Of the reasons students cited for reading particular books, interest was the most frequent though details about why the books interested the students were not included (Carter & Harris).

Since many people are not passionate about reading, it is important that they find interesting books so they can immerse themselves more deeply in stories. According to Stevens (1999), stories will “show them the secrets in their own lives” (p. 28). Children bring different schemata, thoughts, and attitudes along with them when they read (Carter & Harris, 1982). Carter (1988) found that children jump from schema-to-schema to understand the content of a book and fulfill reading experiences. Because of this range of interests, a variety of books will be valued for different reasons. Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999) suggest that students’ interest is so powerful that if they are “interested in what is being taught and have access to material that interests them, learning, motivation, effort, and attitude improve” (p. 12).

Interest in reading material is not only a strong motivator for reading, but it creates a positive effect on other aspects of reading. Children attempt to read material that is more difficult when interest is present, yet they also monitor the difficulty (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). In fact, interest in a story can influence children to select literature that is more difficult and increase the period of time a child reads (Wolfson, Manning, & Manning, 1984).

Word difficulty plays an important role in the reading level of a text. If a child surveys a passage and cannot read many of the words, then the child will probably reject the book because it is too difficult. Children use the same strategy when the words are too easy. They want some
challenge, but they do not want to experience frustration while reading. Attention plays an important role in comprehension (Carter, 1988), as does interest. Attention keeps one focused throughout a story while interest affects comprehension because children process information at a deeper level when reading something of interest (Worthy et al., 1999). This deep processing helps children understand the story (Carter). Research has also shown that students can comprehend high interest material better than low interest material (Wolfson et al.). Interest can improve comprehension, which can improve students’ overall attitude about reading.

Allowing children to select their own books provides motivation to read and encourages growth (Kragler & Nolley, 1996), so educators should permit children to choose their own books based on their interests. Self-selection improved students’ attitudes about reading in one study (Kragler & Nolley). Kragler and Nolley found that children selected books at levels appropriate for them. However, it is important to help children choose books because if they select a book that is frustrating, boring, or unimportant, reading motivation declines (Carter, 1988). Strang (1946) discovered that children would reject reading if the chosen book was too difficult, wordy, slow moving, monotonous, sentimental, or the characters were too old.

Teachers should gently guide children in strategies for selecting books (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). Children like the feeling of ownership. When they choose their own books, they fulfill this need. Kragler and Nolley believe it is important that children select books at all levels. Since they are able to read more complicated material when interested, children should not have a problem reading (Kragler & Nolley). Kragler and Nolley also found that children choose books more for the topic than for the appropriateness of the reading level.
Factors in Book Selection

It has already been established that it is important for children to select their own books based on their interests. Asselin (2003) explains that researchers have tried using a variety of techniques to determine how children select books that interest them, though results may be limited because the studies did not include the complete range of literature available to students (Asselin). Children use a variety of techniques when determining if a book is of interest to them. Many students use structural indicators. For example, Samuels (1989) found that 59% of the respondents in her study used structural clues. Some of these clues included book thickness, the number of pages, the illustrations, and the cover. Students also relied heavily on the surface structure of a book in a study conducted by Fleener, Morrison, Linek, and Rasinski (1997).

Another indicator is the topic of the book (Samuels, 1989). Other interest indicators used include back of the book summaries, titles, critic quotes, the author’s name, chapter headings, and sample readings (Rinehart et al., 1998). However, children’s main criteria for selecting and liking books are characterization, physical book characteristics, the author, content, plot, genre, recommendations.

Characterization

Children have noted that characterization is very important in selecting a book. A study of junior high students completed by Carter and Harris (1982) found that the students liked characters who acted as they did. Samuels (1989) found similar results. Her young adult study found that subjects related to characters through their feelings and relationships. Children enjoy literature in which characters’ experiences are similar to their own (Rinehart et al., 1998). In fact, children expect experiences related to their own experiences when reading a book (Rinehart et al.). External circumstances like economic status, family situations, and school life were also
character traits to which students were able to relate (Carter & Harris). Other studies, such as those conducted by Carter (1988) and Swartz and Hendricks (2000), have found that students like characters in series books because they come to know them. For the same reason, students also desire book characters from television and movies (Kragler & Nolley, 1996; Swartz & Hendricks). Whatever the interest students have in book characters, it is evident that a personal connection with the characters is highly valued.

**Physical Characteristics**

When selecting a book for reading, children look at not only characters, but also at the book’s physical attributes. Kragler and Nolley (1996) found that students selected books that had attractive covers and appealing pictures or illustrations. Visual appeal does appear to have an impact on students when selecting a book. Children appraise the visual appeal of the cover, illustrations, and other book features. Young adults and junior high students enjoyed books that showed maps, blueprints, and photos (Carter & Harris, 1982; Samuels, 1989). Students with special needs also selected eye-catching books (Swartz & Hendricks, 2000). Attractive books spark children’s curiosity. Title and actual length of a book were also characteristics that children considered (Swartz & Hendricks). It seems apparent that no matter what characteristic of a book students are examining, physical characteristics play an important role in their selections.

**Author Impact**

Many researchers have found author recognition to be important to children when they are determining what book to read. Kragler and Nolley (1996) found that some fourth grade students select books written by a favorite author. Familiarity with an author influenced students who read for pleasure (Fleener, Morrison, Linek, & Rasinski, 1997). Students enjoy series books by authors with whom they are already familiar (Carter, 1988; Chrisman & Bishop, 1985; Swartz
& Hendricks, 2000). Swartz and Hendricks made the argument that books in a series could be
considered desirable because children are comfortable with the characters in the story. This
element of comfort has much to do with children’s prior knowledge of the text. Prior knowledge
helps children relax and focus their attention on understanding the story. However, it is important
to recognize “that general preferences may change regularly, as evidenced by the bestseller lists
and preference studies over the years” (Worthy et al., 1999, p. 24).

Leibowicz (1983) also found that children like books by a specific author. Many children
in Leibowicz’s study expressed an interest in stories written and illustrated by Tomie de Paola.
Why certain authors receive more recognition than others is still not clear. Children may have
prior experience with some stories through their parents or teachers, so they develop a preference
for an author or book because of that familiarity (Carter, 1988). The author’s style of writing is
also a determining factor for choosing books (Samuels, 1989) Young adults preferred descriptive
yet easy-to-read texts and favored an action style.

Content

A book’s subject matter plays a role in determining what book students will select to
read. Content appears to hold value and engage young readers (Carter, 1988; Kragler & Nolley,
1996; Mellon, 1990). For example, a child who wanted a book on animals looked for that
specific content in the text. Mellon found that rural teenagers read about special interests that
sparked their attention. These special interests usually related to learning about people or how to
acquire a certain skill. Curiosity sparks questions to which children want answers, so they read to
satisfy this need.
Plot

A desirable trait for a book for many children is the plot. Leibowicz (1983) found that children like plots that are episodic. They enjoy these stories because they proceed event-by-event. They may also enjoy episodic plots because they are easy to understand and follow. Leibowicz also discovered children’s enjoyment of plots that focus on characters with various points of view. In a study conducted by Carter and Harris (1982), junior high students mentioned plot as a desirable factor in books. Carter’s and Harris’ subjects shared that they would evaluate the plot of a story on the book’s jacket or review section, so it appears to play a role in children’s choices.

Genre

There is an abundance of research on the types of books to which children are attracted. Leibowicz (1983) found that children like books that are simple to comprehend. Mellon (1990) discovered easy-to-understand books were also important to rural teens. Children want reader-friendly books so they can relax and enjoy reading, a notion that relates to the role of comprehension in sustaining interest. Carter (1988) also found that children increase their attention while reading if they understand the story.

Students value genre as much as the ability to comprehend the text. Mystery and adventure are two genres they rate highly (Chrisman & Bishop, 1985; Kincade et al., 1993; Samuels, 1989). Rinehart et al. (1998) discovered that eighth graders enjoyed adventure and thrillers the most. Samuels noted that mystery, adventure, and suspense are important to young adults. Mystery was also popular with children who are accelerated learners (Chrisman & Bishop). Mystery, adventure, and suspense all have an element of surprise involved. The action in these genres engages and excites readers across age and grade levels.
Students value other genres as well. The participants in one study deemed informational, recreational, and family stories important (Kincade et al., 1993). Chrisman and Bishop (1985) recognized the popularity of fantasy. Children who were gifted often enjoyed fantasy books along with the favored genres of mystery and adventure. Leibowicz (1983) likewise noted the importance of fantasy with the children he studied. Fantasy contains some experiences to which students can relate, but also contains elements with which students cannot identify.

Humor appears as a desirable genre to read. Chrisman’s and Bishop’s (1985) study with children who were accelerated identified humor as a main reason to read particular texts. In fact, it was cited as a significant motivational factor by a majority of the students. Comics are a category of humor that many enjoy. Some other humorous books include joke and riddle books (Chrisman & Bishop). Norvell’s (1946) twelve-year study noted that students reacted favorably to humor “except where the humor is of the subtle type” (p. 532). Doiron (2003) found that both genders enjoyed humor. A study of rural teenagers found that they read for entertainment (Mellon, 1990). A component of entertainment is humor. No matter what the age group, it appears that students enjoy reading humorous books.

Some other genres of literature that students find interesting include romance, nonfiction, and scary books. Carter and Harris (1982) received input from students that romance is acceptable if the story has limited involvement between a boy and girl. Mellon (1990) found that rural teenage girls read romance novels because their mothers purchased and read them. A romance story can be both appropriate and engaging for students. Teenagers may enjoy romance because it imitates what they are experiencing at the time. Carter (1988) reported that students were inclined toward books that dealt with their daily concerns.
Nonfiction is interesting for students who want to know how something works (Carter & Harris, 1982). Mellon (1990) found that rural teenagers read nonfiction for leisure. Most often, the nonfiction categories selected by boys and girls were biography and science. Mellon also found that rural teenagers identified magazines and newspapers as nonfiction materials. Teenagers reported that they read a variety of magazines for leisure. Mellon also noted that parents were usually purchasing magazines for themselves. Students typically read two types of newspapers each day. Students read their local newspaper and most often one national newspaper (Mellon). Some students read more than two newspapers daily. Worthy et al. (1999) observed different results. “Materials at the bottom of the list for all subgroups were encyclopedias, historical information books, math/science, and biographies” (p. 20). Although this result is negative, it does suggest that children are reading nonfiction; however, they may select a different genre to read before they select nonfiction.

Carter and Harris (1982) also found that a favorite reading category frequently identified by children was one they labeled as “gross.” Although this is not a particular genre, it does play a factor in children’s literature interests. Carter and Harris assumed that “scariness” and “grossness” were characteristics of horror books. They concluded that, “this fascination with horror might well be a component of the value placed on scary aspects of various books” (p. 45). Movie producers have been using horror for years and have found it to be successful, so it should not be surprising that authors are beginning to use this technique in books (Carter & Harris). Although the results of which genre children like best vary among the studies, it appears that children do place value on the genre when selecting a story to read.
**Recommendations**

Recommendations come from a variety of sources and play an important role when children select a book to read. Hickman (1984) reported that most children read the same books as their friends. Kragler and Nolley (1996) found that students read what other students from their class read or what peers say are good books. Eighth graders read books based on recommendations and comments from friends (Rinehart et al., 1998), as did rural teenagers (Mellon, 1990). Carter (1988) and Swartz and Hendricks (2000) also discovered in their studies that students used recommendations to select a book. Recommendations were sometimes direct while others were indirect. A direct recommendation happens when a person discusses a book with another person. An example of an indirect recommendation is a student who overhears other students discussing a book (Rinehart et al.). Both types of recommendations encourage children to read the book to find out for themselves if it was good.

Hickman (1984) suggests that children are interested in their friends’ interests and recommendations because it helps them find books with less effort. Although recommendations from friends are highly valued by students, White and Greenwood (1995) reported that students are able to ignore peer pressure when choosing a book. Students were still interested in what their friends were reading, but they chose a book based on their own interests (White & Greenwood). Regardless, Hickman explains that children can help others become readers through these recommendations.

Parents and school staff also provide recommendations to children on what to read (Fleener et al., 1997; Mellon, 1990; Rinehart et al., 1998). Fleener et al. and Rinehart et al. both found that students also utilize recommendations from family members other than parents. This could include a brother or sister, aunt or uncle, or grandparent. Students mentioned teachers’
recommendations having an impact on their reading selections as well (Fleener et al.; Kragler et al., 1996; Mellon). Mellon acknowledged recommendations from library specialists as a determinant for selection. Although teacher and library specialists provided recommendations, they were not frequent enough to have a large impact on students (Fleener et al.)

*Unsure*

Although most children are able to verbalize why they selected a certain book, some cannot articulate their rationale. Kragler and Nolley (1996), for example, found that some fourth graders could not explain why they chose a certain book. These fourth graders indicated that they read the book by default because they could not find anything else (Kragler & Nolley). Carter (1988) reported similar findings. Children who were vague about a selection normally responded that they had no idea why they selected the book (Carter).

Numerous influences shape students’ reading choices. Interests vary across age and reading ability, so it is important that students learn appropriate strategies for selecting books. Self-selection is a strong motivational tool (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). By allowing students choices in their reading selections, educators can nurture children’s life-long reading skills.

Gender Differences in Reading Selections

All children differ from one another. Because of this, researchers have conducted studies to see where differences lie between children with regard to reading. One of the biggest is a function of age (Hickman, 1983; Kincade et al., 1993). As a student grows older and becomes more mature, book preferences change. Teachers expect students in sixth grade, for example, to read chapter books because of their growing sophistication.

Kincade et al. (1993) also found gender to have an impact on reading selections. Chrisman and Bishop (1985) reported that gender is the biggest determining factor. According to
Chrisman’s and Bishop’s study with children who are gifted, gender had more of an impact on reading selections than did age or intelligence (Chrisman & Bishop). There is a substantial amount of variation among students of different genders; however, educators should not make assumptions about children’s interests based on gender alone.

Intelligence is also a significant variable in children’s reading interests (Chrisman & Bishop, 1985). Chrisman and Bishop found “relationships between reading interests and intelligence, reading achievement, age, sex, socioeconomic level, grade level, geographic location, and race” (p. 201). There is not a way to change the differences in students’ reading selections because each child is so uniquely different in needs, interests, and background (Swartz & Hendricks, 2000). Since there are so many variables to consider among children with regard to reading selections, it is important that teachers assess their own students’ interests.

Boys’ and Girls’ Reading Selections

Although there are differences in boys and girls’ reading selections, some preferences are the same for both genders. Both genders enjoy humorous stories (Doiron, 2003; Norvell, 1946), though the topic of the humorous story may vary between genders. Boys and girls both enjoy books about specific holidays (Doiron). They also both enjoy stories in which animals are involved (Norvell). Some other categories that both genders enjoy are adventure, mystery, and games (Norvell). Even though there are similarities between genders, Mellon (1990) reports “girls’ reading preferences tend to be more imaginative while boys’ reading preferences are often informal” (p. 226). These differences are outlined below.

Boys’ Reading Selections

Boys’ reading selections vary from group to group, but there are generalizations about their choices. Many boys enjoy adventure (Norvell, 1946; Rinehart et al., 1998; Wolfson et al.,
1984), and especially like war stories (Norvell). Boys also find enjoyment in reading science material (Norvell; Wolfson et al.). Books featuring animals (Doiron, 2003; Norvell; Wolfson et al.) or wild animals (Norvell), snakes, and dinosaurs (Doiron) are among their favorites. Boys also view books about sports, machines, and vehicles as favorable (Doiron; Wolfson et al.) Asselin’s (2003) study found that boys were interested in nonfiction, which may explain their topic choices. For independent reading, boys appear to read more nonfiction than girls (Doiron). Rinehart et al. found that boys have a broader range of interests. All of these studies confirm that boys do like to read an assortment of literature.

**Girls’ Reading Selections**

Girls’ reading selections vary from group-to-group. One generalization about girls’ reading selections is that girls enjoy fiction (Asselin, 2003). Romance is one genre they frequently read (Norvell, 1946; Rinehart et al., 1998). Both Norvell and Wolfson et al. (1984) found that girls enjoy stories about family or home life and children. Doiron (2003) noticed that girls read books about friends. Personal problems were also another topic among girls (Wolfson et al.), reflecting their desire to read about familiar life issues (Samuels, 1989). Girls may enjoy the stories not only because they deal with family and friends, but because a conflict is presented and usually resolved.

Girls also have an interest in stories that are about animals like their own pets (Doiron, 2003). Poems are another category girls enjoy (Norvell, 1946). They view reading as a social and engaging activity (Asselin, 2003). Even though girls’ preferences are different from boys’, both genders are able to find selections that fulfill their individual interests.
Responses to Literature

Children respond in numerous ways to literature. Some responses are verbal and others are nonverbal. Hickman (1984) reveals that watching and listening during observations are powerful tools. These tools cue educators as to what children are thinking about books, enabling them to judge students’ interests (Hickman, 1984). According to Hickman (1983), teachers are powerful determiners of children’s responses. The teacher is “producer and director of children’s experiences with books” because the teacher “arranges time, provides materials, controls the physical setting of the classroom, and presents certain expectations about what is to happen” (Hickman, 1984, p. 82). Children notice teachers’ attitudes, habits, and actions and learn from this modeling.

Many of children’s responses to literature are verbal. Some indicate overall interest in book. Hickman (1986) found that children would admit to liking a book by saying it is “good” and not liking a book by saying it is “boring.” Johnston (1999) found similar results. “Good” is a common term and a verbal response that does not offer an explanation (Hickman, 1983). Students in Johnston’s study made comments about how some books do not interest them. Hickman (1983) also found positive verbal responses including common terms like “neat” and “funny” from children. Although the responses indicate that the readers enjoyed their books, they do not reveal why (Hickman, 1983). Plot retellings are another type of response to stories. The retellings usually included characters from the book (Hickman, 1986). Another verbal response is evident when a child shares his or her interest with a friend by reading aloud a passage from the reading selection. Sometimes classmates act out stories to show their response (Hickman, 1983). Children share many of their verbal responses about literature with their peers outside of class. Social interactions during which verbal responses to books take place are at lunch, after
school, and at school events (Rinehart et al., 1998). This possibly could be because children are not given time to interact with each other about literature in class. Reading discussions are a place where children make verbal responses in class if such communications are present (Hickman, 1986). No matter what the reading selection is, children offer verbal responses of some sort. It is important to tap into these responses to understand children and their reading preferences.

Nonverbal responses are just as important and expressive as verbal responses (Hickman, 1983). Many times young children do not have the language skills necessary to respond to literature. This is often true for preschoolers. Hickman (1986) studied preschoolers’ nonverbal responses to literature and found that younger children use body language to respond. Preschool children often twist and turn, shake, bounce, and clap during stories (Hickman, 1986). Children also laugh and during stories they enjoy (Hickman, 1983). Children who are interested in stories also point to the pictures or parts of the narrative they enjoyed (Hickman, 1984). Repeatedly, they thrust a book under a friend or adult’s face (Hickman, 1983). Hickman (1983) also found that facial expressions tell a lot about children’s reactions to reading. They smile, open their mouths, and raise their eyebrows when responding to a story. Some other nonverbal responses come with other activities in school like art or writing (Hickman, 1986). Children express their feelings by writing a story similar to the one read to them. Sometimes their writing includes the characters from a recently read book. Children’s artwork usually displays a scene from a previous story. Any type of response may include the aspects of the topic, characters, issues, or plot (Rinehart et al., 1998).
The Teacher’s Role

The role of the teacher in developing children’s reading interests is essential. “Teachers need to be aware of the strategies students actively employ during the process in order to promote a lifetime love of books and reading” (Fleener et al., 1997, p. 75). It is imperative that teachers are knowledgeable about students’ strategies for selecting books, so they teach can help children learn to choose books related to their interests. However, teachers need to exercise caution because children lose interest in reading when monitored too closely (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). Children do not enjoy frequent questions about what they are going to select to read. Wolfson et al. (1984) recommend that “educators should not constrain book choices of boys and girls” (p. 9) for the same reason. Teachers should model strategies for selecting books, but allow students opportunities to select their own without help.

Helping children develop strategies is just as valuable as providing the necessary materials for students. Reiff (1985a) explains this by saying, “The teacher who selects materials and strategies based on identifying learning/reading styles of children will provide for the diverse reading styles in the classroom. Instruction will enable the student to have options in learning” (p. 29). Books should fit the diversity and range of students in a classroom (Kragler & Nolley, 1996). By providing resources that allow children to have choices, their reading interests will grow. Worthy et al. (1999) found that many children purchased books from book clubs and stores. Teachers can help children develop more interests by offering book club subscriptions. Worthy et al. also found that students borrow books from school and public libraries frequently. Teachers can capitalize on this by providing a variety of materials and resources for children to borrow. Since children use classroom tools the most, it is important to represent the diverse world with assorted materials. These might include books, magazines, and games.
Teachers need to provide in class opportunities for students to read and reflect as well as time for children to interact with peers about books (Fleener et al., 1997). Students need to talk during class to share interests in books since through this interaction students can influence and motivate each other (Carter, 1988; Fleener et al.). Presentations, read alouds, book sharings, and poster sessions are just a few ways teachers can promote reading (Worthy et al., 1999). Students in Kragler’s and Nolley’s (1996) study, for example, mentioned that they enjoyed book sharings. Teachers also need to be discussion leaders for literature. There is no denying the power of the word of mouth, and teachers need to use it to motivate children to read. Teachers also can share with children the diverse interests that exist within their classroom. If teachers help children learn self-selection strategies, provide appropriate materials, and allow students to interact during discussions about books, children can expand their own reading interests.

A variety of opportunities should be offered to children for expressing their interest in books. Writing and art experiences are important activities, so children can express their interest in other ways than just talking (Hickman, 1984). Children can respond to literature in other ways if given the opportunity to do so. For example, a child may not like or be good at acting out a story, but may excel at writing a script. By allowing for a variety of expression styles, teachers can meet their students’ needs. “A teacher who knows his/her own learning style as well as the students’ reading style in the classroom will have a systematic and effective procedure for planning instruction” (Reiff, 1985a, p. 29). Reiff (1985b) conveys that students who learn through their own learning style, learn more rapidly.

Teachers need to take the time to find out what their students really do like. Most often what adults perceive as students’ preferences are not really accurate (Worthy et al., 1999). Though educators are encouraged to use the book lists containing popular selections that journals
publish each year, they should be careful because adults compose the lists (Carter & Harris, 1982).

There are a variety of ways teachers can find out about their students’ interests. Teachers can interview, observe responses, use questionnaires, journals, and informal reading inventories to find out about students’ interests. Worthy et al. state that the lack of materials students have access to may constrict their actual interests and preferences. Because of this, it is important to represent all media types in classrooms and libraries (Asselin, 2003).

Summary

Children’s reading preferences vary for a number of reasons, the most significant being interest. Interest is so powerful that it can affect a child’s reading ability. A connection between the text and children's own personal lives and experiences also motivate interest. Children use a variety of strategies to determine their interest in a book. Some interest is inspired by recommendations from friends, family, and school staff. Other students are interested in a particular genre. Most children enjoy adventure, mystery, and humorous books.

It is important that teachers observe the many responses children demonstrate toward literature. Children’s responses vary between facial expressions, body language, verbal comments, writing, and artwork. Teachers need to help children develop strategies for selecting books, provide a variety of materials and resources, allow time for social interaction about books, use other subjects like writing and art for literature response, and survey students’ interests. If teachers are able to provide the necessary experiences with literature, then children will develop essential reading skills and become life-long readers.

Based on this literature and the lack of literature on story elements as a factor in book selection, the current study was designed to address the following research questions:
4. “Is there a difference between boys and girls in their selection of stories based on selected story elements,”
5. “Is there a difference between races in their selection of stories based on selected story elements,” and
6. “Is there a difference between major urban and small town school districts in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?”
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Interest is a significant factor in children’s book selections. Many students select a particular book to read because something about it interests them. Teachers need to be aware of their students’ interest so they can help children select books related to their interests. Research has shown that children who read about their interests are more likely to become life-long readers (Kragler & Nolley, 1996; Mellon, 1990; Shafer, 2003; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). The goal of this study was to determine the following:

1. Is there a difference between boys and girls in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?

2. Is there a difference between races in their selection of stories based on selected story elements? and

3. Is there a difference between major urban and small town school districts in their selection of stories based on selected story elements?

Methods

Research Design

The researcher read nine books with various characters, settings, plots, and themes and wrote summaries of each book (see Appendix A). Each summary contained information about the character(s), setting(s), plot(s), and theme(s). The researcher used a mixed method conversion with open-ended response sheets to obtain data from the participants. The researcher coded all response sheets into the story elements: character, setting, plot, and theme for further examination. An ambiguous category called ‘other’ was added after coding because some student responses were unclear. All research questions required extensive evaluation using
descriptive statistics to discover patterns among the categories. These descriptive statistics involved using frequency counts and graphs.

**Participants**

This study was conducted to identify which story elements third grade students used to determine if a story was interesting. The participants were third grade students for this study because of their early childhood classification and their ability to write. Students from four third grade classrooms in northern Ohio were the participants for this study. The researcher randomly selected two classrooms from a major urban district and two from a small town district. To obtain a larger sample size in each school district classification, the researcher used more than one classroom in each district. The researcher used a convenience sample to select the districts and conducted an evaluation for each district based on driving time for the researcher, access to classrooms, and district classification or definition by the Ohio Department of Education. The researcher randomly selected the two elementary schools from each district with assistance to a person who is not related to the study. All elementary schools for the small town district were typed up and put in a box. A person who is not related to the study selected two pieces of paper from the box, which represented the schools chosen. The researcher asked the same person to complete the same procedure for the major urban district. Each selected school’s administrator received a letter asking for their participation in the study. Any third grade classroom in each building that returned the permission slip was entered into the study. The researcher selected children to participate based on the following: (a) parental permission and (b) their ability to attend two 20-30 minute story summary sessions and complete the response sheet.
Materials

The researcher shared nine books during this study. *What Will Mommy Do When I’m at School?* (Johnson, 1990), *Speak English for Us, Marisol!* (English, 2000), *Secret Place* (Bunting, 1996), *Tonio’s Cat* (Calhoun, 1996), *Radio Man* (Dorros, 1993), *Once Upon a Farm* (2003), *Just Like Mama* (Lewis, 2002), *Mama Talks Too Much* (Russo, 1999), and *Sweet Potato Pie* (Lindsey, 2003) were the books chosen for this study. The researcher read a variety of books containing different story elements for this study. It was important that the book was within the last 10-15 years. The researcher also evaluated the books for overall detail and interesting storyline. The researcher tried to evaluate from a child’s perspective. Even though some of the criteria used to select a book were not presented to the students, the researcher assessed the book by the appearance of the cover and illustrations, wording of text, the author impact, and overall storyline to narrow the literature to a smaller sample. After an extensive evaluation of children’s books, the researcher selected the remaining books based mainly on the following criteria:

1. Availability.
2. An urban or rural setting.
3. A distinguishable African-American, Caucasian, or Hispanic character.
4. A recognizable plot.
5. A recognizable theme.

See Appendix B for specific story elements in each book.

The researcher created the summaries used for the response. The researcher read each story and took notes on each book. The notes included each book criteria, so the students could have all the information since they would not view the book. It was important to include the setting classification, gender of the character, and race of the character to provide students a
variety of choices. The researcher wrote the summaries ensuring that each one was written between a third and fourth grade reading level because that range level is the listening level for third grade students. The reading level was determined using Flesh Kincaid on the computer. Each part of the criteria was included in the summaries read to the students (see Appendix A).

Instrumentation

A response sheet was created by the researcher to capture the participants’ reactions to the summaries read to them (see Appendix C). It was open-ended so the researcher could gather more information from the participants. There were two sentences for each student to complete. The first sentence asked the student to share why he or she would like the book shared based on the summary read to him or her. The second sentence required the students to answer why he or she would not like the book based on the summary the researcher read.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was completed to ensure that the researcher would receive the appropriate responses on the response sheet. The researcher held a discussion with the students after completion of the pilot study. The students commented that it was hard for them to remember certain details to write on the response sheet. As a result, the researcher redesigned the response sheet to include a copy of the summary read. This would allow the students to follow along while the researcher read the summary and to review while writing their answers on the response sheet. The researcher finalized this change after the completion of the pilot study.

Procedures

Nine different summaries were read to the participants by the researcher (see Appendix A). Each summary contained information about the character(s), setting(s), plot(s), and theme(s). Times were arranged with the different teachers for the researcher to conduct two, 30-minute
sessions held on two different days within the same week. These sessions utilized whole class instruction and consisted of the researcher reading the summaries to the students. Prior to the researcher reading the summaries, consent forms were distributed to each student (see Appendix D). After the students gave their consent, the permission forms were collected. The researcher read to the students to control the variation of tone and excitement. Each summary took approximately two minutes to read. No pictures were shown to the students because the researcher wanted to limit the student responses to the story elements only. The researcher was concerned that providing illustrations would influence student choices. There was no discussion or questions allowed after the researcher read the summaries. This was to control that each classroom received the same information about the stories. After each summary was read, the researcher provided three to five minutes for the students to complete the response sheet on the summary read. The researcher read the same summaries to the students in each classroom in the following pre-selected random order: (a) *What Will Mommy Do When I’m at School?*, (b) *Speak English for Us, Marisol!*, (c) *Secret Place*, (d) *Tonio’s Cat*, (e) *Radio Man*, (f) *Once Upon a Farm*, (g) *Just Like Mama*, (h) *Mama Talks Too Much*, and (i) *Sweet Potato Pie*. The first four summaries were read during the first meeting session, and the last five were read during the second meeting session. Reading the literature in this order allowed the researcher to control for each classroom.

Data Collection

After the participants heard each summary, the researcher provided time for the students to respond on a response sheet provided (see Appendix C). The response sheet was open-ended, so the students could respond in various ways.
Data Analysis

After the researcher collected the response sheets, the response sheets were coded based on the story elements of character, setting, plot, or theme. The researcher coded responses that mentioned the character like, “He is just like me,” or “She speaks two languages,” as character responses. Responses that contained the date, time of day, or reference to city or country, the researcher coded these as setting. Responses that mentioned the overall theme like friendship or love were placed in the theme category. The researcher put responses that mentioned the plot like “He has to leave his dog behind,” or “She feels conflict,” into the plot category. After coding, the researcher entered quantitative data into the computer to compare using frequency counts and graphs. Using frequency counts and graphs, the researcher evaluated the results to determine if there was a difference among the story elements and gender, race, and geographical area.

Summary

In each of the four classrooms in this study, the researcher read nine different summaries of books dealing with various characters, settings, themes, and plots. Students in each classroom listened to the same summaries in the same order. After each summary, students participated in an open-ended response sheet. This study provided information on which selected story elements third grade students used for book selection and if there was a difference among boys and girls, races, or geographical area.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to analyze what story elements students in the third grade valued when selecting a book to read. The results were analyzed for any differences in gender, race, and geographical area. The chapter will be organized by presenting the overall results, the differences between gender, the differences between race, and the differences between geographical codes as identified by the Ohio Department of Education.

Results

Students were read summaries about nine different books. Each summary shared contained a variety of characters, settings, plots, and themes from the books. After each summary, students were asked to write a response on why they would like and dislike the story based on the information provided. The researcher collected the responses and coded them into the categories character, setting, theme, or plot. During categorization of the student responses for each book, the researcher added a fifth category (other) due to the ambiguous answers received. The researcher tallied the results for each question and used a mixed-method conversion to analyze the results for any patterns. The means for each analysis cam from averaging the nine books for each story element classification.

Demographics

The participants all attended the third grade at either a major urban or small town district. Of the participants, 32 students were from the small town district while the other 20 students were from the major urban district. Approximately 75% of the students were White and 35% were non-White. Non-White students comprised of African-American, Hispanic, and Multi-Racial students. There were 27 females and 25 males who participated in this study.
Responses

Overall

After visiting all the schools and coding the response sheets, the data showed that students use different story elements for liking and disliking literature (see Appendix E). Character had the highest mean at 16.7 for liking literature based on the coded responses by the students, according to the results in Appendix E. The second most conveyed story element for liking a book was theme with a mean of 13 while setting was the third highest mean at 7.2.

For disliking a story, the results show plot as the number one revealed story element after coding for disliking a book with a mean of 27.5. The second category recognized was other, which held 10.1 as a mean. Character with a mean of 6.8, setting with a mean of 2.9, and theme with a mean of 1.2 were also reported; however, not as many students expressed statements that were coded into these story elements as much as plot.

Gender

Females

Females (see Appendix F) followed the previous pattern for liking and disliking stories. Character appears to be the number one reason on why students would like a particular story with a mean of 8.9. The coded results also show that theme seems to be important when determining a book of interest with a mean of 7.1. The third valued story element for liking a book was setting at 4.6 while plot and other had the least amount of coded responses.

The results share that plot was the story element used the most for disliking a story with a mean of 15.4. The other category was noted as the second highest category with a mean of 4.9. Character, setting, and theme rounded out the tallies with all of these categories receiving means under three.
**Males**

Males (see Appendix G) also followed the previous pattern. Character and theme were the most reported story elements for liking a story. Character had a mean of 7.8 while theme had a mean 5.9. Setting, plot, and other were the third, fourth, and fifth categories for liking a story; however, the means for these categories were less than five.

Plot and other were categories shared for disliking a book after coding. Plot received a mean of 13.1 while other only had a mean of 5.3. Character, setting, and theme finished out the disliking category for males and females, but again there were not large responses in these categories. It seems that there is no difference in the story elements selected by females and males.

**Race**

There were two different race categories involved in the study. White (see Appendix H) and Non-White (see Appendix I) were the categories to which the students belonged. Each race category can be viewed in the appropriate appendices. The results for liking and disliking the stories were similar to the previous results.

**White**

Character, mean of 10.9, was the category that contained the most responses after coding for liking a story. The second highest category was theme with a mean of 8.9. Setting also appeared to be important to the students since it had a mean of 6.1. The plot and other categories rounded out the results with means that were not comparable to character, theme, and setting.

For disliking a story, plot was tallied as the most important story element to the students with a mean of 21.1. Again, the other category was the second most reported category with a mean of five. Character, setting, and theme were also noted, but did not have high means.
Non-White

Character was the story element recognized most frequently for liking literature while theme was the second most important story element to the students based on the coding results. Character had a mean of six and theme had a mean of four. Setting, 2.8; other, 2.2; and plot, 1.4 were also recognized story elements.

Plot with a mean of 7.4 was expressed as the number one reason to dislike a story according to the averages. The other category was the second most frequent category with a mean of 5.2. Character, setting, and theme were also noted, but the averages for these categories were all below the value of two. It appears that there is no difference in the story elements selected and race.

School District Classification

The two different district codes, major urban (See Appendix J) and small town (See Appendix K), held results comparable to those found previously.

Small Town District

Character was the most identified story element for liking a book and theme was second for the small town district. Character held a mean of 10.6 and theme had a mean of 8.6. This follows the overall pattern for the results. Setting was identified third with mean of 5.6, plot fourth with a mean of 3.4, and other fifth with a mean of 1.7 for liking a story.

Disliking a book also followed the previous data pattern with plot as the highest average or mean of 20.1. Other was reported as the second category after coding with a mean of 4.8. Character, setting, and theme were identified, but not as frequent as plot.
Major Urban District

The major urban district followed the same pattern as the small town district with character and theme having the two highest means. Character had a mean of 6.1 while theme held a mean of 4.4. Setting was recognized third with a mean of 3.3 while other and plot were fourth and fifth for liking a story.

Plot was recognized as the most important story element for disliking literature based on the coded results with a mean of 8.4. Other was the category with the second highest mean at 5.4. Character, 2.1; setting, 1.3; and theme 0.6 rounded out the averages for disliking literature. Again, it seems that there is no difference among school district classification and the selected story elements based on the results.

Discussion of the Results

The results are consistent among the analyzed categories that students use different story elements for liking and disliking literature. Character and theme were the two recurring story elements recognized for liking literature while plot is the recurring story element recognized for disliking literature. After an in-depth analysis of the results, it appears that there is no difference in book selection between females and males, race, and district classification codes and the selected story elements. The only difference noted from the results is the overall difference in the story elements selected for liking and disliking literature.

Summary

This chapter presented data collected and analyzed to determine which story elements third grade students utilized during book selection. Results from the data show that students usually like a book because of the character(s) or the theme. However, they dislike a story based on the conflict or plot of the literature. In examining the data, it was found that there was no
difference among gender, race, or school district classification and the selected story elements.

The results share that students use different story elements for liking and disliking text; however, the results are similar among the groups.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today’s educators are faced with the challenge of aiding students in book selection for independent reading. Teachers need to be aware of their students’ interests so they can help students select literature. Interest in reading material is an influential factor for future reading. This study was conducted to see which story elements third grade students found appealing to their interests. It also addressed a secondary question about whether there is a relationship among the story elements and race, gender, and school district classification. Chapter 5 summarizes the study, draws conclusions from the data collected, and provides recommendations based on the findings.

Summary

This study investigated which story elements third grade students found appealing in book selection. Nine books were selected and examined to determine the categories for the story elements. Of the nine books, five contained the setting of city, four contained the setting of country, three contained African-American characters, three contained Hispanic characters, three contained White characters, four contained female main characters, and five contained male main characters. The researcher read the books’ summaries containing the story elements to four third grade classrooms. Two classrooms were from a major urban district, and two from a small town district. The students completed a response sheet for liking and disliking the story after each summary. The response sheets were coded by the researcher and computed to make frequency plots (Appendices E-K) for analysis.

Conclusions

The results received were consistent throughout the study. Students do use story elements in determining interest in literature and for book selection; however, they use different story
elements for liking compared to disliking text. The most reoccurring story element for liking a story was character. Students provided many responses that dealt with the character of the book. They seemed to find something about the character that interested them like one’s gender, race, language, or individual characteristic, which is consistent with previous research (Carter, 1988; Carter & Harris, 1982; Rinehart, Gerlach, Wisell, & Welker, 1998; Samuels, 1989; Swartz & Hendricks, 2000). Carter and Harris found students to relate to characters that had situations with family and school similar to their own situations as desirable. This study had comparable results. Students made note of situations like school or family relations in their responses. The second story element recognized for liking literature was theme. Many children noted the theme in their responses. Reading selections that dealt with friendship and appreciation were noticed the most among the students. Setting was the third story element identified for liking a book. Usually setting was recognized for one or two of the books, but not as frequent as character and theme. Plot and other categories were named as the last story elements to be used according to the data. Students appeared to be able to find another element that was more appealing than plot, or they were able to verbalize their reason clearly that placed it into another story element.

Students used different story elements when recognizing a text of interest. Plot was the number one story element discovered for disliking literature. Students related with the conflict situation in one way or another and expressed their dislike of the clash in the story. Carter and Harris (1982) and Leibowitz (1983) found plot as a desirable story element in their studies; however, it was disliked in this study proving that it is an important and valued story element in determining if a book is of interest. Although it cannot be determined as what was disliked about the plot because this study did not examine the plot in detail, it can be determined that students are able to relate with the conflict and determine that the story is not of interest based on the plot
alone. Plot could be explored in more detail to determine the types of plot that students like and dislike in another study, but the results of this study do not share any information on the kind of conflict students like and dislike. Plot was a significant factor in disliking a book in this study. Eight of the nine books recorded plot as the reason for disliking it. The other category received the second most responses. This category was created after the study because students were vague in their reaction to the literature or children could not find a reason to dislike a story. The results of the other category support Carter (1988) and Kragler and Nolley (1996) who reported students’ inability to articulate their rationale. Character was the third story element noticed by the students. Even though students could relate to the character, they also disliked aspects of the character as well. Setting and theme received the least amount of responses.

It appears from the results that there is no difference in the selected story elements in book selection used by boys and girls. Research shares that boys and girls have different selections in book genres with boys enjoying more adventure stories (Norvell, 1946; Rinehart, Gerlach, Wisell, & Welker, 1998; Wolfson, Manning, Manning, 1984) and girls enjoying fiction (Asseslin, 2003), but the story elements used are consistent between the two groups. Character and theme are the two most recognized story elements for liking literature while plot is the single important factor for students deciding to dislike literature.

There is also no difference in the usage of the story elements in book selection between White and Non-White students. Both groups shared more responses that the researcher coded as character and theme for liking a story than any of the other selected story elements. Both groups also shared more references to the conflict of the story or plot for disliking a story than any of the other story elements.
The two school district classifications, major urban and small town, also had no difference in book selection using the selected story elements. Character and theme were the two main reasons children liked a particular story while plot was the main reason to dislike literature according to the results received.

Recommendations

Teachers need to be aware of student interests to encourage children to become life-long readers and learners. By providing books of interest, teachers can help students select books that engage them. Attractive stories entertain students and they will continue to read if they take pleasure in reading. Students who enjoy reading will read more often, read a variety of texts, and continue to reach a higher potential than those students who dislike reading (Stanovich, 1986). It is important that teachers urge students to read literature and to read what interests them.

An important recommendation is for teachers to perform book talks that include the story elements with students since students value the characters, theme, and plot. It seems from this study that students do evaluate the characters and theme for book selection and further assess the plot to determine if it is of desire. Worthy et al. (1999) suggests presentations, read alouds, and poster presentations to help inform students of literature while Carter (1988) and Fleener, Morrison, Linek, and Rasinski (1997) advise teachers to allow more discussion and interaction time for students regarding books. Research has shown how powerful indirect and direct recommendations among students can be in book selection (Carter, Kragler & Nolley, 1996; Mellon, 1990; Rinehart et al., 1998; Swartz & Hendricks, 2000). Overall, it is important that teachers become discussion leaders and allow interaction among students to discuss the elements of a story, so students can evaluate a book more efficiently.
**Future Research**

This study included two third grade classrooms in a major urban district and two in a small town district. One possible suggestion to further this topic would be to conduct the study in other urban or rural districts. A comparison of the results would be interesting to determine whether other students’ reasons match these participants’ responses. Another proposition for further research is to complete the study with another grade level. It would be appealing to disclose information with other levels. Another proposal for additional research is to complete the study by conducting class discussions or interviews. This information could help explain student’s reasons in more depth than the response sheets. One last suggestion for more investigations is to study the desirableness of plots. The researcher was unable to analyze children’s responses regarding plot in more detail. It would be interesting to determine what students’ prefer in a plot and how the decipher if a plot is enjoyable.

**Summary**

This chapter presented a review of the study, conclusions drawn, and suggestions for further research. This study examined the value of story elements in book selection. The researcher found that students use the story elements character and theme the most for liking literature, but recognized plot as the story element for disliking stories. Further research is needed to determine and explain what is desirable about the story elements used in book selection.

Knowing children’s reading interests and assisting them with book selection is crucial to aiding students become life-long readers. Teachers need to familiarize themselves with their students’ interests and provide literature that matches their curiosity. They also need to discuss elements of a story with students to help with book selection. By helping provide texts that meet
students’ interests and discussing literature in more detail, teachers can create an environment for students that promote reading and help students reach their maximum potential.
References


APPENDIX A
SUMMARY OF BOOKS SELECTED
Description of Books Read To Students

*What Will Mommy Do When I’m at School?* by Dolores Johnson

This story is about a little African-American girl. She is starting school in the city. She is worried what her mom will do when she is at school. She realizes no more reading books or going to the grocery store with her mom. She feels conflict when she wants to stay at home with her mom. Her dad tells her no. She learns that her mom will be okay and make friends at her new job.

*Speak English for Us, Marisol!* by Karen English

This story is about Marisol. Marisol is a Hispanic girl. She walks through the city from school. She is in a hurry to get home from school to see if her cat has had kittens. On her way home, people stop Marisol and ask for her help. This creates conflict for her. She helps translate English for them. When Marisol gets home, her mom needs her to talk to the telephone company. Eventually Marisol gets to check on her cat.

*Secret Place* by Eve Bunting

This story is about a White boy. He lives in the city. He has a secret place he likes to go. This secret place is hidden in the city. Many people do not know where it is. The secret place is hidden under smoke stacks. It has its own quiet sounds unlike the sounds of the city. The boy feels conflict when he wants to tell people about the secret place. His dad tells him not to because some people may try to take it away. Many different types of animals know about the secret place. If you are able to find it, you may find ducklings.

*Tonio’s Cat* by Mary Calhoun

This story is about Tonio. Tonio is a Hispanic boy. He moved from Mexico to California. Tonio had to leave his dog behind when he moved. Tonio does not have very many friends since he is new to the city. Tonio misses his dog. One day Tonio meets a stray cat. He begins to play with the cat. He names the cat Toughy. Tonio likes having Toughy around but he does not want to be attached. This makes conflict for Tonio. Tonio realizes that the cat is his friend.

*Radio Man* by Arthur Dorros

This story is about Diego. Diego is a Hispanic boy. He works as a migrant worker. He travels across the country to find work. Diego picks fruits and vegetables with his family. Diego meets new people at each farm. They become his friends. Diego does not like to leave his friends. He feels conflict when he has to leave them. Diego likes to carry a radio with him to each farm. The radio helps Diego remember where he has been. The radio also helps Diego keep in touch with his friends.
**Once Upon a Farm by Marie Bradby**

This story is about a little boy on a farm. The little boy is African-American. He tells how he had fun on the farm. He liked chasing the goat. He liked milking the cow too. The boy tells how he became sad. He became sad when people started building malls and roads around the farm. He wanted the land to stay country. The boy experiences conflict when the farm begins to change.

**Just Like Mama by Beverly Lewis**

This story is about Susie Mae. Susie Mae is a White girl who is Amish. She lives on a farm. Susie Mae wants to be just like her mama. She tells her brother that she can do her mama’s chores. Susie Mae follows her mama around the farm. She tries to do everything her mama does. She tries to milk but she spills it. She tries to pick berries but she eats them instead. Susie Mae feels conflict because she is not able to do exactly what her mom does on the farm. At the end of the day Susie Mae realizes how much Mama does on the farm.

**Mama Talks Too Much by Marisabina Russo**

This story is about Celeste who is a White girl. She goes to the store with her mom on Saturdays. The store is in the city. Her mom talks to people she knows. Celeste does not want her to stop and talk to people. She wants to go straight to the store. Celeste is always in a hurry to get to the store. She feels conflict when her mom decides to talk on their way to the store. Celeste decides to count objects like cars to pass the time. She realizes that she is not in such a hurry when a puppy walks by. Celeste plays with the puppy until her mom is done talking.

**Sweet Potato Pie by Kathleen Lindsey**

This story is about an African-American family. It takes place in the 1900s. The family lives on a farm. One year the family struggled because the summer was dry. The family only had one crop to sell. This crop was the sweet potato. The family had conflict because they needed to pay back the bank because they borrowed money from the bank. The bank would take away their house if they did not pay. The family decided to sell sweet potato pies. The whole family stays up to make the pies. They sell the pies the next day.
APPENDIX B
ANALYSIS OF BOOK ELEMENTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Plot</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>What Will Mommy Do When I'm at School?</em></td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>The girl experiences conflict when she has to go to school. She wants to stay at home with her mom and be her mom's friend.</td>
<td>love, friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Dolores Johnson</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td></td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when she has to go to school. She wants to stay at home with her mom and be her mom's friend.</td>
<td>love, friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Speak English for Us, Marisol!</em></td>
<td>Hispanic girl</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he wants to tell everyone about the secret place in the city, but his dad tells him not to tell anyone.</td>
<td>find beauty within, appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Karen English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he wants to tell everyone about the secret place in the city, but his dad tells him not to tell anyone.</td>
<td>find beauty within, appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Secret Place</em></td>
<td>White boy</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he wants to keep the cat, but is scared he'll get attached.</td>
<td>compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Eve Bunting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he wants to keep the cat, but is scared he'll get attached.</td>
<td>compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tonio's Cat</em></td>
<td>Hispanic boy</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he wants to keep the cat, but is scared he'll get attached.</td>
<td>compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Mary Calhoun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he wants to keep the cat, but is scared he'll get attached.</td>
<td>compassion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Radio Man</em></td>
<td>Hispanic boy</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he has to move all around the country and leave his friends behind.</td>
<td>make the best of every situation, enjoy life, friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Arthur Dorros</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A boy experiences conflict when he has to move all around the country and leave his friends behind.</td>
<td>make the best of every situation, enjoy life, friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Once Upon a Farm</em></td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>country/farm</td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when the country land around him turns into a city with malls and highways.</td>
<td>change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Marie Bradby</td>
<td>boy/family</td>
<td></td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when the country land around him turns into a city with malls and highways.</td>
<td>change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Just Like Mama</em></td>
<td>White girl/family</td>
<td>1900's, country/farm</td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when she wants to be just like her mom, but keeps messing up doing the farm chores with her mom.</td>
<td>appreciation, thankfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Beverly Lewis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when she wants to be just like her mom, but keeps messing up doing the farm chores with her mom.</td>
<td>appreciation, thankfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mama Talks Too Much</em></td>
<td>White girl</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when she is in a hurry to get to the store with her mom, but her mom keeps stopping to talk to people.</td>
<td>patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Marisabina Russo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A girl experiences conflict when she is in a hurry to get to the store with her mom, but her mom keeps stopping to talk to people.</td>
<td>patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sweet Potato Pie</em></td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>1900's, country/farm</td>
<td>A boy and family experience conflict when they do not have the money to pay the bank for the house.</td>
<td>teamwork, cooperation, believing in yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Kathleen Lindsey</td>
<td>boy/family</td>
<td></td>
<td>A boy and family experience conflict when they do not have the money to pay the bank for the house.</td>
<td>teamwork, cooperation, believing in yourself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C
STUDENT RESPONSE SHEETS
This story is about a little African-American girl. She is starting school in the city. She is worried what her mom will do when she is at school. She realizes no more reading books or going to the grocery store with her mom. She feels conflict when she wants to stay at home with her mom. Her dad tells her no. She learns that her mom will be okay and make friends at her new job.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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Code________________________________________________________

This story is about a little African-American girl. She is starting school in the city. She is worried what her mom will do when she is at school. She realizes no more reading books or going to the grocery store with her mom. She feels conflict when she wants to stay at home with her mom. Her dad tells her no. She learns that her mom will be okay and make friends at her new job.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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Code________________________________________________________
This story is about Marisol. Marisol is a Hispanic girl. She walks through the city from school. She is in a hurry to get home from school to see if her cat has had kittens. On her way home, people stop Marisol and ask for her help. This creates conflict for her. She helps translate English for them. When Marisol gets home, her mom needs her to talk to the telephone company. Eventually Marisol gets to check on her cat.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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What I would not like about this book is...

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This story is about a White boy. He lives in the city. He has a secret place he likes to go. This secret place is hidden in the city. Many people do not know where it is. The secret place is hidden under smoke stacks. It has its own quiet sounds unlike the sounds of the city. The boy feels conflict when he wants to tell people about the secret place. His dad tells him not to because some people may try to take it away. Many different types of animals know about the secret place. If you are able to find it, you may find ducklings.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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This story is about a White boy. He lives in the city. He has a secret place he likes to go. This secret place is hidden in the city. Many people do not know where it is. The secret place is hidden under smoke stacks. It has its own quiet sounds unlike the sounds of the city. The boy feels conflict when he wants to tell people about the secret place. His dad tells him not to because some people may try to take it away. Many different types of animals know about the secret place. If you are able to find it, you may find ducklings.

😊 What I would not like about this book is...

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This story is about Tonio. Tonio is a Hispanic boy. He moved from Mexico to California. Tonio had to leave his dog behind when he moved. Tonio does not have very many friends since he is new to the city. Tonio misses his dog. One day Tonio meets a stray cat. He begins to play with the cat. He names the cat Toughy. Tonio likes having Toughy around but he does not want to be attached. This makes conflict for Tonio. Tonio realizes that the cat is his friend.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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This story is about Tonio. Tonio is a Hispanic boy. He moved from Mexico to California. Tonio had to leave his dog behind when he moved. Tonio does not have very many friends since he is new to the city. Tonio misses his dog. One day Tonio meets a stray cat. He begins to play with the cat. He names the cat Toughy. Tonio likes having Toughy around but he does not want to be attached. This makes conflict for Tonio. Tonio realizes that the cat is his friend.

😞 What I would not like about this book is...

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What I would like about this book is...

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What I would like about this book is...

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What I would not like about this book is...

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What I would like about this book is...

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What I would not like about this book is...

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This story is about Diego. Diego is a Hispanic boy. He works as a migrant worker. He travels across the country to find work. Diego picks fruits and vegetables with his family. Diego meets new people at each farm. They become his friends. Diego does not like to leave his friends. He feels conflict when he has to leave them. Diego likes to carry a radio with him to each farm. The radio helps Diego remember where he has been. The radio also helps Diego keep in touch with his friends.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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🙂 What I would not like about this book is...

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Code___________________________________________________________
This story is about a little boy on a farm. The little boy is African-American. He tells how he had fun on the farm. He liked chasing the goat. He liked milking the cow too. The boy tells how he became sad. He became sad when people started building malls and roads around the farm. He wanted the land to stay country. The boy experiences conflict when the farm begins to change.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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Code______________________________________

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😊 What I would like about this book is...

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Code______________________________________
This story is about Susie Mae. Susie Mae is a White girl who is Amish. She lives on a farm. Susie Mae wants to be just like her mama. She tells her brother that she can do her mama's chores. Susie Mae follows her mama around the farm. She tries to do everything her mama does. She tries to milk but she spills it. She tries to pick berries but she eats them instead. Susie Mae feels conflict because she is not able to do exactly what her mom does on the farm. At the end of the day Susie Mae realizes how much Mama does on the farm.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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This story is about Susie Mae. Susie Mae is a White girl who is Amish. She lives on a farm. Susie Mae wants to be just like her mama. She tells her brother that she can do her mama's chores. Susie Mae follows her mama around the farm. She tries to do everything her mama does. She tries to milk but she spills it. She tries to pick berries but she eats them instead. Susie Mae feels conflict because she is not able to do exactly what her mom does on the farm. At the end of the day Susie Mae realizes how much Mama does on the farm.

😢 What I would not like about this book is...

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Code______________________________________________________________
This story is about Celeste who is a White girl. She goes to the store with her mom on Saturdays. The store is in the city. Her mom talks to people she knows. Celeste does not want her to stop and talk to people. She wants to go straight to the store. Celeste is always in a hurry to get to the store. She feels conflict when her mom decides to talk on their way to the store. Celeste decides to count objects like cars to pass the time. She realizes that she is not in such a hurry when a puppy walks by. Celeste plays with the puppy until her mom is done talking.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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This story is about Celeste who is a White girl. She goes to the store with her mom on Saturdays. The store is in the city. Her mom talks to people she knows. Celeste does not want her to stop and talk to people. She wants to go straight to the store. Celeste is always in a hurry to get to the store. She feels conflict when her mom decides to talk on their way to the store. Celeste decides to count objects like cars to pass the time. She realizes that she is not in such a hurry when a puppy walks by. Celeste plays with the puppy until her mom is done talking.

😢 What I would not like about this book is...

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This story is about an African-American family. It takes place in the 1900s. The family lives on a farm. One year the family struggled because the summer was dry. The family only had one crop to sell. This crop was the sweet potato. The family had conflict because they needed to pay back the bank because they borrowed money from the bank. The bank would take away their house if they did not pay. The family decided to sell sweet potato pies. The whole family stays up to make the pies. They sell the pies the next day.

😊 What I would like about this book is...

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sad

This story is about an African-American family. It takes place in the 1900s. The family lives on a farm. One year the family struggled because the summer was dry. The family only had one crop to sell. This crop was the sweet potato. The family had conflict because they needed to pay back the bank because they borrowed money from the bank. The bank would take away their house if they did not pay. The family decided to sell sweet potato pies. The whole family stays up to make the pies. They sell the pies the next day.

😢 What I would not like about this book is...

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APPENDIX D
LETTERS OF CONSENT
Dear Principal:

My name is Syndi Kauffman and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am currently working on my Master of Education degree in reading and am conducting a study for my thesis. I am seeking a third grade classroom to participate in a study exploring elements of a story and children’s reading interests.

During this study, students will be read nine different summaries of various books. After reading aloud, students will fill out a survey that asks why they would like this particular book and why they would not like this particular book. This will be done for all nine books. I will read the nine summaries over a week’s period, visiting the classroom twice for approximately 30 minutes during the regularly scheduled school day.

By completing this study I hope to recognize story elements that interest students. I believe that this study can only have positive effects on the students with whom I will be working with. I am enthusiastic at the prospect of working at your school and would appreciate the opportunity to conduct my study in a third grade classroom.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (419) 372-7323 or kauffs@bgnet.bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Cindy Hendricks, Bowling Green State University at (419) 372-7341 or cindyg@bgnet.bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions or concerns about the rights of your students as participants you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu. If you are granting me permission to access your school for this study, it would be greatly appreciated if you would please fill out the attached form and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

Sincerely,

Syndi Kauffman
I have been informed of the study, “Which story elements do third grade students find appealing to their interests based on their written responses?” and am giving permission for you to conduct your study at my school.

___________________________________________________________
Principal’s Signature

Questions or concerns:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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Please return this form in the self-addressed envelope to Syndi Kauffman.
Dear Teacher:

My name is Syndi Kauffman and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am currently working on my Master of Education degree in reading and am conducting a study for my thesis. I am seeking a third grade classroom to participate in a study exploring elements of a story and children’s reading interests.

During this study, students will be read nine different summaries of various books. After reading aloud, students will fill out a survey that asks why they would like this particular book and why they would not like this particular book. This will be done for all nine books. I will read the nine summaries over a week’s period, visiting the classroom twice for approximately 30 minutes during the regularly scheduled school day.

By completing this study I hope to recognize story elements that interest students. I believe that this study can only have positive effects on the students with whom I will be working with. I am enthusiastic at the prospect of working with you and your third grade classroom.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at (419) 372-7323 or kauffs@bgnet.bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Cindy Hendricks, Bowling Green State University at (419) 372-7341 or cindyg@bgnet.bgsu.edu. Also, if you have any questions or concerns about the rights of your students as a participant you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University at (419) 372-7716 or hsr@bgnet.bgsu.edu. If you are granting me permission to access your class for this study, it would be greatly appreciated if you would please fill out the attached form and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

Sincerely,

Syndi Kauffman
I have been informed of the study, “Which story elements do third grade students find appealing to their interests based on their written responses?” and am giving permission for you to conduct your study in my classroom.

___________________________________________________________
Teacher’s Signature

Questions or concerns:
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Please return this form in the self-addressed envelope to Syndi Kauffman.
Dear Parents/Guardians:

My name is Syndi Kauffman and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am currently working on my Master of Education degree in reading and am conducting a study for my thesis. My study will explore the question of “Which story elements do third grade students find appealing to their interests based on their written responses?” This study will benefit your child by recognizing which story elements he/she uses to select books.

Your child will be read nine different summaries of books. After reading aloud, students will fill out a survey that asks why they would like this particular book and why they would not like this particular book. This will be done for all nine books. There will be two meeting times during the traditionally scheduled school day in which this study will take place. It will take approximately 30 minutes each meeting to read and fill out each survey. Your child’s participation in this study is voluntary and he/she may choose not to participate at any time. If you choose not to have your child participate, arrangements will be made with the teacher for him/her to complete another activity while this study is taking place.

The surveys will be collected to analyze the results and be kept for three years. At the end of this time period, all materials will be permanently destroyed. All information will remain confidential (students’ names will not be used) and will only be used for the purpose of this study. To ensure privacy each student will receive a code of letters and numbers. You do have the right to obtain a copy of the results if you wish and are free to ask any questions of my advisors or myself.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact me, Syndi Kauffman, at (419) 372-7323 or kauffs@bgnet.bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Cindy Hendricks, Bowling Green State University at (419) 372-7341 or cindyg@bgnet.bgsu.edu. Also, if you have questions or concerns about the rights of your child as a participant you may contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University at (419) 372-7716 or hsr@bgnet.bgsu.edu. If you are willing to allow your child to participate, please complete and return the attached form to your child’s teacher. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

Syndi Kauffman
I have been informed of the study, “Which story elements do third grade students find appealing to their interests based on their written responses?” and I consent to allow my child to participate in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Name</th>
<th>Parent Signature</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Race</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Child’s Gender</th>
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<tbody>
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Dear Child,

My name is Miss Kauffman. I am doing a study about reading. I would like you to listen to me read summaries of stories. Then I would like you to fill out a worksheet. You will be asked why you would like the story. You also will be asked why you would not like the story. I will collect each paper after you have filled it out. You do not need to write your name on your paper. I will keep your name a secret in my study. You may choose not to join my study. You will not be in trouble if you do not want to join my study. Your teacher will give you something else to do during my study. If you choose to join my study but change your mind later, you will not be punished. Please ask me any questions that you may have. If you choose to take part in my study, then please sign the next sheet of paper and give it to me.

Thanks,

Miss Kauffman
I will listen to Miss Kauffman and answer on the surveys about nine books.

___________________________________________________________
Printed Name

___________________________________________________________
Your Signature
APPENDIX E
OVERALL FREQUENCY OF CODED RESPONSES
### Overall Frequency of Coded Responses

**n=52**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Like/Dislike</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Plot</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>35</td>
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<tr>
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<td>28</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
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APPENDIX F
FEMALE FREQUENCY OF CODED RESPONSES
## Female Frequency of Coded Responses

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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Plot</th>
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<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td><em>Secret Place</em></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<th>Setting</th>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4</td>
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APPENDIX H
WHITE FREQUENCY OF CODED RESPONSES
### White Frequency of Coded Responses

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<th>Plot</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<th>Character</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Plot</th>
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<td>22</td>
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</tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>18</td>
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APPENDIX I
NON-WHITE FREQUENCY OF CODED RESPONSES
## Non-White Frequency of Coded Responses

\( n = 18 \)

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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
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APPENDIX J
SMALL TOWN FREQUENCY OF CODED RESPONSES
## Small Town Frequency of Coded Responses

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