THE CONSTRUCTION OF LITERARY UNDERSTANDING
BY FIRST AND SECOND GRADERS
IN RESPONSE TO PICTURE STORYBOOK READALOUDS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

by

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Despite extensive research on storybook readalouds, the literary understanding young children construct during these readalouds has received little attention. This descriptive, naturalistic study in a literature-rich classroom investigated the literary understanding of first and second graders as picture storybooks (traditional literature; contemporary realistic fiction; and contemporary fantasy) were read aloud to them. Over seven months, data (field notes, transcripted audiotapes of readalouds, and interviews) were gathered in three contexts: 35 large group readalouds done by the teacher with the whole class; 28 small group readalouds done by the researcher with two selected groups of five children each; and 20 one-to-one readalouds done by the researcher with each of the ten children in the two small groups. Children's responses suggested five types of literary understanding: (1) making narrative meaning by "close reading" and analysis of text and illustrations; (2) making intertextual connections; (3) connecting the story to their own lives; (4) temporary aesthetic merging of their lives with the text; and (5) performative responses, in which the text was manipulated and used as a platform for an expression of the children's creativity or a carnivalesque romp. Teachers scaffolded children's learning
by acting as readers; managers and encouragers; clarifiers and probers; fellow wonderers or speculators; and extenders and refiners. The role of intertextual connections was pivotal in many interpretive moves. The children learned illustrational codes or conventions and used all the visual stimuli of the picturebook (including peritextual features such as the cover, endpages, title and dedication pages, as well as the illustrational sequence) to make meaning. Individual styles of response were identified for several children. A higher frequency of personalizing responses was associated with contemporary realistic fiction than with the other genres. Two-thirds of the conversational turns took place during the readalouds, suggesting the importance of allowing children to respond during the reading of the story. A grounded theory of literary understanding was developed, conceptualizing the five facets of literary understanding as the expression of three basic literary impulses (the hermeneutic, aesthetic, and personalizing impulses) which function simultaneously as intersecting and overlapping planes in cognitive space.
In Memory of My Father

ROBERT ANDREW SIPE

1925 - 1972

Beatus vir, qui timet Dominum:
in mandatis ejus cupid nimis

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CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

The Importance of Reading Stories Aloud to Children

Educational researchers and practitioners generally agree that reading stories to children is one of the most powerful and influential of all the literacy acts in which children can be engaged (Snow, 1983; Johnson, 1992). Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985) state that "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 23). Specifically, cited benefits include the development of a love of books (Holdaway, 1979); understanding the difference between oral and written language in the acquisition of "book language" (Baker & Freebody, 1989; Clark, 1976; Elley, 1989; Smith, 1982); and the development of a sense of story and story structure (Meyer & Rice, 1984). Other affordances of the storybook readaloud situation include knowledge of the conventions of print and "how books work" (Clay, 1991; 1993); vocabulary development and listening comprehension (Cohen, 1968; Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; Ninio, 1980; Dickinson & Smith, 1994); a grasp of the events and goals of narrative (Phillips & McNaughton, 1990; and the enhancement of independent reading and writing ability in general (Morrow, 1989). In his extensive longitudinal study, Wells (1986) found that the number of stories children had heard read to them was the single greatest predictor of later success in reading.

In addition to being an ideal site for parent-child interactive talk and the forming of emotional attachments (Bus, 1993), storybook reading may be one of the crucial activities for children's developing understanding and use of decontextualized language--language that does not relate to the child's immediate physical world
(Snow, 1983). Because storybook reading is often a routinized activity, this routine enables the building of "progressively richer knowledge structures" through the talk between adult and child that surrounds books as they are read and reread (Snow, Nathan, & Perlmutter, 1985, p. 168). Storybooks contain the type of language used to represent experience imaginatively rather than to get something done or cause certain effects (Halliday, 1975); therefore, hearing stories may help children to stand back from everyday experience in order to contemplate it and evaluate it (Britton, 1970; 1993). Another (almost diametrically opposite) way story language and structure may be used is "to create a [social] framework that will guide subsequent action and allow it to be interpreted by the other participants so that their activities may be coordinated" (Wells, 1986, p. 1980), as when children use story plots to guide their creative play.

Many parents read to their children from an early age, often establishing a daily storytime routine. By the time they come to school, some children have heard thousands of stories read aloud (Wells, 1986). With all this exposure to books, some children spontaneously begin to read emergently, not simply memorizing a favorite story, but showing evidence (through their invented reconstructions) that they have internalized and transformed the text’s linguistic structures and organized its meaning in semantic hierarchies of importance (Pappas, 1987a, 1987b; Teale, Martinez, & Glass, 1989). This emergent reading has been studied extensively by researchers who have asked preschool and kindergarten children to "read the story" (Sulzby, 1985, 1988; Sulzby & Teale, 1987), and who have attempted to discern a developmental sequence in these pretend-readings or protoreadings.

A large number of teachers, especially those who teach the preschool and primary grades, read to their students as well. Researchers have investigated the beneficial effects of storybook reading in the school setting in one-to-one situations (Morrow, 1988), in small group situations (Morrow, 1990), and in whole-class settings (McGill-Franzen & Lanford, 1993).

A growing body of research (Allison & Watson, 1994; Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Dickinson, Hao, & He, 1993; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Martinez & Teale,
1993; Peterman, Dunning, & Mason, 1985) examines the distinctive styles that teachers may employ when reading to children, revealing that teachers may have various ideas about what constitutes a good storybook readaloud session. In other words, the storybook readaloud situation is not consistent across classrooms, but is protean in nature. This finding complicates the commonly heard exhortation to "read to children often," since teachers may understand this exhortation in vastly different ways. Some styles of reading to children may be more productive for children’s literacy development than others (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). Morrow, Rand, and Smith (1995) found that there were several correlations between teacher behaviors and child behaviors during storybook reading, including the influence of the teachers’ modeling of discussion and subsequent involvement on the part of the children.

Framing the Storybook Readaloud Situation

All of this research in the storybook readaloud situation in both home and school rests on a theoretical foundation provided by the paradigm of emergent literacy.

The term "emergent literacy" was first employed by Marie Clay (1966) in her doctoral dissertation, which was entitled Emergent Reading Behaviour. The concept of emergent literacy has been extensively developed (Clay, 1991; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Goelman, Oberg, & Smith, 1984; Holdaway, 1979; Ollila & Mayfield, 1992; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). It has also been thoroughly reviewed in major compendia of research (Mason & Allen, 1986; Sulzby, 1991; Sulzby & Teale, 1991, Teale, 1987) to the extent that it has received wide enough support from the educational community to constitute a paradigm (Kuhn, 1970): an overarching set of cohesive theoretical and epistemological principles that, taken together, function as a heuristic lens through which we may look at any given phenomenon, in this case young children’s literacy learning. The following summary of these principles is based on the list of Teale and Sulzby (1986) and the list of the International Reading Association (1985), utilized by Morrow and Smith (1990).
1. Literacy development may be said to begin at birth (Doake, 1988, 1995), as young children react to, begin to interpret, and respond to the oral and written language surrounding them. Because oral and written language are all-pervasive in a child’s environment, the child is continually learning and developing an awareness of the forms and functions of language. This development is the result of critical cognitive work by the child. Thus, the emergent literacy paradigm does not postulate a set of prerequisites for reading, as in the concept of "reading readiness," where certain sets of skills are thought to be necessary before learning to read (Doake, 1995; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Another way of conceptualizing this principle is that because the surrounding culture has immersed children in language since birth, learning to read and write are considered natural activities (Smith, 1982).

2. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are all aspects of language, and develop "concurrently and interrelatedly, rather than sequentially" (Teale & Sulzby, 1986, p. xviii). This principle contradicts the traditionally held belief that development in literacy proceeds from listening to speaking, to reading, and thence to writing, in a linear and causal fashion. Rather, the emergent literacy paradigm postulates that there is a synergistic relationship among these four activities (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

3. Literacy learning is situated in an environment where reading, writing, listening and speaking occur for meaningful reasons, and serve meaningful functions for the learner. Meaning is seen as central to the whole process of learning both spoken and written language (Wells, 1986). Literacy develops through the child’s participation in activities and situations in which literacy is useful (Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984).

4. Young children are seen as active participants in their own learning, rather than as passive recipients. This represents a transactive view of literacy learning, in opposition to the view that literacy is learned by the teacher’s transmission of knowledge (Barnes, 1976; Wells, 1986). Knowledge about literacy is not something that can be poured into children, as if they were pitchers waiting to be filled; rather, this knowledge is something that is (and must be) actively constructed by each child.
5. Literacy learning takes place in social settings, as children interact with adults and peers. Interactions with others, particularly interactions involving talk, form the basis of all literacy learning (Barnes, 1976, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, Wells, 1990).

6. "Adults serve as models for literacy behavior, by demonstrating the use of books and print themselves" (Morrow & Smith, 1990, p. 2).

7. Although there may be describable, generalized stages of literacy development, an individual child's path to literacy is not rigid. Children display a great deal of idiosyncratic variance in both the ways they pass through these stages, and in the ages at which they evidence specific learnings.

It is clear that the storybook readaloud situation instantiates a great many of these principles in one activity; this may be one of the reasons why it is so aggressively promoted as a crucial classroom practice, and why it is considered so powerful.

The first principle (the continuous development of literacy from birth onwards) suggests that the classroom refines, extends, and builds upon what children already know, viewing them as young members of the "literacy club" (Smith, 1987). If this is so, then the classroom needs to continue the storybook readaloud situation that is an important part of the range of literacy activities in many homes. Holdaway (1979), for example, specifically compares the "lap-reading," done by caregivers and individual children, with the teacher’s sharing of one large-sized book with a group of children. Holdaway asserts that the teacher, in doing so, creates the possibility of a seamless connection between the stories children have heard before they come to school and the books they hear (and learn to read) in school.

The second principle, that of the concurrent and interrelated nature of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, allows us to understand the storybook readaloud situation as the nexus of many related literacy activities. Speaking is present, because the adult is saying the words of the story aloud; the young child is also conversing with the adult. Perhaps the adult is asking the child questions, or the child is pointing out some features of the illustrations by labeling or describing what she sees.
Listening is present, because the child is listening to the adult’s reading of the text, and to the adult’s comments, questions, and directions. Reading and writing are present, in that the child is experiencing a demonstration (by the adult) of what reading written language is like (Cambourne, 1988). Perhaps the adult is pointing to words or lines as they are read; in this case, the child’s attention is being drawn to the visual features of written language.

The third principle—the meaningfulness of written and spoken language—is exemplified in the storybook readaloud situation by the evident enjoyment that many adults and children take in reading and hearing stories together. The text and the illustrations refer, no doubt, to many objects, situations, and events that are recognizable features of the child’s world, and are recognized as such by the child (Snow & Ninio, 1986). Although storybook reading is not pragmatically meaningful in the sense that reading a grocery list is meaningful, it is nonetheless perceived by the child as a meaning-rich activity, shared with a trusted adult who obviously perceives it as meaningful as well (Snow & Goldfield, 1983). Another aspect of meaningfulness is that storybook reading makes use of "real books" with realistic language and well-developed characters (Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989) rather than basal stories, which often have stilted or unrealistic language.

The fourth principle of the emergent literacy paradigm emphasizes the active nature of children’s learning. In the storybook readaloud situation, the child often takes an active role, insisting on turning the pages of the book, or pointing to things she wishes to highlight. Children frequently demand a rereading of the book, and caregivers and teachers frequently comply with this demand. Children may also ask questions if something puzzles them. In these ways, they are actively using language at the same time that they are learning language.

The fifth principle suggests that literacy learning takes place in social settings. At home with caregivers, the social situation of storybook readalouds may be the parent-child dyad (Ninio, 1980). In school, the situation is likely to be more complex, as children interact socially with each other as well as with an adult. At home and in school, both the quantity and the quality of social interaction during
storybook readalouds tend to be high (Holdaway, 1979). The talk among children and their teachers and peers in school is the "glue" that holds the entire school curriculum together (Barnes, 1976), and the nature and quality of classroom discourse have been extensively researched and reviewed (Cazden, 1986, 1988; Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972; Pinnelli & Jaggar, 1991; Rosen & Rosen, 1973; Tough, 1979).

In the storybook readaloud situation, the teacher's talk about the story and the children's talk with each other and the teacher is extremely important: it is not enough to simply hear stories; children must talk about them in order for the readaloud situation to achieve its full potential: "The language and social interaction that surround the text are critical...; in fact, they appear to be good candidates for what makes storybook reading so powerful an influence in young children's literacy development" (Sulzby & Teale, 1991, p. 732). The quality of this interaction, rather than the reading itself, is what results in positive effects for children (Meyer, Stahl, Wardrop, & Linn, 1992). Moreover, this talk seems to be most useful for the development of literacy if it goes beyond the typical type of classroom discourse known as "I.R.E.": "Initiation" (a question by the teacher); "Response" (by the children to the teacher's question); and "Evaluation" (the teacher evaluates the children's responses), a pattern that gives the teacher almost total control over the discussion, and which limits children's contributions severely (Bellack, et al, 1966; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). By implication, then, the storybook readaloud situation is most fruitful for learning if the teacher and children break out of this traditional pattern and engage in discourse that is more like true conversation (Eeds & Wells, 1989).

The sixth principle of the emergent literacy paradigm asserts that adults are models of literacy behavior (Smith, 1982). In the case of storybook readalouds, the adult is modeling a very basic and important reading activity: reading a story. Reading a story to children constitutes a powerful demonstration of what reading is and should be like, as the adult reads with expression and meaning. As well, the adult reader's role may be a significant contributor to the child's developing responses to stories (Martinez & Roser, 1991). According to the social constructivist view of
literacy learning (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Genishi, McCarrier, & Nussbaum, 1988; Straw, 1990, Vygotsky, 1978, 1986), adults and more capable peers "scaffold" (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) children's learning by talking them through a problem or by determining what children can understand already and supplying the "hard bits" (Clay, 1991). Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the "zone of proximal development" is based on the assumption that children reach higher levels of cognition and understanding through social interactions with "expert others": "what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to by herself tomorrow" (p. 87). This concept has been shown to be heuristic for understanding and improving the interactions between teachers and students in the classroom (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). In terms of the storybook readaloud situation, the adult who reads the story may help to develop the child's understanding by ascertaining the child's zone of proximal development and providing the appropriate scaffolds.

The last principle, which concerns children's idiosyncratic paths to literacy, is instantiated by the storybook readaloud situation through its openness to children's individual responses. Some children may be able to relate the book to other books; others may not have this capability. Some children may be able to make inferences about a character's personality or future actions. Other children may function on a more literal level of interpretation. Though all the children are listening to the same story being read, all are having slightly different experiences (Holdaway, 1979).

It is thus clear that the storybook readaloud situation is one of the most exemplary of the literacy activities that the emergent literacy paradigm envisions as powerful for learning.

The Problem

The previous sections show that reading storybooks aloud to young children and talking about these stories with them is a common, well-researched, and much-recommended practice for both home and school, and that this practice is situated in the theoretical paradigm of emergent literacy. During the past fifteen years, the situation of an adult reading a storybook aloud to a child or a group of children has
been the object of extensive and intensive scrutiny by researchers from educational institutions. Almost all of this research has dealt with the relationship of storybook reading to children's development as independent readers and writers: their development of literacy. When researchers have considered the talk between adults and children, for example, they have often focused on the ways in which the adult points out features of print to the youngster, or ways in which the child constructs the idea that print conveys a message that is meaningful and functional. The literary content and qualities of that message and children's responses to that content have been studied in far less detail, even though this type of knowledge is clearly an important part of literacy development (Huck, 1977).

During the ascendancy of basal reading schemes for beginning reading in the 1940's, 50's and 60's, literary content was largely ignored (Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988). The type of reading material that was conceived to be suitable for beginning readers was a story that was tightly controlled in terms of the number of words, the amount of variation in the grapho-phonemic relationships of the words, and the large number of built-in repetitions. Concern was thus focused at the level of words, rather than on the total structure of the story. With the advent of the whole language movement, this focus shifted to a concern with the meaningful wholes that literature for children has always emphasized (Goodman, 1985). Although "whole language" has been defined in various ways and is a notoriously slippery term (Moorman, Blanton, & McLaughlin, 1994), a common (and central) feature of all its definitions and descriptions is its concern with the use of "real books:" trade books for children, rather than the ersatz, sterile stories in basal readers (Edelsky, 1991; Goodman, 1986; Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989). Publishers of more recent beginning basal reading schemes have accordingly changed the content of their collections to include reprintings of picturebooks and other trade books (or excerpts thereof) in order to take a more literary approach (Greenlaw, 1994), although such revisions have not gone as far as some theorists advocate (Shannon & Goodman, 1994; Goodman, Maras, & Birdseye, 1994; Hade, 1994).
From the late 1960's until the present time, then, there has been an increasing emphasis on the literary qualities of stories that would make them more engaging and compelling for young children (Huck, 1977; Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Veatch, 1966), with a corresponding emphasis on the importance of literary interpretation as a crucial addition to concern with more literal comprehension (Meek, 1988; Sloan, 1975, 1991; Stott, 1983, 1987; Vandergrift, 1980). In other words, practitioners and researchers who are concerned with children in the emergent stages of literacy have begun to realize that learning to read and learning to read literature cannot be easily separated (Sawyer, 1987). Somewhat surprisingly, however, research on the storybook readaloud situation has tended to focus primarily on the aspects of that situation that contribute to (1) children’s knowledge of the visual features of words and the ways this knowledge contributes to learning to read; (2) to children’s comprehension of stories at a rather low, literal level; or (3) to children’s developing abilities as writers. While these aspects are extremely important, the literary knowledge that is an integral part of literacy learning, and that is a significant factor in learning to be an independent reader, has been generally ignored. (One significant exception is Cochran-Smith’s (1984) 18-month study of storybook reading in a preschool, which includes an analysis of the storybook reading situation from the perspectives of reader-response and other literary theories. This study is further discussed in chapter 2.)

Many stories chosen by caregivers and teachers for storybook readalouds--stories like Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963), The Snowy Day (Keats, 1962), The Tale of Peter Rabbit (Potter, 1902), and the innumerable versions and variants of fairytales and folktales--have profoundly rich literary content, in terms of compelling language, well-developed characters, complex and exciting plots, and serious themes. These stories also have the capability of involving young children in a deeply satisfying emotional and intellectual experience (Crago & Crago, 1983; Butler, 1979; White, 1954), and in evoking an almost limitless range of personal responses and connections to other stories (Hickman & Cullinan, 1989; Hickman, Cullinan, & Hepler, 1994; Holland, Hungerford, & Ernst, 1993; Roser & Martinez,
Although there is a significant body of anecdotal reporting, children’s understanding of and responses to this overall richness in the context of the classroom storybook readaloud situation have received scant attention from empirical research.

This study thus seeks to fill in a significant gap in that research by focusing on one aspect of the storybook read-aloud situation that has received little attention to date: the construction of literary understanding by young children as they talk about stories with adults and with each other in the classroom. Literary understanding is the principal theoretical construct of this study, and thus deserves a full discussion, rather than a short definition in a list of terms.

The Construct of Literary Understanding

For many researchers and practitioners, literary understanding consists of a knowledge of the traditional "elements of narrative" (Cianciolo & Quirk, 1993) or "central narrative elements" (Bauman & Bergeron, 1993): plot, setting, characters, and theme. From a traditional perspective, then, children develop literary understanding by learning to identify these components or aspects of narrative and by then using these elements to understand how a story works. It has been indicated that young children’s literary understanding of even these basic elements has not been studied extensively in the storybook readaloud situation. This study takes a much more inclusive view of literary understanding as it relates to the picture storybook or picturebook, which is the most common type of book used by caregivers and teachers when reading to young children. Literary understanding can be viewed in a far more rich and textured way. While not ignoring the importance of the traditional elements of narrative, the construct of literary understanding on which this study is based draws from theories of semiotics, visual aesthetic theory, schema and cognitive flexibility theory, and theories of contemporary literary criticism. The classroom is conceived as an "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980) in which the teacher and the children socially construct their own definition of "literary competence" (Culler, 1975). Together, the children and the adults involved in their learning put together an
implicit grasp of literary understanding. The information provided by adults and other peers in the process of scaffolded conversation allows children to add more and more items to their repertoire of literary understanding.

One important element missing in the traditional view of literary understanding (as it applies to picturebooks) is that little or no attention is paid to the meaning-bearing qualities of the illustrations; and, except for the groundbreaking work of Kiefer (1982), children's responses to illustrations in picturebooks and in the naturalistic setting of a classroom have received little attention from researchers. This is unfortunate, because the illustrations in picturebooks are not a separate or expendable addition to the words in the story, but rather constitute an integral part of the story, having equal importance with the words (Doonan, 1993; Golden, 1990; Marantz, 1977; Nodelman, 1988; Schwarcz, 1982). Thus, any fully-developed view of the literary understanding of picturebooks must also include and incorporate visual aesthetic understanding. In this study, picturebooks are conceived (in semiotic terms) as the site of the interaction and transaction between two sign systems: the visual sign system of the illustrational sequence and the verbal sign system of the printed words (Nodelman, 1988). In order to understand a picturebook, children must integrate these two sign systems, translating the content of one sign system into another in the process of transmediation (Suhor, 1984). The illustrations are conceived as a matrix of many clusters of conventional signs or codes (Moebius, 1986). From this semiotic perspective, literary understanding consists of the learning of the conventional, socially constructed codes of meaning present in the book: learning the "language," as it were, of both illustrations and the verbal text, and the ways in which they inform, supplement, or conflict with each other. Although visual aesthetic theories are primarily concerned with painting, sculpture, and the other plastic visual arts (Arnheim, 1969, 1974; Berger, 1977; Gombrich, 1961, 1972; Goodman, 1976; Steiner, 1982, 1988) these theories also have important perspectives to bring to an understanding of the illustrations and illustrational sequence in picturebooks.
Using structuralist literary criticism (Scholes, 1974) as well as schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) and theories of narrative representation (Graesser, Golding, & Long, 1991), the picturebook may also be viewed as stimulating the perception of formal patterns (for example, the "home-away-home" pattern represented in Where the Wild Things Are), which are useful for understanding "how the story works." Cognitive flexibility theory (Spiro et al, 1994) suggests that readers build up knowledge gradually across cases, as they read (or listen to) many stories and extract similarities and commonalities across them. From the perspective of these theories, literary understanding consists of the gradual growth of knowledge about story structure and the "way stories work" by hearing many stories and making meaningful connections between them. Stories in the same genre (for example, fairy tales) could be used by the learner to build up a cognitive representation or schema for fairy tales. Structural theorists such as Vladimir Propp (1958) have described how the structure of various traditional stories can be reduced to a series of propositions or events that are common to all the variants of a certain story. On a more specific level, then, many variants of one type of tale (for example, the Cinderella story, which has many variants from many cultures) could enable children to build up a "Cinderella schema." Literary understanding thus would involve the growth, refinement, and extension of these schemata and the formation of cognitive linkages between them.

The range of reader-response theories (Beach, 1993; Tompkins, 1980) may be utilized in suggesting that readers may assume various stances toward texts, and that they may bring quite different backgrounds of knowledge, thus resulting in a rich diversity of response. Readers transact with a text (Rosenblatt, 1985), assuming various stances along a continuum; these stances shape responses. Readers may read in order to take some information away from the text, or to analyze its formal properties; Rosenblatt calls this the efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 1978). On the other end of the continuum, readers may read simply to engage in a "lived-through experience" of the text, entering the text, as it were, and experiencing its literary power. Rosenblatt refers to this type of stance as aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1986). For
Rosenblatt, meaning is constructed by the reader, and depends on the stance the reader assumes, rather than existing in the text itself.

Other reader-response theories emphasize the activity of filling in the gaps or indeterminacies in a text by making inferences and revising those inferences, and adopting a "wandering viewpoint" (Iser, 1978; Ingarden, 1973). From the perspective of these theories, literary understanding involves the tracing of the reader's personal responses and the ways in which readers construct meaning by mentally supplying what is not contained in the text. As well, literary understanding also involves the various perspectives readers may take, in placing themselves within one character's perspective; taking on the perspectives of several characters in turn; aligning themselves with the narrator and the narrator's perspective and knowledge; or combining all of these levels and perspectives in order to place themselves above even an omniscient narrator. In other words, the flexibility with which readers adopt these varying perspectives and move among them is an important aspect of literary understanding.

Poststructural, Marxist, and feminist literary theories suggest that the text frequently inscribes prevailing hegemonic cultural ideologies (Stephens, 1992); that readers may resist or read against the text (McGillis, 1996); that a reader's response and literary understanding are constrained by class, race, gender, and culture, and is always partial and positioned (Davies, 1989; Alvermann & Conmeyras, 1994); and that readers may treat the text as a playground by engaging in a carnivalesque romp (Bakhtin, 1984; Davidson, 1993). What counts as literary understanding changes when children’s responses are viewed through these contemporary literary theories. From the traditional view that literary understanding comprises a knowledge of narrative elements like plot, characters, setting, and theme, certain responses might be considered transgressive, resistant, or totally off-task. However, these same responses might be prized and positively valued from the perspective of a broader and more inclusive conceptualization of literary understanding afforded by more contemporary literary criticism.
Any discussion that draws on theory and research from a wide range of disciplines must answer to the charge that it rests on a crudely eclectic pastiche of theoretical principles. The rich and textured view of literary understanding that has just been sketched for this study is saved from mere eclecticism by the unity and coherence provided by the social constructivist paradigm: the assumption of all of these theories is that human beings socially construct their view of literature (and of the world) by social interaction and by reacting to and expanding on what previous generations and cultures have constructed. This underlying principle is the cohesive force that allows concepts from such diverse fields as literary criticism, reading theory, semiotics, and visual aesthetic theory to inform each other and become heuristic for each other, reflecting multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon like the facets on a finely cut diamond: perspectives that, while multiple, are not contradictory or oppositional, but rather augmentative and synergistic. One of the major theoretical burdens of this study is to lay out the more comprehensive definition of literary understanding that arises both from the prior multiple perspectives just outlined, and also from the data themselves. Chapters 4 and 5 flesh out this definition, and indicate how the data afforded a richer and more nuanced conceptualization of literary understanding than traditional views.

**The Purpose and Questions for the Study**

This discussion of the nature of the key construct of literary understanding sets the stage for a specific statement of the purpose of the study. This study was devised to investigate the emerging literary understanding of first- and second-grade children as they participated in readalouds of picture storybooks in the context of an informal primary classroom that had an articulated literature-based reading program.
The research questions for the study were the following:

In the context of a literature-based informal first- and second-grade classroom,

1. **What are the verbal indications that children are developing literary understanding of picturebooks during storybook readalouds?** What is the nature of this literary understanding, and how does it proceed for selected children?

2. **How do "expert others" (adults and more knowledgeable peers) scaffold the children's developing literary understanding during picture storybook readalouds?**

3. **How does the type of text (in terms of genre, narrative complexity, or the relative "openness" of the text to varying interpretations) appear to affect the nature of the discussion and response during storybook readalouds?**

The questions thus deal, in turn, with three major elements in the dynamic storybook readaloud situation: the children; the adult who reads the story; and the text.

**Methodological Choices Flowing from the Research Questions: A Summary**

The type of research that is suited to these questions is descriptive, qualitative research, in the naturalistic setting of a classroom (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study took place in a first- and second-grade classroom in a school with a long history of using children’s literature in creative ways. The school’s population was middle-, lower-middle, and lower-class, with a racial and cultural mix. The teacher used trade books to teach reading, and storybook readalouds were normally done twice daily. Although response to literature permeated the classroom in many ways, the focus of the study was the talk immediately before, during, and after storybook readalouds. The study considered this talk in three contexts: in read-aloud sessions the teacher did with the entire class; in readalouds done by the researcher with two small groups of five children each; and in one-to-one readalouds done by the researcher with each of the ten children in the two small groups. The rationale for the choice of these three contexts was that readalouds to small groups or to individuals might evoke
different types and quantities of responses, particularly from children who were less likely to speak in the whole-group situation. The researcher's stance ranged on the continuum from "participant-observation" (Spradley, 1980) to "observant participant" (Erickson, 1992). The readaloud discussions were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher; other data sources included field notes and interviews with the teacher. Data was analyzed recursively and iteratively, according to the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), by assigning codes and categories and modifying them as the analysis proceeded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In this way, a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of this classroom's construction of literary competence and literary understanding emerged.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

Literary understanding is best studied in a situation where the school learning community has a long history of using children's literature in creative ways; where children's literature (particularly picture storybooks) is an important part of each school day; and where children's talk is encouraged and viewed positively as a crucial component of learning. The researcher's purpose was not to focus on the ways in which an interpretive literary community developed in a school where the teachers were in the process of becoming familiar with children's literature and beginning an attempt to make it a central part of the school program, but rather to explore the responses of children in a fully developed program. Thus, the study concerns an almost ideal educational situation, which is rare by definition. However, it should also be pointed out that the children in the study were mostly not children of privilege, but rather middle-, lower-middle, and lower-class children with culturally diverse backgrounds, including Native American, African American, and Appalachian heritages. This combination of factors allowed the researcher to investigate how a variety of children, including children from unadvantaged home situations, responded to picturebooks in a nurturing and supportive school setting.

Previous researchers (for example, Hickman, 1979, 1981; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1994) have documented a wide range of responses to storybooks, including
dramatic play, art, spontaneous re-enactment, and written response in many forms. This study does not deal in any depth with this range of responses; rather it focuses almost exclusively on the talk of children and adults before, during, and after storybook readalouds. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the researcher spent more than a month in the classroom before focusing on storybook readalouds, noting instances of this range of response; this enabled the understanding of the social environment and this classroom’s "school culture," which was used to contextualize the storybook readalouds.

The study depends on purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) on several levels. The school was chosen for its long history of using children’s literature to teach reading and philosophy of informal instruction, in which classroom talk by the children is promoted and considered critical for learning. The classroom was chosen because it had a combination of first- and second-grade children, giving the researcher the opportunity to study a slightly wider range of ages while still concentrating on children with emerging literacy abilities. The classroom teacher was chosen because of her commitment to an informal philosophy of instruction, her knowledge of children’s literature and her extensive use of it in the classroom, and for her high degree of theoretical knowledge about pedagogy and children’s literature. Taken together, then, these choices resulted in what Patton (1990) refers to as "intensity sampling" (p. 171): a sample that manifests the phenomenon to be studied intensely. The data of the study, in general, reflect the high potential for children’s literary understanding rather than the level of literary understanding that may be found in more typical classrooms and schools.

Another limitation of the study is that it concerns classroom discussion of only a few genres of children’s literature: traditional stories, contemporary realistic fiction, and contemporary fantasy. This is a limitation because children’s responses to and literary understanding of other genres (for example, poetry or historical fiction) may possess quite different dynamics.

Although the study lasted for a total of seven months, it was not the researcher’s intention to frame it as a longitudinal study, as if its main purpose were
to trace development. A truly longitudinal study of the development of literary understanding would involve at least several years of data collection. However, it did prove possible to trace how the children added to their existing repertoire of literary understandings during the course of the study through the scaffolding provided by the classroom teacher and the researcher.

The study is limited in the same way that all descriptive classroom studies are limited, in that it reports on the experience of 27 specific children in a particular classroom. As such, it attempts to provide a sufficiently "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of this one classroom case in order to enable the reader to determine whatever generalizability it has for other children, other classrooms, and other teachers. Another limitation of such a qualitative, descriptive study is that the researcher's own subjectivity is an important part of the methodology. Because qualitative methodology does not mask or ignore this subjectivity, the researcher will occasionally shift to the use of the first-person in this document. These methodological limitations of the study are discussed more fully in chapter 3.

**Significance of the Study**

The importance of the storybook readaloud situation cannot be underestimated. Researchers have investigated what goes on in this situation that contributes to children's literacy learning, and have postulated many explanations for its power. However, the literary aspects of storybook readalouds have been largely unexamined. This study is significant in that it attempts to describe how young children in the emergent stages of literacy construct their own view of literary understanding and literary competence, with the support of adults. It describes and analyzes the sophisticated responses and understandings that first- and second-grade children can display when they function in a supportive school and classroom environment in which literary response is sought after, valued, and praised, and in which knowledgeable adults scaffold the children's developing literary understanding.

This study seeks to expand and broaden our view of what constitutes literary understanding by engaging in theory-building, providing a theoretically rich and data-
driven model of this construct. It builds on, reformulates, synthesizes, and extends
the models and constructs produced by such literary theorists as Roland Barthes
Bogdan (1990); James Britton (1968, 1984, 1993); Gerard Genette (1980); Wolfgang
Iser (1974, 1978); and Louise Rosenblatt (1938, 1978, 1994); and such researchers as
(1992, 1995). It is theoretically significant, as well, for its investigation of the
individual response styles of young children, an aspect of their response that has been
hitherto unexamined.

The practical significance of the study lies in its implications for pedagogical
practice, which are discussed in chapter 5. Because storybook readalouds are a
feature of virtually every primary classroom, and because they occupy a significant
portion of the school day in many primary classrooms, it is important to examine the
readaloud situation from as many perspectives as possible.

**Summary**

This descriptive study, situated in the constructivist paradigm, uses qualitative
methods to describe and analyze the comments, questions, and responses of the
children in a first- and second-grade classroom as they heard picture storybooks read
aloud by the teacher and the researcher. The study was designed to elicit a rich and
substantial body of children’s responses and to analyze the patterns in these responses;
to describe the ways in which the adults involved in the storybook readalouds
scaffolded the children’s developing literary understanding; and to ascertain how the
type of text read aloud affected the children’s responses. It was expected that the
study would add to the body of knowledge about the storybook readaloud situation by
its focus on these young children’s literary understanding, and that it would assist
practitioners in their instructional decisions about how to conduct storybook
readalouds more fruitfully, as well as how to understand and encourage children’s
responses to literature. It was also expected that the study would produce a grounded
theory of literary understanding that would extend and refine current conceptualizations of this construct.

In the next chapter, a review of relevant research and theory is presented.
Endnotes for Chapter 1

1. The concept of the "informal" school is discussed more fully in chapter 3. Informal education involves features of the British Primary Schools model (Blackie, 1971, 1978; McKenzie & Kernig, 1975; Webb, 1974; Weber, 1971). An informal philosophy of education includes: (1) a view of children as the constructors of their own learning, with (2) subsequent greater freedom allowed to children to pursue their own learning agendas; (3) an emphasis on the "integrated day" (Blackie, 1974; Brown & Precious, 1968; Taylor, 1972), in which subject area disciplines are not rigidly separated from one another; (4) the use of trade books of children's literature to teach reading rather than basal readers or other tightly organized reading schemes; (5) an emphasis on active learning in the form of drama, experimentation, and activities involving the visual arts; and (6) frequent grouping of children of differing ages, so as to make the school resemble a family situation. The philosophy of informal schooling is directly related to Dewey's concept of "progressive education" and the philosophy of "open education" prevalent in the United States in the 1970's.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from a variety of academic disciplines, subject matters, and research traditions that are relevant to this study. In doing so, it attempts to build an argument that creates a space for the study as a contribution to and augmentation of what is currently known and thought about children's responses to literature in the classroom. It will be argued that the implicit view of literary understanding that is present in theories of reading comprehension, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and discourse processing is somewhat narrow and confining, being limited to the traditional idea of the "narrative elements" of setting, character, plot, and theme; that there is little empirical research on the responses of children below third grade to literature; that such research as does exist for elementary- and primary-age children relies heavily on a handful of literary theories; that a greater variety of literary theories may be useful in describing and understanding young children's responses and developing literary understanding; that there is a paucity of research on the storybook readaloud situation that is concerned with children's literary understanding; and that there is little research that takes into account the visual qualities of picturebooks. Taken together, these limits on current knowledge and research suggest that a study is needed which (1) describes and analyzes young children's literary understanding displayed as they talk about picturebooks in the classroom during storybook readalouds; and (2) builds a grounded theory that extends, broadens, and refines the theoretical construct of literary understanding.
The chapter may be conceived as a series of nested concentric circles, in that it moves from quite broad epistemological issues to an increasingly focused discussion of research and theory relevant to the phenomenon under investigation: the reading of picture storybooks aloud to young children, and the talk before, during, and after the readaloud. The largest conceptual circle deals with the social constructivist paradigm and its application to the classroom, and uses Vygotsky’s social-cultural theory to move to a consideration of the nature of classroom talk as the all-pervasive element in children’s learning.

The review continues with a discussion of how theory and research in reading, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and discourse processing are relevant to classroom talk about textual narrative, including schema theory and various theories and models of narrative representation, such as story grammars and story mapping. Following this, there is an extensive review of literary theories that are relevant to classroom talk about books, including several clusters of text-based theories; the wide range of so-called "reader response" theories; Benton’s theory of the secondary world; Langer’s model of "envisionment;" and Bogdan’s theory of literary response.

The next section of the review continues by considering the classroom research (based on some of the literary theories in the previous section) that has investigated how literature is discussed by students and teachers. The last section in the review focuses even more narrowly on research and theory relevant to the picturebook, which is the literary form in which young children most commonly experience literature or "story" (Chukovsky, 1971), and which is the literary form with which this study is concerned. In this section, semiotic perspectives on illustration and on the text-picture relationship are discussed, as well as perspectives from visual aesthetic theory; the section concludes by considering the small body of research on children’s responses to and understanding of picturebook illustration.

The discussion, in brief, assumes the following structure:

1. The social constructivist paradigm
2. Vygotsky’s theories and the importance of talk in the classroom
3. A particular kind of talk in the classroom: talk about literature
A. Perspectives from reading theory, cognitive psychology,
linguistics, and discourse processing

B. Perspectives from literary theory
1. Text-based theory and research
2. Reader-based theory
3. Reader-based research

IV. A particular kind of literature: *the picturebook*

This review is based on the assumption that theory and research are not two rigidly distinct categories, but rather that they exist in a reciprocal, dynamic, and synergistic relationship. Where theory and research are separated (for example, in III.B.2. and III.B.3.), it is for organizational purposes only. As well, the review is weighted toward research having to do with young children (children in grade three or below).

The Social Constructivist Paradigm

The second half of the twentieth century has seen the emergence of several broad, far-reaching shifts in the ways we view reality and the possibility of knowing that reality through human cognition. What is known as the "social constructivist paradigm" (Gergen, 1985; Schwandt, 1994) is a set of broad epistemological and ontological principles resulting from these shifts. One shift is a basic change from an objective view of reality to a subjective view (Bleich 1978). The traditional, objective conceptualization of reality—what is "out there"—is that it has an objective organization and existence, and that through proper methods, we can discover its nature and structure. The observer is sharply differentiated from what is observed. These traditional epistemological and ontological assumptions have formed the basis for the positivist or objectivist paradigm. In contrast to this view of reality, according to the social constructivist paradigm, reality is not found "out there," but rather socially constructed by groups of people. If reality is invented rather than found, then the sharp distinction between observer and the observed is blurred or rendered
nonexistent (Gadamer, 1986). Constructivists and other non-positivists speak of "knowledge production" rather than the discovery of knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1994): we do not find knowledge; we create it.

Another basic change or shift lies in the basic conceptualization of language: what Rorty (1967) calls the "linguistic turn." Traditionally, according to the positivist or objectivist paradigm, language has been seen as directly descriptive of reality. Language is, as it were, transparent to reality, in the sense that language itself is merely a clear window through which we view reality, and which adds and takes away nothing from our perception of reality. The work of de Saussure (1916/1983), Peirce (1931, 1958), and others replaces this idea of the transparence of language with a view of language as a system of signs that has internal coherence but no direct correspondence with reality: "words mean what they do through their relations with each other rather than through their relationship to an extra-linguistic reality" (Blackburn, 1994, p. 256). Thus, from the point of view of social constructivism, language does not describe reality, but rather inscribes or constitutes reality (Berlin, 1986). Social constructivism changes the metaphor of language as a clear window to that of language as a window made of colored and cloudy glass. Above the elemental level of physical perceptions, all knowledge consists of language. We cannot get past language to some deeper, more "real" experience, particularly when we are trying to understand how human beings relate to each other. For the human sciences (psychology, sociology, anthropology, and all aspects of education), the way we talk and write about the human, social world actually creates that world (Lather, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Moreover, language is freighted with the values and worldview of those who use it. Human thought dwells in the "prison-house of language" (Jameson, 1982), where meanings are socially constructed and therefore shifting and unstable. Kuhn (1970) suggests that scientific development consists of a series of epistemological "revolutions," as the same phenomena came to be interpreted in very different ways, depending on "changing sets of beliefs about the nature of reality subscribed to by a group of thinkers large enough to exercise leadership for those similarly wishing to observe and understand human experience" (Bleich, 1978,
p. 10). The "facts," Kuhn argues, do not speak for themselves; rather our paradigmatic lens and our language determine how we interpret the facts, and even what constitutes a fact. Truly objective observation is never possible, because all perceptions are filtered through the cultural background, race, gender, socio-economic status, paradigmatic stances, and language of the observer (Husserl, 1970). All knowledge is therefore seen as partial, positioned, and socially constructed.

From the perspective of the social constructivist paradigm, these shifts--to (1) the view of reality as invented or created by human beings, and to (2) the view of language as the irreducible substratum of knowledge--suggest that the interaction between human beings, particularly their interaction in language (written or spoken) is the crucible in which all cognitive processes are forged. The implication for young children is that oral language in social settings is a profoundly critical component of their cognitive development and one of the most important factors in their learning. (The social constructivist paradigm also has important implications for the methods employed by educational researchers; these implications are outlined fully in chapter 3.)

**Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Approach**

The importance of oral language in social settings is one of the foundational assumptions of the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist who was particularly interested in child development, and whose theories of language and social interaction have become increasingly appreciated and utilized in the field of education (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Moll, 1990; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Although he published most of his work in the 1920’s and 30’s, many of his books and articles began to be translated into English only in the 1960’s and 70’s. Thus, although Vygotsky’s ideas were developed well before the middle of the twentieth century, his influence on education is fairly recent.

Vygotsky’s theory is often called the "socio-cultural" approach (Wertsch, 1985; Berk & Winsler, 1995) because it is concerned with how the surrounding social and cultural forces affect children’s cognitive development. This was a natural
emphasis for Vygotsky; he did his work in the beginning stages of the Soviet Union after the Marxist revolution of 1917, and he was thus concerned to develop a psychology that would reflect the philosophy and political aims of the new society in which he lived. Soviet principles emphasized the importance of the collective rather than the individual, and Vygotsky's theory gives a special place to the effect of culture (developed by groups of people over time) on young children. One of the unique qualities of his theory is that he did not conceive of thinking as being "bounded by the individual brain or mind" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 12); rather, he felt that "the mind extends beyond the skin" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 90) and is irrevocably joined to other minds. Vygotsky therefore emphasized the social nature of cognition rather than its individual nature. Our social experience constrains and forms our ways of thinking about the world; indeed, social experience profoundly influences how we construct reality. Vygotsky argued that "every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). In other words, children are exposed to and learn cognitive processes through social interaction, and then they internalize these cognitive processes. Vygotsky (1978) agreed with Piaget that children were active constructors of knowledge in response to problems, but unlike Piaget, who believed that such learning was motivated by internal cognitive disequilibrium, Vygotsky emphasized that "it was the social world that motivated learning, rather than cognitive disequilibrium. The process by which children and adults collaboratively construct solutions to these everyday problems was at the heart of learning for Vygotsky" (Rowe, 1994, p. 9).

For Vygotsky, language is the primary way in which we socially communicate with others; it is the main way in which "the mind extends beyond the skin," to interact with other minds. For young children, of course, "language" means "oral language;" later, we use both oral and written language to interact with other minds. Another important function of language is that it is the main way in which social experience is represented and interpreted in the mind; it is the main tool human beings use for thinking. Language is a "symbolic tool" (Vygotsky, 1978). For
Vygotsky, children’s speech is social from the outset; then it divides between "speech for others," which continues the communicative function, and "speech for the self" or "egocentric speech," which is used by the child to assist herself in thinking. In experiments, Vygotsky (1986) noticed that when young children were attempting a difficult task, they often began to speak aloud, and that this speech seemed to help them focus on the task and to accomplish it. Vygotsky theorized that, later in a child’s development, this egocentric speech was completely internalized (became "inner speech") when children could think themselves through a task instead of talking themselves through it. Therefore, the thinking was the internalization of the private speech that had, in turn, come from social speech ("speech for others"). As Cazden (1986) puts it, "Speech unites the cognitive and the social."

The emphasis Vygotsky placed on oral language in social settings for children’s cognitive development also led him to emphasize the role of adults and more capable peers in that development, because it is clearly those who are already expert in the use of language who can assist the child in developing it for her own. But what are the dynamics of this assistance? How does it occur? These questions led him to formulate a construct he called the "zone of proximal development," usually abbreviated as ZPD. For Vygotsky, the paradigm situation in children’s development consisted of an adult and a child engaged together in some activity. The ZPD was formulated to explain the nature of this engagement. Vygotsky (1978) noticed that when we speak of a child’s cognitive ability, we can define this ability in various ways, depending on whether or not the child is receiving assistance in a particular task. He therefore distinguished between two levels of children’s abilities: the "actual" level and the "potential" level. The actual level is the level at which the child can function independently, without assistance from anyone. The potential level is the level at which the child can perform a task with the assistance of an adult or "expert other." This potential level is always higher than the actual level, and there is always a certain distance or "zone" between them. Vygotsky named this zone between the actual and potential level the "zone of proximal development." The ZPD "is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent
problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86, italics in the original). Vygotsky argued that the lower, actual level of ability is raised to the potential level of ability through the interaction with and assistance of expert others. In other words, learning is a matter of being able to do for ourselves what yesterday we could do with assistance. Cognitive development occurs as a consequence of (and after) this learning. The child is then on a new actual level that was her old potential level, and has a new, higher potential level. In further interactions, this sequence is repeated, and these subsequent learnings further the child’s development. The successful interaction is always directed at the "ripening" rather than the "ripe" functions, because the task or activity is always just slightly beyond what the child can do independently (Vygotsky, 1978).

Other theorists and researchers have refined this construct of the ZPD to further explain how the expert’s assistance helps the child (Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984). Some researchers (Rogoff, 1990; Rogoff, Mosier, et al., 1993) use the term "guided participation," to describe the way in which the adult guides, supports, and challenges the child at the same time that the child is actively involved. Wood and Bruner (Wood & Middleton, 1975; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Wood, 1989) use the term "scaffolding" to describe the ways in which adults attempt to sensitively support children, by giving directions, "talking them through" a sequence of actions, letting children do what they can, and supplying the more difficult parts of the task. The metaphor of the scaffold is appropriate because it relates to construction, which in this case refers to the construction of understanding by the child in social settings. In other words, the child is the one who does the building, but that construction is enabled by the scaffold provided by the adult. Research has shown that such an approach is very powerful in increasing children’s abilities in a variety of tasks (Diaz, Neal, & Amaya-Williams, 1990; Diaz, Neal, & Vachio, 1991; Palincsar & Brown, 1989; Pratt et al, 1992). Berk and Winsler (1995, pp. 27-28) list five components of successful scaffolding: joint problem solving; intersubjectivity ("a process whereby two participants who begin a task with a different understanding arrive at a shared
understanding”); warmth and responsiveness; keeping the child in the ZPD; and promoting self-regulation by the child. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) have further refined the ZPD to include four stages: (1) assistance provided by more capable others; (2) assistance provided by the self (as when children talk themselves through a task); (3) a stage of internalization and "fossilization," where assistance from others is actually detrimental and counterproductive and the child can function independently; and (4) a stage where a new feature of the task or a change in circumstances "de-automatizes" the child’s cognitive processing and forces her to go back to stage 1.

**Talk in the Classroom**

Vygotsky’s theory, which emphasizes the importance of oral language used in social settings, has clear relevance for the classroom situation. In terms of Vygotsky’s theory, the successful teacher is one who is able to identify the various ZPDs of the children in her class, and to construct experiences that scaffold the children’s developing abilities. The successful teacher also arranges experiences that enable more capable peers to help with scaffolding. The theory suggests that learning occurs most powerfully in situations that are highly social, and in which children are engaged with each other and the teacher in meaningful activities where there is a great deal of talk. Current research has shown these principles to be valid (Pinnell & Jaggar, 1991).

Unfortunately, research has also shown that, in actual classrooms, this type of situation is uncommon. Teachers tend to control talk rather rigidly (Green & Wallat, 1981; Barnes, 1976; Wells, 1986). This has been shown to be true even for teachers identified as "good" teachers (Dillon & Searle, 1981). Several researchers (Belleck, et al, 1966; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) have identified a particular type of classroom discourse that is characterized by a sequence of three events. The first event consists of the teacher’s initiation of a question or probe. The second event consists of the students’ response to the teacher’s initiating question. The third event is the teacher’s evaluation of the response. The short description for this sequence is I.R.E. (the abbreviation for Initiation-Response-Evaluation). It is clear
that the first and third events are totally teacher-controlled, and that the students' involvement is sandwiched between them. Researchers have found that the I.R.E. sequence continually repeats itself in the classroom. Whether learning occurs in this situation is seemingly less important than the execution of this "procedural display" (Bloome, 1989). In any case, following the orderly procedure of the I.R.E. does not automatically ensure that students are developing their cognitive abilities. Several researchers have found that the home may be a richer site for oral language and learning than the school (Wells, 1981; Tizard & Hughes, 1984).

Barnes (1976) argues that the oral language used to communicate in the classroom is the major factor in determining the actual curriculum that is being taught. He calls this the "hidden curriculum," in order to distinguish it from the curriculum that is written in instructional manuals and books. Problems arise when teachers assume that certain types of oral language interactions will occur without explicitly teaching the children what is expected. This can be a particular difficulty for children who come from homes in which these interactions have not occurred (Cazden, 1988, Tough, 1973, 1977). For example, Heath (1982, 1983) found that the African American children of low socio-economic status in her study were not used to being asked questions to which the questioner already knew the answer; when these types of questions were frequently asked by their classroom teacher, these children were silent and withdrawn. Children from another cultural group were quite accustomed to this type of questioning, and readily adapted to the classroom discourse. Edwards (1979) notes that when teachers ask questions to which they already know the answer, they are constructing a situation in which they hold all the power because they are in a position to evaluate the answer.

Barnes also distinguishes between two types of language use in the classroom, "transmission" and "interpretation." As Dillon and Searle (1981) explain,

In the transmission view, knowledge is seen as existing outside the learner, and teaching is seen as transferring a body of knowledge to the learner. In the interpretation view, knowledge is seen as being developed within the learner, and teaching is seen as giving students the
opportunity to develop and express knowledge from a more personal perspective (Dillon & Searle, 1981, p. 312).

The "interpretation" view is clearly the view that best accords with the social constructivist paradigm. The "transmission" view tends to ignore the importance of what children can bring to a task in the form of prior knowledge; it also de-emphasizes the role of personal experience and makes children more dependent on the teacher’s experience (Edwards & Furlong, 1978). The implication of this research for the storybook readaloud situation is that discussions of the book should not be rigidly controlled by the teacher, and that children should have the opportunity of relating personal experiences to the story. As well, teachers should be aware of the power relations involved in frequently asking questions to which they know the answer.

Researchers have investigated classroom situations in which the "interpretation" view of teaching and learning seems to be more in evidence. The Kamehameha Elementary Education Program in Hawaii was based on a theory of teaching/learning as "assisted performance," which drew from Vygotsky’s construct of the ZPD. In this program, the teacher acted as a conversational partner, and responded to the children rather than dominating the talk (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Similarly, Watson (1987) in a study of classroom discourse in New South Wales, found that although 60 percent of the lessons he observed were characterized by tight teacher control, 30 percent were classes in which there were more open-ended questions and conversational responses by the teacher. In about 10 percent of the lessons, Watson found that students initiated responses more often and that teachers tended to encourage students to talk with each other.

Researchers have also investigated the various routines of the classroom that are structured around certain oral language interactions. Gumperz (1986) calls such routines "speech events." Such events have norms or rules that are followed by the teacher and the children (Gilmore & Glatthorn, 1982; Green & Wallat, 1981). The storybook readaloud situation is one of these speech events, and children participate by speaking within the norms of this speech event.
Theory and Research Concerning Narrative from the Fields of Reading, Cognitive Psychology, Linguistics, and Discourse Processing

The focus of this review now shifts to a discussion of the various perspectives that may be taken on children's experiences with stories. Theory and research from a variety of cognitively oriented disciplines inform our understanding of children's comprehension of narrative text. Since the early 1970's, a number of models of the structure of stories have been produced, variously called "story grammars," "story maps," or "story schemas" (Black & Wilensky, 1979; Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1980; Meyer & Rice, 1984; Graesser, Golding, & Long, 1991). These grammars or maps attempt to describe how narrative structures are represented in the mind; thus they are sometimes called theories of narrative representation. These theories of narrative are based on the more general principles of schema theory (Adams & Collins, 1977; Anderson, 1984; Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Anderson, Spiro, & Montague, 1977), which posits the existence of cognitive structures called "schemata" that process and organize incoming information, and are themselves modified and refined by new information. Although schema theory has been challenged and refined during the last decade (Kintsch, 1988; Paivio, 1986; Sadoski & Paivio, 1994; Sadoski, Paivio, & Goetz, 1991; Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 1994), one of its major insights is still accepted. That insight is that what we bring to the act of reading (or to any experience) in the form of prior knowledge is an extremely important factor in the ways in which we understand that experience. New information is, as it were, filtered through our prior knowledge. In the case of story grammars or maps, researchers hypothesize the existence of schemata for stories, which allow us to understand the plot and to predict what will happen in the narrative. One important conclusion reached by researchers is that, as complicated as all these models are, even young children display a working understanding of story structure that is, if anything, in excess of the complex propositions and interrelationships in the models (Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Stein & Glenn, 1979).

More recent research has asked whether explicit instruction in story-mapping would have a positive effect on the understanding of narrative; the evidence is fairly
conclusive that such instruction is productive of greater understanding (Fitzgerald & Spiegel, 1983; Spiegel & Fitzgerald, 1986; Dimino, Gersten, Carnine, & Blake, 1990), as well as having a positive influence on children's writing abilities (Fitzgerald & Teasley, 1986; Gambrell & Chasen, 1991). Bauman and Bergeron (1993) were the first to study story-mapping with children who were younger than grade three; they studied the relative effects of four different treatments of instruction in story-mapping on first-grade children's comprehension of "central story elements." The study is thus notable for its focus on children in the emergent stage of literacy. Also notable is the researchers' use of children's literature in the form of picturebooks; previous studies had used abbreviated stories or stories written especially for research. Bauman and Bergeron concluded that explicit instruction in story-mapping is effective in helping first-graders to identify and understand "central narrative elements" such as characters, plot, setting, problem, and resolution (p. 407), as measured both by the children's answers on tests and by qualitative analysis of interviews of the children. However, diversity of response was evidently not encouraged in the study: one of the comprehension questions was "What was the problem in the story?", which assumes that only one answer is acceptable.

Golden and Rumelhart's (1993) recent model of "story comprehension and recall" conceptualizes the reader's task as following the "narrative trajectory" of a story by mentally filling in the gaps in the narrative: "A story is represented as a partially specified trajectory in situation-state space, and thus, story comprehension is defined as the problem of inferring and most probable missing features from the partially specified story trajectory" (p. 203). The emphasis in this model is what is not in the story and what must be supplied by the active reader.

There seem to be several limitations to the research on story grammars, maps, and models. First, the models are often based on very simple, short stories that were written by the researchers for the express purpose of developing and explaining the models. This means that the models are based on narratives that may not reflect the length or the complexity of trade books of literature used in classrooms; therefore, the applicability of these models to children's understanding of the typical narratives used
in classrooms may be questioned. Second, the models seem to assume the traditional view of literary understanding as consisting of the grasp of the "elements of narrative" such as setting, characters, plot, and theme. This traditional view may in actuality represent only one restricted aspect of children’s literary understanding. Third, story grammar maps and models do not include attention to illustrations and the potential of illustrations for meaning-making by children. This is problematic because the great majority of narratives used in primary classrooms take the form of picturebooks, in which the illustrations play an equally important part with the verbal text. Thus, young children may be involved in a considerably more complex process (involving the coordination and integration of the sign system of the illustrations and the sign system of the verbal text) than is contemplated by story grammars, maps, and models. Fourth, because of their focus on textual features rather than on the qualities of readers, story grammar maps and models do not explain how readers may have quite different, but equally valid understandings and interpretations of the same text.

Miall and Kuiken (1994) have further critiqued story grammars and models of story comprehension by exploring the ways in which concepts from literary theory can expand, refine, and inform these text-based theories. They use insights into narrative from the Russian formalists, the Prague Linguistic Circle, and William Empson to identify several missing factors in story grammars that do not account for literary response. One of these concepts is the idea of "defamiliarization," in which literary texts are viewed as different from other texts because of their degree of ambiguity. Literary texts have the possibility of a greater number of interpretations, and thus promote more personal and individual readings. Literature stimulates us to see and conceptualize in new ways; it is, as Shklovsky (quoted in Miall & Kuiken, 1994, p. 343) declared, the enemy of "habitualization," that habitualization that "devours life," making us automatons as we merely go through the motions of life without savoring its experiences. Miall and Kuiken argue that story grammars fail to capture this aspect of literary experience. Most story grammars attempt to "economize comprehension, postulating that the mind takes the shortest route through the maze of meanings in a story," whereas defamiliarization theory suggests that
literary texts are read in the opposite way, as the reader dwells on the ambiguities of the text: "Generally, text theories emphasize the reader’s uncertainty about explicitly recallable meanings, where defamiliarization theory emphasizes the reader’s affective experience of the ambiguity presented by multifaceted meanings" (p. 349). Miall and Kuiken conclude by commenting, "We read literary texts because they enable us to reflect on our own commitments and concerns; to discover better what they are, to reconfigure them, to place the ideas we have about our aims and identity in a different perspective. The differences between readers are thus not incidental to literary response, they are fundamental" (p. 351).

**Literary Perspectives Relevant to Talk about Literature in the Classroom**

The previous section showed the kinds of perspectives and insights that cognitively oriented disciplines bring to children’s understanding of stories. However, the literary qualities of the children’s responses to and understanding of these stories are not the major focus of this research and theory. For a literary perspective, we naturally need to shift to literary theories, particularly those theories that deal with (1) the literary qualities of texts, as well as with (2) the literary qualities of readers’ responses to literature. This section of the review deals with these two foci. First, text-based theory and research is presented, including various New Critical, Russian Formalist, and structuralist perspectives, as well as the perspectives of archetypal criticism. Then, various types of reader-based theory are discussed. These various types include reader response criticism; Benton’s theory of the secondary world; Bogdan’s theory of reader stance; Langer’s model of "envisionment;" and various poststructural theories.

**Text-based Theory and Research**

high-quality children's literature in picturebook format, gives "lessons" in "authorship, audience, illustration, and iconic interpretation"—all part of the development of literary competence, but also crucial to reading. Meek explains that, "To learn to read a book, as distinct from simply recognizing the words on the page, a young reader has to become both the teller (picking up the author's view and voice) and the told (the recipient of the story, the interpreter). This symbolic interaction is learned early" (p. 10). Another thing the young reader learns from Rosie's Walk is that there would be no story without him/her. This is because the words and the pictures work together in order to tell the story, and only the reader can use them to make sense of each other. (The difference between the text-picture relationships in Rosie's Walk and the text-picture relationship in basal stories is that the illustrations in basal stories are essentially decorations, adding no more to the story than the words of the text.) Thus the beginning reader learns his/her active role through the picturebook itself. Meek goes on to describe how literature provides beginning readers with the crucial lessons in narrative (of character, plot, action, conflict, and resolution) that teach "how texts work" even as they motivate children to read to the end. The satisfactions of the narrative form are so great that children are driven to read and reread, even after they find out "what happens." One final point that Meek makes is that stories are members of a huge interrelated family; through literature, children learn intertextual relationships as well as the discourse conventions of various genres. The surprisingly wide range of these discourse types that young children learn is examined in some detail by Walmsley, Fielding, and Walp (1991) in their longitudinal study of second graders' home and school literary experiences.

The work of Meek and others, then, points to the crucial importance of the narrative structures of literature in learning to read. Textual analysis of these structures would therefore seem to be useful in understanding what children learn about reading through literature and how they learn it. Text-based literary theories provide perspectives that may enable this understanding. The following sections highlight several of these clusters of literary theories that focus on the form and content of narrative texts.
The New Criticism

From the 1920's until the 1960's, the field of English-speaking literary criticism was heavily dominated by an approach that focused almost solely on textual analysis. Known as "New Criticism," this approach reacted against the prevailing literary criticism that continued the Romantic tradition of viewing literary works as self-expression, and which therefore concentrated on biographical and historical information about the author to the neglect of the text itself (Whalen-Levitt, 1983; Selden & Widdowson, 1993). American New Criticism emerged in the 1920's from the influence of English writers (T. S. Eliot and I. A. Richards'), and grew to its greatest importance in the 1940's and 50's. John Crowe Ransom (1941); Cleanth Brooks (1939/1965); Robert Penn Warren (Brooks & Warren, 1943); William Wimsatt, and Monroe Beardsley (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1946/1970; 1949/1970) were some of the most influential figures in New Criticism. The New Critics had a great concern for objectivity, and set about attempting to give literary criticism some of the characteristics of a science. They observed that the traditional trichotomy of literature—the author, the author's text, and the reader of that text—had only one element that was fixed, stable, and capable of objective investigation. That element was, of course, the text. The words of the text did not change (and the growing science of textual criticism ensured the "authenticity" of texts). The text was there—literally—in black and white, and was therefore amenable to investigation in a way that the author and the reader were not. Authors like Shakespeare were dead, and had never commented in writing about their work. Other authors might have written about their work, but this evidence was usually scarce, spotty, and unclear. Contemporary authors might talk about their work, but it is well known that authors are extremely reticent and coy about explaining anything or pinning down a meaning. We could never determine authors' true intentions; what they said or wrote about their work might be ironic or even deliberately misleading. Therefore, the author's part of the trichotomy was eliminated from consideration. In the same way, the reader's part of the trichotomy was considered outside the scope of objective examination. The New Critics viewed readers with a great deal of apprehension, for
readers were even more destructive of the project to objectify criticism than authors. Readers were notorious for being incredibly diverse in their interpretations; I. A. Richards (1929) had proved this with his study of university undergraduates, for even this homogeneous group had come up with wildly different readings of the same poems. To consider readers would therefore end in complete relativism and solipsism. These concerns were crystalized in two extremely influential essays by Wimsatt and Beardsley. The "intentional fallacy" (1946) inveighed against any attempts to determine an author's intention; and the "affective fallacy" (1949) recoiled from the prospect of using what readers said about texts as a basis for literary criticism. The text alone was considered worthy of investigation. Its form, its structure, and its use of image and irony could be analyzed. Since there was only one text, there could be only one interpretation; and close, careful reading would reveal it. While there might be disputes about interpretation², it was generally agreed that, just as the text existed in its own right (as a "verbal icon"), so the purpose of criticism was to arrive at the meaning that was already there in that text. In a curious way, the New Criticism was quite democratic; for it assumed that great erudition about the history of literature and the biographies of authors was unnecessary. All that was needed was the text and a good dictionary. The text was stripped of context (even to the point of not even providing the authors' names in some anthologies meant for the college classroom). Yet, in another way, the New Criticism was autocratic: the instructor initiated the students into the techniques and procedures of analysis that would yield the correct interpretation. Along with a text and a good dictionary, a student needed the critical keys provided by the instructor.

In summary, New Criticism emphasized the text, rather than the reader or the author. Meaning was understood to lie in the text, waiting to be discovered. The goal of reading was thought to be achieving the closure of objective understanding. The text was considered a message, and the reader's job was to decipher the message. Because meaning was in the text, there was only one correct interpretation. There was a scientific objectivity about the whole process, since extraneous factors/variables (readers' backgrounds and the broader social and cultural context) were ignored. The
focus was on the individual and the text, not on the world surrounding that relationship; and that relationship was unidirectional: from the text to the reader. The text "speaks" or transmits; the reader "listens" (receives) and understands. Various writers (Harker, 1987, 1989, 1992; Hunt, 1990; Straw, 1990) have pointed out the similarities between the New Criticism and the behaviorist theories of reading that also focused on characteristics of the text, and which viewed reading as a matter of transmission of meaning from author to reader through the text.

Although some contemporary literary critics (Eagleton, 1983) and others concerned with the teaching of English (Thompson, 1987) write of the New Criticism as if it were the Evil Empire, the New Critical insistence on the close, careful reading of texts has continued. As well, the New Critical language for talking about texts is still very much alive in the use of terms like "irony," "foreshadowing," and "plot complication and resolution," and the emphasis on the understanding of metaphorical language and unifying symbols. More contemporary literary theories tend to have foci other than the text; but when these theories do deal with text, they seem to use much of the terminology of New Criticism.

**Russian Formalism and Structuralism**

Another group of text-based literary theories provides insights into how texts can teach what readers need to learn. The Russian formalists and the related critical school of structuralists, working at times with older forms of literature such as folktales and classical myths, found ways in which these texts all had the same structures in terms of plot actions and characters' relationships with each other. These writers analyzed narrative in broad categories of sequence and in typologies of literary devices (for example, point of view). Particular texts were considered to be instantiations of these broad patterns. One important distinction was made between *fabula* (plot) and *sjuzhet* (story). Story referred to a series of events linked together in real linear time, whereas plot was defined as the artistic or literary rearrangement of these events, in a different order (as, for example, in the writing of a flashback in the course of a narrative, or in a character's narration of memories). According to
Childers and Hentzi (1995), story "refers to the story as it might have occurred in real time and constitutes the raw narrative material awaiting the formal manipulation of the author;" while plot "designates the authorial transformation worked upon the story" (p. 106). This may be a crucial distinction for children to learn if they are to follow a narrative, because the points in the narrative that depart from real chronological sequence may prove to be confusing to children.

Propp (1958) postulated that Russian folktales could be analyzed into a basic set of thirty-one "functions," or events that form the basis of the narrative. All of the functions are combinations of characters and the actions they perform. For example, function 25 is "A difficult task is proposed to the hero," and function 31 is "The hero is married and ascends the throne." Naturally, every folktale does not contain all thirty-one functions; however, Propp posits that the functions describe the universe of possibilities in the folktales, so that each folktale is an instantiation of a certain number of functions. Although his analysis was based on Russian folktales, Propp's system may have application to other folktales and to other forms of literature as well (Seldon & Widdowson, 1993, p. 110).

Shklovsky (1917) argued that the experience of life naturally dulls our senses and our feeling through repetition. We go through the motions of life, and because of its very familiarity, we tend to pay less attention. Shklovsky emphasized that the main purpose of literature is to allow us to acutely experience the freshness and vibrancy of life, through literary techniques and practices that "defamiliarize" life and make it strange and new again. One technique, for example, is to "slow down" the narrative by dwelling on a single moment with a great deal of descriptive detail; or (alternatively) to "speed up" the narrative by skipping over days or even months of time. This is closely related to Genette's (1980) ideas concerning pace or speed of narrative. A narratologist, Genette observes that narratives commonly either collapse time (with such transitional devices as "some days later..." or expand time (for example, by viewing a single dramatic moment, lasting only a few seconds, through the eyes of several characters in turn). Genette calls this the acceleration and deceleration of the narrative, and he further differentiates several types of these
changes in speed. Real time is steady and predictable; narrative time is jerky, quirky, proceeding by fits and starts. We may be born (as Kant postulated) with an a priori idea of real time, but narrative time is something that clearly must be learned. There is no existing research on children’s developing understanding of narrative time.

The narrative theorist Todorov (1977) posited that narratives contain twelve types of transformations (six simple and six complex) that transformed simple expository language (what Bruner (1986) called "paradigmatic" or "logico-scientific" language) into the language of narrative, widening the scope of meanings and "subjunctivizing" reality, or showing "an action or a state as conceived" by the characters in a story (Hade, 1988, pp. 312-313). For example, the sentence "John ate ice cream" is in the expository, paradigmatic mode; it simply makes a statement. A transformation of mode of this sentence would be "John might eat ice cream." A transformation of intention would be "John tries to eat ice cream." There are ten other possible transformations in addition to these two. Hade (1988) used this system of "narrative transformations" worked out by Todorov to analyze the relationship between the text of a story and three children’s retellings of the story. Hade’s method was to analyze two stories that were read to the children (ages 3, 4, and 8), according to Todorov’s system of transformations. Hade then also analyzed the children’s several retellings according to the same system. His findings were that "the children are resonating syntactically to the language of the story," thus "making the language of the original texts part of their own story language" (p. 319). The implication is that the types of stories we read to children (or the stories they read) are formative of their concepts of narrative. Hade concluded that "Narrative transformations may be a structural tool that can enlighten the concept of ‘a child’s concept of story’" (p. 319). Hade’s work represents a powerful exemplar of the use of literary theory in research on young children’s understanding of narrative.

Archetypal Criticism

Rather than seeing literary texts in lonely isolation, the literary theorist Northrop Frye (1957, 1964) explored the ways in which poems, novels, and plays
represented the working out of broad mythic themes that had perennial significance and meaning for the human race. Frye extended Jung’s (1934-5) idea of archetypes—cognitive structures, themes, and concepts that Jung believed were part of the "collective unconscious" of humanity—to the universe of literary discourse. According to Jung, the ancient myths and folktales of all societies represent psychological states and symbols. One major product of the unconscious is the "hero myth," which recounts the resolution of struggle and other developmental themes. Frye used Jung’s ideas to construct a typology of literature, identifying four basic narrative patterns or types, which embodied archetypal knowledge: romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire/irony. For Frye, literature (and other art) is what makes us uniquely human, providing us with meaning and the possibility of self-transformation. Frye's theories have been used extensively by two writers interested in children’s acquisition of literary understanding, Glenna Davis Sloan (1991) and Kay Vandergrift (1980). The work of these two writers is described in the section of this chapter entitled "The Child as Critic."

Whereas New Criticism tended to focus on the text as a unique entity, the major thrust of Russian Formalism, structuralism, and archetypal criticism was to connect texts with each other by finding common patterns that united them. These last three movements in literary criticism represent the effort to discern the "grammar" and dynamics of narrative; to outline organizing principles common to particular genres and literary types; and to identify the ways in which literature reflects the universal human experience through the archetypal instantiations of values, goals, dreams, and character types.

**Reader Response Theory**

We now consider literary theories that shift the focus of interest from the text to the reader. If the major assumption of the text-based theories is that there is objective meaning, structure, and content in the text (and that, therefore, there can be only one meaning for any one text), the major assumption of reader-based theories is that different readers will naturally and inevitably construct different meanings of the
same text. One cluster of theories that focuses on the ways in which readers understand and interpret what they read is commonly grouped under the category of "reader-response" (Beach, 1993; Marshall, 1993; Tompkins, 1980; Suleiman & Crossman, 1980). These theories have in common their emphasis on the role of the reader in constructing literary meaning. They also share the phenomenological assumption that what is perceived and who perceives it are inseparable (Nauman, 1994). As well, reader-response theories reject the idea of any single, univocal, objective meaning in a text, since all readers bring different experiences to a text and understand the text through their own unique cultural and psychological filters. All of this is not to imply, however, that reader response criticism is monolithic. As Beach (1993) has shown, it is a house of many mansions.

For the purposes of this review, the diverse spectrum of reader response criticism has been organized as a continuum, ranging from theories that understand the reader as dominated by the text to theories that assert that the reader functions in a totally autonomous way, as shown in Figure 2.1:

reader as author/text-dominated ----------------|------------------totally autonomous reader

Figure 2.1 The continuum of reader-response.

The two extremes of the continuum will be discussed first. The extreme left-hand side may appear puzzling, since it describes a situation where the reader is dominated by the author or the text. Can this be reader-response? Yet the focus of the theories on this end of the continuum is still what happens in the reader's mind as he or she reads. For example, the phenomenologist Georges Poulet (1980), believes that, when we read, our minds are "taken over," inhabited by the author. We become a host to the author, who thinks (or re-thinks) his/her thoughts through us: "This I, who 'thinks in me' when I read a book, is the I of the one who writes the book" (p. 46).
Stanley Fish is another theorist whose early work (1967, 1970/1980) falls on this left end of the continuum. Fish is a fertile thinker, and has changed his approach significantly over a distinguished career as the *agent provocateur* of American literary criticism (Richter, 1989). *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in "Paradise Lost"* (Fish, 1967) brilliantly traces the moment to moment process of reading Milton's masterpiece. In so doing, of course, Fish challenged the New Critical "affective fallacy" by focusing on the reader of the poem rather than the poem itself. Fish conceives of reading in linear terms: "The basis of the method is a consideration of the temporal flow of the reading experience, and it is assumed that the reader responds in terms of that flow and not to the whole utterance. That is, in an utterance of any length, there is a point at which the reader has taken in only the first words, and then the second, and then the third, and so on, and the report of what happens to the reader is always a report of what has happened to that point" (Fish, 1970/1980, p. 27). Fish seeks to describe "the responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time" (p. 27); and this moment-by-moment, play-by-play description of the effect that every new word or phrase has on what has already been read is what constitutes interpretation. (Fish emphasizes that his method of analysis slows down the process to a conscious level; and his description thus may have a surprising relevance to the reading process of beginning readers, whose processing is much slower than that of mature readers.) From this perspective, the text is no longer an object, but an event, "something that happens to, and with the participation of, the reader" (p. 25). Thus, although the text constrains the reader at every moment, it is the reader's processing of the text that is the focus of interest.

At the other, extreme right-hand of the continuum of reader-response theories, the opposite situation obtains. At this end, there is a cluster of theories that give almost total autonomy to the reader: the text, controlled by the reader, becomes merely "a vessel of associations helplessly open to the mastery of [our] response" (Grudin, 1992, p. 105). The most extreme of these positions are taken by David Bleich (1978, 1980) and Norman Holland (1968, 1975). Assuming the subjective nature of reality, Bleich (1980) writes that "It is true that there is often an illusion that
a text acts on a reader, but it can hardly be the case that a text actually does act on the reader" (p. 145). Beyond seeing the same text and perhaps agreeing on the "nominal meaning" of words, "the only consensus about a text is on its role as a symbolic object, which means that further discussion of the text is predicated on each reader's symbolization and resymbolization of it" (p. 145), not on any illusory transaction. Discussion of reading means the sharing of one's own personal responses; and the pedagogical implication of this view is that the teacher (or professor; Bleich is primarily concerned with his own university teaching) needs to arrange a situation where literally any response is valued and accepted.

Norman Holland's position is similar, but he approaches the reader's autonomy from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory. His main concern is the emotional response that readers have to literature, and his earlier work (1968) takes a specifically Freudian view of how particular texts resonate with our basic fantasies and psychic conflicts. A bit later (1975), he examined the responses of five (adult) readers in detail, coming to the conclusion that what these people did when they read was to "read into" literature their basic personality structure or "identity theme." Since one's identity theme is unique and idiosyncratic, every reader's interpretation may also be unique. For Holland, what we find in a text is literally ourselves. Mailloux (1982) comments that, for Holland, "All of us, as we read, use the literary work to symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves. We work out through the text our own characteristic patterns of desire and adaptation" (p. 25). Our interpretation of a text depends almost solely on the internal emotional structures we bring to it; thus, Holland's work has more than surface similarities to theories of reading that emphasize the reader's background of experience to the almost total exclusion of the words on the page. Koler's aphorism that "Reading is only incidentally visual" (quoted in Flynn, 1983, p. 42) reflects this type of thinking about the reading process.

It was already mentioned that a comparison between the earlier and later work of Stanley Fish reveals a significant shift in his thought about the relative importance of the text. In the collection of essays *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Fish, 1980), his perspective swings to the opposite side of the continuum, reflecting almost as
extreme a subjective view as that of Bleich and Holland. For example, he asserts that there is no objective meaning in the text, referring in one essay (1980) to "affective criticism" as a "superior fiction," saucily declaring that "it relieves me of the obligation to be right (a standard that simply drops out) and demands only that I be interesting" (p. 180). The extreme relativism (not to say solipsism) that this view reflects was repudiated later by Fish himself, in another series of essays in the same book. Still maintaining that texts had absolutely no inherent meanings, he began to consider the reader not as a "sect of one," but in relationship to other readers.

Meanings, he argues, are constructed by individuals in the context of the particular "interpretive communities" to which they belong. This pivotal concept allows Fish to sit on both sides of the theoretical fence—to maintain reader autonomy while also avoiding the charge of interpretive anarchy. The interpretive community determines by what conventions and norms a work of literature will be interpreted; it sets the parameters, so to speak. So, while there is obviously not total agreement among the members of any interpretive community, they all recognize a common set of rules for interpretation. (The knowledge of this set of rules, norms, or conventions is similar to what Jonathan Culler (1975) calls "literary competence," though Culler's is a more universal concept.) Thus, while Fish can assert on the one hand that "Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing" and declare that "Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them" (p. 327), he can also guarantee that meaning is not merely a matter of individual whim, but the result of the individual reader's membership in the interpretive community. It is important to note that the idea of an interpretive community is not limited to august bodies like the Modern Language Association or its subgroups. Indeed, one can simultaneously be a member of several interpretive communities, each with its own norms. In the classroom, the rules of the interpretive community may be reconstructed anew each year by the negotiation of the teacher and the children. Fish's concept of the interpretive community implies that what children think literature is and what they think reading is depend on the implicit definitions of their classroom communities.
Thus far, the extremes of the reader-response theoretical continuum have been discussed. Now we shift to a consideration of reader-response theories that are situated more toward the middle of the continuum, attempting to strike a balance between the information in (and constraints of) the text and the prerogatives and control of the reader. The two theorists who have been most influential in the research on classroom response to literature are Wolfgang Iser and Louise Rosenblatt.

Subtitled "A Theory of Aesthetic Response," Iser's *The Act of Reading* (1978) is the most complete exposition of his theory of reading literature (particularly novels). Unlike Bleich and Holland, Iser does not believe that "the text disappears into the private world of its individual readers" (p. 49). Reading does not lead to "daydreaming, but to the fulfillment of conditions that have already been structured in the text" (p. 50). Iser views reading as an "interaction" between the text and the reader: "Effects and responses are properties neither of the text nor of the reader; the text represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process" (p. ix). Iser emphasizes the situatedness of reading in time, though his discussion is unlike Fish's relentless unidirectional progress through a text. Iser sees the reader having a "wandering viewpoint," which not only focuses on varying characters and what they know compared to what the narrator is telling us, but which also wanders back and forth between the memories of what has already been read and the reading of the moment, revising these memories as new information is added while reading. The reading process is conceived of as essentially recursive, with "a continual interplay between modified expectations and transformed memories" (p. 111). Another important concept in Iser's theory is the idea of "indeterminacies" or "gaps" in the text. No text, no matter how detailed, can describe every action, situation or character in exhaustive detail. One of the reader's main jobs is to fill in these gaps by inference. Iser says that "The gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves" (p. 169). As the readers fill in the gaps in the text, they must assure that their ongoing gap-filling is consistent with the information they have encountered previously in the text; and readers may revise their inferences as they come upon new information. Iser calls this whole process "consistency-
building," and it bears a great deal of similarity to Piaget's important concepts of assimilation and accommodation, in the constant process of revising expectations in the light of new knowledge (Piaget, 1977; 1985). The reading process involves anticipation, frustration, retrospection, reconstruction, and satisfaction. Iser's notion of gap-filling also resembles Golden and Rumelhart's (1993) idea of a story as a "partially specified trajectory" and the reader's job of supplying "the most probable missing features" of that trajectory (p. 203).

For Iser, then, meaning is not in the text, but created by an active reader, who nevertheless follows the instructions of the text that acts as a framework or schema upon which the reader builds a meaning. Iser privileges the reader, but he gives perhaps slightly greater weight to the text, since it is the text that provides the reader with the set of instructions he/she needs to make meaning. Iser even goes so far as to speak of the "implied reader," by which he means the one that is established by the text itself, through the "response-inviting structures" in the text. (This is quite similar to Booth's (1983) conception of an implied reader.) On our continuum, therefore, Iser would probably be placed slightly to the left of center.

The work of Louise Rosenblatt (1938, 1964, 1978, 1985, 1986, 1994) has been largely ignored by other literary theorists, but of all the theorists I have discussed, she is the most important for current literacy research and pedagogical practice. Long before the term "reader-response" criticism was coined (and during the ascendency of New Criticism), Rosenblatt was a pioneer in emphasizing the importance of the reader (Clifford, 1988). Her perspective on reading is that it is a "transactional" process involving the reader and text as equal partners; and of all the theorists, she is probably the one who approaches most closely to the exact middle of the continuum. She insists that her theory has "always kept both reader and text in focus" (1985, p. 103.) Whereas Iser uses the metaphor of a "set of instructions" for the text, Rosenblatt's (1978) metaphor gives a bit more authority to the reader: she calls the text a "blueprint, a guide for the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what is being called forth" in the reader's mind (p. 11). Rosenblatt (1985) takes great pains to distinguish her idea of "transaction," which is derived via Dewey and Bentley
(1949), from the idea of "interaction." "Transaction," she writes, "designates an ongoing [organic] process in which the elements or parts are seen as aspects or phases of a total situation" (1985, p. 98), as opposed to interaction, which she feels has too "mechanical" a connotation. Despite this, however, Iser's own concept of "interaction" and Rosenblatt's "transaction" are quite similar.

Rosenblatt's insistence on the "transactive" nature of the reading process bears fruit as she discusses the stances readers may take toward any text. She describes two basic stances, which she calls "efferent" and "aesthetic." These two stances constitute the opposite ends of a continuum rather than a dichotomous pair. When readers adopt an efferent stance, they are reading for the purpose of taking some information away from the text. (The term "efferent" is derived from the Latin efferre, meaning "to take or carry away.") Therefore, efferent reading is purposeful and focused on what happens after the activity of reading. Rosenblatt gives the example of reading the instructions on a bottle of prescription pills when someone has taken an overdose. The reader of these instructions cares nothing for the "experience" of reading; reading in this case is simply the means to a (very urgent) end. On the other hand, when we read a play or a novel or a poem, it is precisely this "lived-through experience" that is important. Our focus is on this experience with the text during the act of reading, rather than on any information we might use after reading. When we do this type of reading, we are adopting what Rosenblatt calls the "aesthetic" stance. One of Rosenblatt's great insights is that the "literariness" of texts is really an illusion; "literariness" resides not in the text, but in the reader, as the reader chooses the aesthetic stance. It is quite possible (and, in some English classes, unfortunately almost certain) that poems, novels, and plays may be read efferently; that is, for the information we may acquire from them: for the purpose of analysis of literary form, or for the ethical or thematic "message." "What facts did this poem teach you?" is a question that expresses Rosenblatt's caricature of this type of situation, in which the focus is far from the "lived-through" aesthetic experience, and solidly on the "use" of literature.
Any reading situation, for Rosenblatt (1984), "falls somewhere on the continuum between the aesthetic and efferent poles; between, for example, a lyric poem and a chemical formula. I speak of a predominantly efferent stance, because according to the text and the reader's purpose, some attention to qualitative elements of consciousness may enter. Similarly, aesthetic reading involves or includes referential or cognitive elements. Hence, the importance of the reader's selective attention in the reading process." (p. 269; italics in original). Rosenblatt believes that both efferent reading and aesthetic reading should be taught. However, "Contrary to the general tendency to think of the efferent, the 'literal,' as primary, the child's earliest language behavior seems closest to a primarily aesthetic approach to pleasure" (p. 271). Children have an "affinity for the aesthetic stance" (p. 272), which suggests that aesthetic reading should be a very important component of early school experiences.

Rosenblatt (1986) remarks that the "physical text is simply marks on paper until a reader transacts with them," bringing to the text "a unique reservoir of public and private significances, the residue of past experiences with language and texts in life situations" (p. 123). In other words, the text has no meaning; the reader makes the meaning in the process of transaction. In so doing, the reader creates what Rosenblatt (1978) refers to as the "poem," by which she means the lived-through aesthetic experience "evoked" by the text. The poem is not an object, but an "event in time" (1964, p. 126), an "experience" (p. 127). In this respect, her thought is very similar to that of Fish. She calls the poem "an occurrence, a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text" (p. 126).

For Rosenblatt (1938), the immediate, personal response of the individual reader, uninfluenced by the teacher, is the crucial beginning of the literary experience: "Without linkage with the past experiences and present interests of the reader, the work will not 'come alive' for him, or rather, he will not be prepared to bring it to life" (p. 112). However, this personal response is not the end of the literary experience. The teacher has a critical role to play, as well. The teacher must order the classroom environment so that individual response is elicited and
encouraged, but this is only the beginning. Students must discuss their personal responses, and in so doing, they will discover that others have very different responses. This will drive them back to the text, and they will modify and refine their response as a result. At this point, background information of all types--information about the author, the author's historical milieu, the genre to which the text belongs, and formal and structural aspects of the text--may be brought to bear on the response, which will then be further modified. It is a distortion of Rosenblatt's position to assert that she is encouraging interpretive "free-for-alls," though she does insist that the students should be initially free to respond individually and idiosyncratically. "Though a free, uninhibited emotional reaction to a work of art or literature is an absolutely necessary condition of sound literary judgment, it is not, to use the logician's term, a sufficient condition" (p. 75). Nor does she believe that every response is equally valid: "There is, in fact, nothing in the recognition of the personal nature of literature that requires an acceptance of the notion that every evocation from a text is as good as every other. . . . The aim is to help the student toward a more and more controlled, more and more valid or defensible, response to the text" (p. 281). Analysis "for its own sake"--"what Eliot has called the 'lemon-squeezer' method of criticism"--is not appropriate; nevertheless, students need to be "helped to handle critically [their] own responses to the text" (1964, p. 128).

Unlike most reader-response critics, Rosenblatt (perhaps because of her two years of postdoctoral work in anthropology) pays some attention to socio-cultural context, by asserting that reading occurs "between a particular reader and a particular text at a particular time, and under particular conditions. All of these factors affect the transaction" (1986, p. 123). She believes that readers who have similar social and cultural backgrounds will be able to arrive at similar (though not necessarily identical) interpretations. These backgrounds limit the range of responses that are possible, just as the blueprint of the text "limits or controls" response (1978, p. 129).

James Britton is another theorist who is much more appreciated in the educational community than in the literary community. Drawing on the work of the psychologist D. W. Harding (1937, 1962) as well as the linguistic perspectives of
Halliday (1975), Britton (1968, 1984, 1993) attempted to describe the difference in the stances we take when we read literature and when we read (or use) expository language (for example, contracts or any formal discourse). Britton calls these two stances (or roles) the participant and the observer or spectator. According to Britton (1993), "language in the role of participant designates any use of language to get things done, to pursue the world's affairs, while language in the role of spectator covers verbal artifacts, the use of language to make something, rather than to get something done" (p. 28). When we use language as participants, we are using transactional language, and when we use language as spectators, we are using poetic language. Britton (1993) conceives these two sets as lying on opposite sides of a continuum, and further defines expressive language as lying midway between them.

Britton has stated (1984) that his "participant" stance is similar to Rosenblatt's idea of efferent stance, and that his "poetic" stance is similar to her idea of aesthetic stance. (Rosenblatt (1985) disagrees, pointing out that the transactional language and poetic language associated with the two stances implies that there are texts that are in themselves transactional and texts that are in themselves poetic. Rosenblatt believes that any text can be read efferently or aesthetically, and that the difference is in the stance of the reader, not in any qualities of the text. As well, Rosenblatt (1985, p. 102) points out that "Emphasis on the 'spectator' aspect does not do justice to the total transactional (in my sense) relationship with the text.") In the participant stance, readers read in order to learn something that will be of use to them in the real world, whereas in the spectator stance, the reader uses language to make a storyworld, without any thought of any real-world consequences or outcomes. Britton's use of the term "transactional" for participant or efferent reading is a source of confusion, because Rosenblatt uses the term "transactional" to mean the transaction between the reader and the text, whereas the same term for Britton means a particular kind of language that might be used in a common transaction, for example buying something from a store.
We now consider other reader-based literary theories, theories that are not usually classified as "reader-response," but which nevertheless focus on what happens in the reader's mind.

**Benton's Construct of the Secondary World**

All of us have had the experience of becoming "lost in a book." As Victor Nell (1988) comments in his study on this phenomenon,

Reading for pleasure is an extraordinary activity. The black squiggles on the white page are still as the grave, colorless as the moonlit desert; but they give the skilled reader a pleasure as acute as the touch of a loved body, as rousing, colorful and transfiguring as anything out there in the real world. ... These are the paired wonders of reading: the world-creating power of books, and the reader's effortless absorption that allows the book's fragile world, all air and thought, to maintain itself for a while, a bamboo and paper house among earthquakes (p. 1).

Although this is a common enough experience among readers and listeners, it is only recently that it has begun to be theorized and taken seriously as an important element of the reading process. The theorist who has most extensively considered the "world-creating power of books" is Michael Benton (1979, 1983, 1992a, 1992b, 1995). Benton develops his concept of the "secondary world" from the metaphor used by both J. R. R. Tolkien and W. H. Auden. Tolkien (1938/1964) felt that the "willing suspension of disbelief," by which Coleridge had described the reader's acceptance of an author's imaginative re-creation of reality, to be an inadequate description of what happens when we read:

What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful "sub-creator." He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is "true;" it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside (Tolkein, 1938/1964, p. 36).

Auden (1968) writes of the dual desire that everyone feels of knowing "the primary world, the given world outside ourselves in which we are born, live, love, hate and
die, and the desire to make new secondary worlds of our own or, if we cannot make them ourselves, to share in the secondary worlds of those who can" (p. 49). Benton (1979) attempts to describe the psychological dynamics of the secondary world. He argues that it is (1) *active*, "making meaning from signs," because "when we are engrossed in a book, we are conscious not of words on the page, but of meanings made" (p. 73); (2) *creative*, because the reader is just as much a "sub-creator" (in Tolkien's terminology) as the author, making a "novel within the novel" by his/her re-construction of the novel as it is read; (3) as *unique* as each performance of a play or a piece of music is unique, because all readers bring different experience to a text, and each reader, constantly changing him/herself, produces a unique reading each time a text is reread; and (4) *cooperative*, since "the experience of reading fiction is a compound of what the text offers and what the reader brings" (p. 74). The affinities of this description of reading with Rosenblatt's transactional views are clear.

Rosenblatt, too, says that the text is "marks on a page" until the reader breathes life in them; that the lived-through experience is unique to each reader; and that the text is a blueprint, as important to the meaning the reader constructs as a musical score is to the symphony that we hear. Benton describes the secondary world as having the structure of three dimensions, which are analogous to the three dimensions of the primary (physical) world. He diagrams these three dimensions as a coordinate system with three axes, suggesting that, at any moment of reading, our reading process can be located on a point mapped by the intersection of the three axes in psychic space, just as any point in physical space can be located by three coordinates:
Figure 2.2 Structure of the secondary world. From Benton (1992), p. 26.
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One dimension is the *psychic level*, which can range from conscious to unconscious (from responses we control to responses we cannot control because we are not consciously aware of them). Benton agrees with the common view that reading (and writing) "involve a mixture of conscious and unconscious ideas" (1992, p. 27). The second dimension is *psychic distance*, ranging between detachment and involvement, and describing our degree of engagement with the text. When we are totally engaged in the secondary world of the text, our state is similar to hallucination (1992, p. 28). The third dimension is *psychic process*, encompassing our retrospection (or looking back on actions and situations we have already read about) and anticipation (looking ahead to predict what will happen). This is similar to Iser's concept of the "wandering viewpoint." The intersection point R marks what is happening at any moment of reading. R shifts constantly as "we vary in our degree of involvement in
and detachment from the story world [our psychic distance], the degree to which the story engages our conscious and unconscious mind [our psychic level], and the degree of anticipation of what is going to happen based upon our retrospective knowledge of the story so far [our psychic process]" (1979, p. 78).

Benton further describes the reader's progress through a story as having four characteristics. This progress is (1) *anticipatory*, because the main thrust of the reader's attention is in the forward direction; (2) *dialectical*, in the sense that the reader is also constantly assimilating and accommodating new information in light of the old, previously read information, making hypotheses and either confirming or disconfirming them; (3) *conventional*, because the reader's knowledge of the conventions of a particular genre will influence the types of predictions that are made; and (4) *analogical*, because of "our tendency to compose stories structured upon the ones we read (or upon parts of them) which give us an opportunity to relive or alter our actual experience, or act out dramas revolving around our wishes and fears" (1979, pp. 80-81).

Benton's is a truly elegant theory, but it deals with such an interior experience that it is difficult to know how we would employ it as a conceptual tool in research. Nevertheless, we must try, because, as Benton himself says, "If we want to fathom the process of 'storying,' we need to develop new methodologies which genuinely take account of the insubstantial nature of the fictions we construct in imagination as we read" (1979, p. 73).

This is a tall order. It has been shown that children display a great range of verbal and nonverbal responses to literature (Hickman, 1981; Morrow, 1988; McGee, 1992b). As we have seen, however, researchers on response generally rely on what children *say* after their experience of listening or reading. This may provide an index or a simulacrum of their aesthetic experience; but can we get any closer? The research of Enciso (1990, 1992) suggests an ingenious solution to this problem. Encisco studied the literary experience of three fifth-grade girls by employing a "symbolic representation interview" (1992, p. 78). Immediately after reading, a child
would engage in an "introspective recall of the reading experience." This was followed by the child’s creating cutouts that represented the characters in the story as well as cutouts that represented the reader’s own experiences. Then the child would read the story, using the cutouts of the characters and reader. This was followed by creating cutouts for the author of the story and the narrator. The story would then be reread, using all the cutouts of the characters, reader, author, and narrator. During the reading and rereadings of the story, the child would verbalize her thoughts while she moved the cutouts to show the relationships and experiences she had perceived. This provided a window on the storyworld the child created as she read—a window that enriched and extended oral response to include visual representation. In analyzing this rich data, Enciso used the work of Benton, Iser, and Rosenblatt in interpreting the child’s transactions with the text. Indeed, the entire study was framed theoretically on the literary theoretical constructs of transaction, stance, and the secondary world.

**Langer’s Model of Envisionment**

The work of Judith Langer (1990, 1995) provides another perspective on the ways in which readers may engage with a text and enter the text-world. Langer describes four changing, constantly shifting relationships of readers to texts, asserting that these four relationships or stances are employed by readers regardless of the type of text they read. In other words, these stances are put forth as applicable to both narrative text and informational, expository text. "Being out and stepping in" refers to the reader’s first approach to the text, and the reader’s mobilization of prior life experiences to understand it. In this stance, readers establish the context for their reading. At any moment of difficulty or confusion, readers may revert to this stance. In the second stance, "Being in and moving through," readers feel comfortable and immersed in the text, and begin to construct meaning. The third stance, "Being in and stepping out," refers to the stance readers assume when making connections between their own lives and the lives or characters in the story, or between some experience or feeling expressed in the story and a similar experience or feeling in
their lives. The fourth stance, "stepping out and objectifying experience," refers to the ways in which readers stand back and make judgements about their own understanding. In this stance, readers reflect on their own experience with the text and the emotions or understandings it evoked for them. They evaluate how accurately they have read the text, and make literary judgements.

Langer emphasizes that the reader’s experience does not follow a linear progression through these stances, but is recursive and iterative, shifting back and forth from moment to moment. In this way, Langer’s model is similar to Benton’s idea of the reader’s constant shift between reflection on what has been read and anticipation or prediction of what will happen. The very fluidity of the categories, however, makes the application of these stances to specific situations problematic; for this reason, perhaps, there has been little research based on the model.

**Bogdan’s Theory of Reader Stance**

Deanna Bogdan (1990) writes about readers’ responses in a new way that seems to extend and refine Rosenblatt’s ideas about the stances readers may assume when they read literature. Bogdan bases her approach on Frye’s (1957) assertion that the form and content of literature are distinct and distinguishable, observing that "Content draws us in; form distances us. It is through the push-me-pull-you of content formalized that the vicarious nature of literary experience is possible and pleasurable" (p. 117). Bogdan argues that the full experience of a work of literature—what she calls the "apprehension of total form"—involves both understanding the form and experiencing the content. Readers can do this in one of two ways: "the short easy way or the long hard way" (p. 119). The easy way comes unsought, as the reader "perceives/receives the literary object through direct insight as a kind of gnostic vision" (p. 119). Bogdan names this rare transporting experience *stasis*. The hard way (and the way readers must travel most often) is "the lower road of interpretive inquiry, the road that oscillates between engagement with the text and detachment from it" (p. 119). This is called *dialectic*. In engagement, we feel the emotional power of the content of the text; and this is similar to Rosenblatt’s idea of
the aesthetic experience. In detachment, we are able to think about and understand
the literary form of the text; this is similar to one type of efferent stance—the type that
engages in literary analysis. Bogdan argues that both engagement and detachment are
necessary in order to achieve the apprehension of total form. She acknowledges the
"virtual psychological impossibility of simultaneously participating in [aesthetic
stance] and being consciously aware of experience [the efferent stance]" that is the
gift of stasis (p. 120). She then comments,

The reader's habitual mode of responding to literature is some form of
imbalance between thought and emotion: we either overintellectualize,
lacking feeling—or sentimentalize, lacking truth. ... To strike a balance
would be akin to coalescing Louise Rosenblatt's two kinds of reading,
aesthetic and efferent (1978), thus enabling the reader to bring away
from the reading the consciousness of the poetic experience itself (pp.
120-121).

But this is the rare gift of stasis, and cannot be planned. The long, hard way is the
way of dialectic, which involves the sequence of participating in literature and then
reflecting on our experience.

Bogdan argues that stasis and dialectic are the two paths to "full response"—the
apprehension of total form. But there are lesser, incomplete responses that are
apprehensions of "partial form." Bogdan identifies three of these incomplete
responses: stock response; kinetic response, and spectator response. A stock
response "interprets and values a text solely according to whether the work in
question seems to reinforce or countervail the welter of ideas, values, and feelings
that go to make up the reader's conscious or unconscious worldview" (p. 124). It
"reduces the meaning of literature to its extraliterary terms, usually some historical,
moral, or social analogue of the work itself" (p. 124), and assumes that the point of
literature is to deliver a message or make a social/moral point. Kinetic response, on
the other hand, views the purpose of literature as providing emotional gratification—to
"further the reader's enjoyment" (p. 127). It "raises the pleasure principle to a
critical axiom of literary interpretation; that is, the reader evaluates the work
according to whether it packs a whollop or falls flat" (p. 126). Spectator response is
solely concerned, like the New Critics, with literary understanding and literary analysis. It produces "indifference to the emotional and imaginative dimension of a literary text" (p. 128), like T. S. Eliot's "lemon-squeezer" school of literary criticism. (Here it should be noted that Bogdan's use of the term "spectator stance" is entirely different from Britton's; in fact, the two uses of the term are almost opposites. By "spectator stance," Britton means an aesthetic engagement in a text, whereas Bogdan is referring to an objective, analytical stance.)

Bogdan argues that each of these three forms of response is incomplete, but in a different way. "Each of these three responses isolates and reifies one aspect of a full literary response: stock response, the search for truth; kinetic response, desire; spectator response, knowledge about literature" (p. 129). Bogdan feels that it is the job of the teacher to understand what type of partial responses the students are making, and to augment them with each other.

Bogdan's theory has been explicated at length because it provides a powerful way of conceptualizing the combination of both literary experience and literary understanding—a way that the aesthetic-efferent continuum does not provide for. For Bogdan, the true aesthetic experience involves (in Rosenblatt's terms) both aesthetic and efferent stances. In this way, it extends and modifies Rosenblatt's ideas, possibly providing a more refined perspective on the issues of literary response and understanding.

The Theorization of Pleasure

It is fitting to end this section on literary theory with a consideration of pleasure, an aspect of the experience of literature that has so far been addressed only obliquely. Here, though the experience of pleasure is certainly one of the chief reasons we read or listen to literature, the theoretical guides are few. Touponse (1996) argues that New Criticism completely ignored pleasure, conflating it with the perception of "formal patterns of meaning" (p. 177). Likewise, Touponse complains, reader response theories (which we might have reasonably expected to develop a theory of pleasure) ignore it almost as steadfastly as the frosty New Critics. Iser
(1978), for example, conceptualizes the reader's "task" as an active (we might say relentless) search for meanings that will complete the indeterminacies of the text, and characterizes literature that does not make the reader do this highly cognitive work as "light reading." Of Rosenblatt, Touponce remarks, "While not negative about pleasure, Rosenblatt is so wary about discussing it that she keeps the word constantly in quotation marks, noting that 'attempts to define aesthetic pleasure by specifying its peculiar sources in the text have been inconclusive.' For Rosenblatt the reader's main purpose is to participate as fully as possible in the potentialities of the text" (Touponce, 1996, p. 177), and she seems simply to conflate pleasure with the "lived-through experience" of aesthetic reading, just as the New Critics conflated it with analysis.

Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975), brief and quirky as it is, advances a theory of literary pleasure. Barthes distinguishes between two types of texts: texts of *plaisir* (translated as "pleasure") and texts of *jouissance* (rendered as "bliss"). We feel pleasure when we can easily master a text; Barthes writes that pleasure is linked to a "comfortable practice of reading" (p. 14). This kind of text reinforces our cultural and social expectations--"it comes from culture and does not break with it" (p. 14). Texts of bliss, on the other hand, unsettle our comfortable assumptions and jar us, opening up new vistas of experience. The text of bliss takes us out of ourselves, whereas the text of pleasure confirms and reinscribes our feelings, attitudes, and values. We master texts of pleasure, and the pleasure is in the mastery; but we are mastered by texts of bliss. In this way, the experience of reading texts of bliss is similar to Poulet's idea of being inhabited, possessed, or mastered by the author, who rethinks his thoughts through us as we read. Indeed, Barthes remarks that "The text is a fetish object, and this fetish desires me" (p. 27). This is pleasurable, because it frees us from ourselves momentarily and propels us into strangeness and uncertainty. Barthes says that the impulse to reread is driven by the experience of texts of bliss.

Rosenblatt (1978) criticizes Barthes for locating pleasure in the text rather than in the reader; according to McCormick (1988), Barthes' categories can be more
heuristically applied to the reading experience than to the text. In any case, many of Barthes' statements clearly seem to refer to the reader. For example, he asserts that "pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss cannot" (p. 21).

In addition to distinguishing between pleasure and bliss, Barthes also playfully develops a typology of pleasures of reading, matching psychological disorders with various types of reading. The fetishist "would be matched with the divided-up text, the singling out of quotations, formulae, turns of phrase, with the pleasure of the word" (p. 63). The obsessive "would experience the voluptuous release of the letter, of secondary, disconnected languages, of metalanguages (this class would include all the logophiles, linguists, semioticians, philologists" (p. 63). The paranoiac "would consume or produce complicated texts, stories developed like arguments, constructions posited like games, like secret constraints" (p. 63). And the hysterical "would be the one who takes the text for ready money, who joins in the bottomless, truthless comedy of language, who is no longer the subject of any critical scrutiny and throws himself across the text" (p. 63).

Research in Talk about Literature in the Classroom

The review now focuses on empirical research on talk about literature in the classroom, research that has employed some of the literary theoretical perspectives outlined in the last section. Generally, this research applies the work of relatively few literary theorists: Nauman (1994), in a study of the research on reader response to literature, found that Rosenblatt, Iser, and Fish were the most commonly cited theorists, and that references to other theorists were rare. This section is divided into four parts: research on reader stance; research on literature discussion groups; research related to the ways in which children may be taught to be literary critics; and research on storybook reading that focuses on children's literary understanding.

Reader Stance Research

"Stance" is a feature of the reader, not the text, and it refers to the particular set of assumptions and expectations a particular reader has of a particular text at a

Though it does not concern young readers, Galda’s work on stance (which utilizes Britton’s concept of the spectator role of the reader) is important for both the investigation of individual differences in stance (1982) and the longitudinal perspective it provides on stance (Galda, 1990, 1992). The 1982 study, with three fifth-grade girls, showed that children of the same age and reading ability differed widely in their ability to assume the spectator stance toward the novels they read. For example, "All three participants recognized the alternate interpretations of reality offered in the texts, but only Anne [one of the participants] accepted them as valid" (p. 18). The other two children were, in Aidan Chambers’ (1985) terminology, "unyielding" readers. Anne was also able "to read for more than plot," understanding and appreciating the author’s craft. Galda suggests that the ability to assume a true spectator stance to literature is connected with the development of the Piagetian stage of formal operations. If this is true, then emergent readers would be cognitively incapable of assuming the spectator role. This, however, is disputable. Chambers (1985) gives many examples of very young children whose responses indicate that they have assumed the spectator role.

Galda’s other studies (1990, 1992) investigated the development of the spectator stance across time (two years for one group of fourth- through ninth-graders and four years for another group, beginning in fourth grade and ending in seventh grade). Utilizing Applebee’s (1978) system of analyzing responses, Galda found that the children’s evaluative responses were mainly categoric (closely tied to personal experiences and linked to categories like "adventurous and exciting") in the fourth grade and more analytic (concerned with understanding how a literary text works) in the upper grades. There was also a different in responses to different genres: students responded to fantasy with more categoric responses and to realistic fiction with more analytic responses. Generalization responses (Applebee’s highest stage, in
which there is preoccupation with the ways in which the text changes how one understands the world) were present only at the eighth and ninth grade levels. This also has important implications for emergent readers, because it suggests that generalization response does not occur until children are much older.

Other research tends to utilize Rosenblatt’s efferent-aesthetic continuum rather than Britton’s, and it, too, is primarily concerned with upper-elementary children. One notable exception is the work of Many and Wiseman (1992) and Wiseman, Many, and Altieri (1992) with third-graders, which studied the effects of different teaching approaches on students’ responses to children’s literature. The study conducted by Many and Wiseman had three treatment groups: "literary analysis," (focused on the identification and interpretation of literary elements during and after the reading of a story); "literary experience," (focused on providing a lived-through experience and personal reaction during and after the reading of the story); and no discussion after the reading of the story. All three groups were asked to "write anything you want about the story we just read" (p. 269), and the written products were analyzed. The literary analysis group tended to write more responses having to do with literary elements, and the literary experience group tended to write responses that indicated that they had entered the storyworld. The group with no discussion tended to write a simple retelling of the story. The Wiseman, Many, and Altieri study (1992, p. 285), also using third-graders, used three instructional approaches: "student-centered" (consisting of "free discussion with no guidance from the researchers"); "teacher-guided aesthetic treatment" ("centered on the students' thoughts and their reactions to the story"); and "teacher-guided aesthetic approach followed by literary analysis" (which employed an aesthetic treatment followed by discussion that dealt with both literary analysis and personal reaction to the story). As in the Many and Wiseman study, children in all treatment groups were asked to write anything they wanted about the story they had just heard and discussed; and the written products were analyzed, using a scale of level of aesthetic response. The results indicated that,
Subjects in the student-controlled discussion groups were more likely to focus on literary analysis and seldom produced responses categorized as purely aesthetic. In contrast, those in the aesthetic or aesthetic-analysis probe groups produced a high concentration of aesthetic responses which explained their feelings or described real life happenings or people or other literary characters that reminded them of story events" (p. 286).

There were no significant differences in the responses of the aesthetic and aesthetic-analysis groups, suggesting that "students who analyzed how the literary elements affected their own experiences as they read were just as likely as students in the purely aesthetic discussion group to respond from an aesthetic stance" (p. 287). The results thus suggest that discussion aimed at furthering literary understanding at least does not harm literary experience.

One difficulty with some of this research is that Rosenblatt herself never speaks of "aesthetic response" (as it appears in the indented quote above), seeing the aesthetic experience instead as the lived-through experience during reading. Even discussion after the story is read is at one remove from the aesthetic experience; and writing after the discussion is at two removes. Another problem is that responses considered "efferent" are often of several types. One type might be a statement suggesting literary understanding (for example, "the characters were well-developed"); and another type might be a response suggesting a purely efferent stance, such as "the character was tall and had red hair." Thus, the research tends to lump together (1) efferent responses to efferent questions like, "What facts did this poem teach you?" or "What color of hair did the main character have?" and (2) responses or questions that appropriately "organize and elaborate" children's "ongoing responses," by pointing out literary elements that would increase children's abilities to listen or read aesthetically. The research on stances frequently attempts to discuss "response" without reference to literary understanding, thereby making the implicit argument that response would be somehow sullied by teachers' attempts to "organize and elaborate" that response. This implicit argument probably represents an overreaction to the New Critical emphasis on textual analysis to the exclusion of any
consideration of the reader. But that is precisely what it seems to be: an overreaction, which some of the stance research tends to perpetuate. The research suggests that the question is not whether teachers should assist children in developing literary understandings, but rather how explicit that assistance should be. This question is addressed by research reviewed in the next two subsections.

Classroom conversations about literature

There is a growing body of research (Allen, 1994; Comnayras, 1994; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Gilles, et al, 1994; McGee, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1993, 1994; McGee, Courtney, & Lomax, 1993, 1994; Raphael & McMahon, 1994; Roller & Beed, 1994; Scharer, 1991, 1992; Wiencik & O’Flahavan, 1994; Wiseman, Many, & Altiier, 1992) and research-based pedagogy (Chambers, 1993; Danieis, 1994; Eeds & Peterson, 1991; Peterson & Eeds, 1990; Roser & Martinez, 1995; Short & Pierce, 1990;) on how teachers and children engage (or could engage) in discussion about literature in the classroom. Virtually all of this work has relied heavily on the theoretical underpinnings of reader-response criticism, primarily the work of Rosenblatt and Iser. Most of the research (and much of the pedagogy) has dealt with children in the upper elementary grades (grades four to six) or older. For example, the work of Eeds and Wells (1989), which was a stimulus to much subsequent research, concerned fifth- and sixth-graders. Eeds and Wells argue that much of classroom discussion of literature is in the form of “gentle inquisitions,” with the teacher probing for understanding of what is read in an afferent manner. What they propose is a form of discussion they call “grand conversations,” focusing on child-centered talk and personal response that reflects aesthetic reading. They found that relatively untrained undergraduate student teachers could hold successful grand conversations with small groups of children. One of their important findings was that “the elements of literature can be expected to emerge naturally as children and teacher talk about the book together because talking about a book necessitates a discussion of character coping, time, place, theme, mood and language as they are contained within and evoked by the work” (p. 23). In other words, in socially constructing a meaning
of the story, relating the book to their personal experience, and engaging in hypothesis-testing about character or action, literary understanding was a natural part of the process.

Eeds and Wells encouraged the student teachers who conducted the discussions to feel free to point out literary elements when they felt there was a "teachable moment" for them. Their findings thus support the idea of the interwoven nature of literary experience and literary understanding. Moreover, the active involvement of the teacher in the construction of literary understanding is also supported. Other researchers (Scharer, 1991, 1992) have more specifically studied the teacher's role in literature discussions, finding that it is often very difficult for teachers to make the transition from the "gentle inquisition" to the "grand conversation" approach. Knobel (1993) has reported that students frequently respond to the teacher, rather than to the text, despite the teacher's efforts to value the students' responses. One of her conclusions is that "teachers need to be aware of how their own meanings and interpretations of reality may affect, and sometimes conflict with, their students' meaning making and reality construction in relation to literature and reader response" (p. 302). The importance of the creation of a non-competitive community of learners where the response of each person is valued--largely the responsibility of the teacher--has also been investigated (Scharer & Detwiler, 1992; Short, 1990).

Some writers have made suggestions about the content and organization of literature discussion groups. Chambers (1993), whose work is based on theoretical insights from Iser, feminist critics (on cooperative discourse), Culler, Barthes, and Booth, has proposed a "framework" of questions designed to encourage children to share their personal enthusiasms about a book; to share "puzzles" or difficulties they had in understanding the book; and to share "connections": patterns that they have discovered within a book or intertextual connections with other books. He warns that the framework is not to be used mechanically, and that "It is not intended that readers of any age should be given lists of questions and be required to answer them one after another either in speech or in writing" (p. 87; italics in original). Chambers' question framework has three parts, including "basic questions" such as Was there anything
you liked/disliked about the book?; "general questions" such as When you first saw the book, even before you read it, what kind of book did you think it was going to be? Is it what you expected, now that you've read it?; and "special questions," such as Which character interested you the most? (pp. 87-90). Other writers (Daniels, 1994) have proposed that each child in a literature discussion group could take on a specific role, that would help focus the discussion and give each child a sense of purpose. Most writers, however, do not advocate the assigning of particular roles, possibly fearing that this procedure would inhibit response.

The success of this approach (variously called "grand conversations," "literature discussion groups," "literature circles," or "booktalks") with upper-elementary and secondary students has led researchers to investigate the use of the approach with younger children. McGee (whose work is cited above) is one of the few researchers who has studied the grand conversations of emergent readers and writers, as well as the role of the teacher in these conversations. McGee audiotaped and transcribed the discussions of first-graders following the reading of picture storybooks. Following Rosenblatt's transactive model and Iser's interactive model, McGee (1992a) noted that "Readers' responses can be expected to reflect a continuum having at one end responses to the readers' personal experiences and emotions evoked by reading and at the other end responses that reflect attention to the text" (p. 178). McGee's coding of children's responses ranged from "reader-bound" to "text-bound" statements to reflect the range and focus of children's comments. McGee (1992c) noted three types of talk structures: "mucking about" (sharing of ideas that were seemingly unconnected); "weaving through" (in which children returned to a previous idea in nonsuccessive turns); and "focusing in" (where succeeding turns seemed to build on each other as the children continued to talk about the same idea). In her version of grand conversations, McGee and the other teachers who led the discussions made a point of not adding any interpretive comments. Midway through the discussion, however, the teachers asked an "interpretive question" that they had prepared beforehand. It was found that this question played an important role in the conversations, eliciting "a higher percentage of interpretive responses" (1992b, p.
as well as eliciting more "focusing in on sustained inquiry about a common idea" (1992c, p. 21). In a further study (1994), which focused on the role of the teacher in book discussions of first-graders, McGee found that teachers played several roles, including that of facilitator (by managing turn-taking, for example); helper/nudger (by summarizing, restating, or asking for clarification); responder (by introducing, expanding, or elaborating of topics); literary curator (by extending literary understandings during "teachable moments"); and reader (by reading the story). Of particular interest is the "literary curator" role, which seemed to be exercised seldom, yet which clearly had the same positive effects as the interpretive questions. In one example, McGee (1995, p. 17) reports two children responding efferently to the fantasy story Hey Al (Yorincks, 1986) by saying, "I think it's all silly," and "Birds can't talk, except parrots." In this case, the teacher took the opportunity (a "teachable moment") to explain that "This kind of story is called a fantasy," and that "Anything like that can happen in a fantasy." What is fascinating is the response of a child after the teacher's brief explanation. The child commented, "I don't think I would like to be a worm on that island, then they would eat me!" The child used this literary understanding provided by the teacher to extend her lived-through (aesthetic) experience of the book by thinking about the implications of being a worm on the island.

McGee's work is also notable for its use of literary theory in her discussion of the creation of the "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980) where readers negotiate meaning by arguing persuasively for their interpretations, and where consensus is reached by this interplay of opinions. She describes this interplay, and comments that the results of her studies "support that first graders are literary critics who are capable members of interpretive communities" (1993, p. 22).

**Children as critics**

McGee's assertion that first-graders are literary critics may seem a bit far-fetched to some. However, the idea that children--even very young children--can be
critics has been in currency for about twenty years, and has received continuing
attention (Sloan, 1975, 1991; Vandergrift, 1980; Stott, 1981, 1987; Chambers, 1985;
poses the question, "But are children critics?" and comments, that for most teachers,

Criticisms is regarded as an unnatural, specialist and adult activity for
which you need training, as well as a perverse taste for pleasure-
destroying analysis. Criticism, it seems, deals in abstractions,
unfeeling intellectualism, cold-blooded dissection. You can't do
criticism with children, and if you try you only put them off literature
altogether. Many colleagues, it turned out, had been put off by what
they thought of as criticism during secondary school and college
literature courses (Chambers, 1985, p. 144).

Chambers goes on to write that, "We asked the question in the first place because our
work persuaded us that children have an innate critical faculty" (p. 144) that can be
guided and formed by a sensitive teacher. Chambers believes that much of what we
call criticism amounts to the discovery of patterns—"of language, of narrative 'codes,'
of plot events, of images, of character, and the rest" (p. 147), and that human
cognition is essentially a matter of finding patterns. Finding patterns is the making of
meaning, and "when we make meaning we experience pleasure" (p. 147). Chambers
(1985) takes Booth's and Iser's idea of the "implied reader," the abstract reader that
the text assumes—the "reader-in-the-book"—and relates it to real child readers. He
argues that child readers are often "unyielding" readers, expecting the story to have a
one-to-one correspondence to their own experience, and that they reject stories that do
not have this correspondence. After continued experiences with stories, and with the
help of a teacher who fosters literary understanding, however, a child can yield to the
story and experience it from the "inside," becoming the embodiment of the text's
implied reader. Chambers places special emphasis on the active involvement of the
reader in filling the "gaps" or "blanks" in the text, and in understanding the point of
view from which the story is written. If abilities like these are fostered, children's
critical faculties can be developed from a very early age.

Many of these writers believe that some form of explicit teaching about
literary elements, genres, or forms is appropriate, in order to help children develop
literary understanding in tandem with literary experience. Stott (1981, 1987), Cianciolo and Quirk (1993, 1995), and Landes (1983) have proposed curricular models for learning literary criticism or "critically aesthetic" reading in the elementary grades, and have tested these models with children. Stott (1987) developed and implemented a "spiralled sequence story curriculum" over a period of five years with second-graders; and eventually worked out a curricular sequence for children through the elementary years. The general goal of the curriculum, which is based on structuralist principles and some of the archetypal criticism of Northrop Frye, "is to introduce the children to the basic elements and methods of literary analysis, it being my firm belief that the individual who has a fuller understanding of any story can enjoy it much more" (Stott, 1987, p. 165). Cianciolo and Quirk (1993, 1995) report on a large two year study involving 20 teachers and 300 children in grades kindergarten through five. The purpose of the study was to foster an environment where literature was enjoyed for its aesthetic potential, and to increase children's abilities to engage in "critical aesthetic response" to literature, through appropriate questioning techniques and activities, which reflected both a reader-response emphasis and a structuralist emphasis. Cianciolo and Quirk concluded that even kindergartners and first-graders were "capable of learning how to respond critically aesthetically to literature" (1993, p. 1).

Landes (1983) describes how she worked with second-graders in a curriculum that was designed "to take them beyond literacy into literature" (p. 161). She provides a page-by-page analysis of how the children learned to appreciate the literary qualities of Beatrix Potter's The Tale of Peter Rabbit. When she read an adaptation of this classic, in which "it seemed as if the author had noted every literary aspect of Potter's language and illustrations and then set about to remove them" (p. 163), the children were surprised and then annoyed. They much preferred Potter's language and illustrations to that of the adaptation, and could give good reasons for their preferences. By so doing, they demonstrated their literary critical abilities.

Sloan (1991) uses the work of Northrop Frye as the overarching theoretical frame for her conception of "the child as critic." Echoing Frye's suggestions in The
Educated Imagination (1964) about what children should be taught about literature, Sloan emphasizes the importance of learning myths, legends, and Bible stories, so that children may acquire knowledge of the archetypal characters, symbols, themes, images, and motifs that recur throughout all of literature. She believes that, although the experience of literature begins with personal response, the experience should not end there. She believes that it is "pointless" to ask children questions like "Would you do as X [a story character] did? Would you like to have X as a friend?": "While literature relates to each one's life experiences, these relations cannot be the basis for systematic criticism" (p. 118). Although she emphasizes that there are no right or wrong answers to questions about literature, her lists of suggested questions (pp. 119-124; 128) include questions like, What is the basic shape of the story? Who is the main character?, which seem to be questions framed as if there were a right or wrong answer. Sloan suggests that children can be taught some basic conventional patterns of stories (for example, the home-away-home or circle story, in which the characters leave home, have a series of adventures, and return to the same place they began). She suggests that children's literary understanding can be increased by introducing them to Frye's four basic narrative types (comedy, romance, tragedy, and irony/satire).

Vandergrift (1980) also recommends Frye's approach, suggesting that children can learn to use an understanding of narrative types to read with increased perception and to write more effective stories themselves. Vandergrift suggests drawing "story lines" to follow the increasing drama or emotional level of the story characters; she also places a great deal of emphasis on children being exposed to a variety of literary genres.

May (1995) has done some of the most recent work on children as critics. She emphasizes the need for teachers to learn literary theory so that they can apply its principles to their teaching:

Adults can determine how much children will learn about their stories, and they can help children communicate about the stories they share. Those adults who want children to discover how a story works for themselves will collaborate with them to construct new meanings for
the literature they share. Since these adults must initiate the discussions, they must know about story structure and critical theory. Unfortunately, since teachers have rarely studied critical theory they often don’t emphasize methods of reading that encourage collaborative learning (May, 1995, pp. 14-15).

May believes that if teachers do not disclose the "common framework of interpretive skills used by all good readers," the children are in a situation where they "are being forced to respond to patterns in texts without understanding that literary appreciation depends upon knowing about literary or writerly structures" (pp. 15-16). May’s book includes several short studies by teacher-researchers on the ways in which they use children’s literature to increase children’s literary experience and understanding. These studies provide empirical evidence for her claim that teachers who know literary theory will be able to help emergent readers and writers to develop a sense of story and to learn to take a critical, interpretive stance toward literature.

Research on Storybook Reading

It was argued in chapter 1 that the voluminous research on storybook reading is rarely concerned with children’s literary understanding. Instead, the overwhelming bulk of this research addresses questions related to other aspects of children’s developing literacy: their growing attention to the visual features of print; the effect of hearing literature read aloud on children’s own writing; their oral language development and acquisition of "book language;" or the particular types of teacher readaloud styles that may be most powerful for the children’s later development as independent readers. There is, however, one notable exception to this generalization. The Making of a Reader. Marilyn Cochran-Smith’s (1984) well-known longitudinal study of the literacy learning of preschool children, was focused on the storybook read-aloud sessions that were a daily occurrence at the preschool that was the site of her research. Cochran-Smith uses literary theory extensively in her construction of a theoretical frame for examining these read-aloud sessions. Among the constellation of literary theorists she cites are Roland Barthes, Wayne Booth, Jonathan Culler, Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss, and Gerald Prince; and she weaves important
insights from these theorists together with the more usual theoretical sources of emergent literacy in a fascinating way. Also intriguing are the ways in which she modifies some of these insights in applying them in the context of the literary development of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. Cochran-Smith refers to two of the five codes (or sign systems through which a narrative is made understandable) utilized by Barthes (1974) to analyze a short story by Balzac. Barthes’ "cultural" code refers to the broad cultural and social knowledge that most adult readers access unconsciously while reading. This is precisely the type of knowledge that young children lack, and which the storyreaders supplied while reading. Another Barthian code, the "hermeneutic" code, refers to the puzzles, enigmas, or questions that are raised by the text, and which are later resolved or answered. The storyreaders mediated this code for the children as well, by referring to the way previous incidents answered the questions that had been posed (implicitly or explicitly) by the text.

Booth’s and Iser’s concept of the "implied reader" is brought to bear during Cochran-Smith’s analysis of the roles played by the storyreaders (the adults who read the stories aloud to the children). Authors of the books used for read-alouds had obviously never met the particular children in the preschool. The authors had written these books with an "implied reader" in mind. On some occasions, the children (the real reader-listeners) had the same characteristics as the text’s implied readers. At other times, however, there was information that the fictional implied reader possessed and that the real children lacked. Cochran-Smith found that one of the main roles played by the storyreaders was that of mediator between the implied reader of the text and the real child listener-readers in front of her. This was one of the main ways in which the storyreader helped the children to make what Cochran-Smith (1984) refers to as "Life-Text" connections: "reader exchanges aimed at helping children use their knowledge in order to make sense of literature" (p. 183).

Cochran-Smith does not employ another concept of Iser’s, the idea of the reader’s "wandering viewpoint." It is, however, clear from her descriptions of the storyreaders that they mediated the story for the children not only by bridging the distance between the children’s knowledge and the knowledge assumed by the text’s
implied reader, but also by directing the children’s attention to past occurrences in the narrative and connecting them with the actions of the moment, and by discussing what various characters were feeling and/or knew. In these ways, the storyreaders were helping the children to see that the reader must employ a wandering viewpoint while reading, as well as facilitating their construction of that viewpoint for themselves.

Cochran-Smith also makes use of Culler’s (1975) idea of “literary competence,” which is the knowledge of literary conventions that both authors and readers must share in order for readers to make sense of what they are reading. She modifies this idea to include two broad categories of literary conventions: book conventions and genre conventions. Book conventions include the ways in which books "work": the meaning of the cover, the title-page, and the sequence of the pages; the process of turning pages; and the use of speech balloons to indicate what a character is saying, are all examples of conventions that children must learn, and part of their literary competence. Culler’s concern is with genre conventions: with the norms and expectations surrounding particular types of literature, like realistic novels or folktales. In talking about genre conventions, Cochran-Smith employs Jauss’s concept of the "horizon of expectations" that is adopted by readers when they pick up a book of a certain type. When we read a folktale, for example, our horizon of expectations will lead us to assume that the plot will begin very quickly, with little character-building or establishment of a setting; that the protagonist may receive help in the form of magical aid from some supernatural being; that the story will resolve happily; and so on. This horizon of expectations has been built up over the many years that the folktale has been told or written. Young children’s experience with all genres is limited, and Cochran-Smith found that the storyreader helped them to begin to build a horizon of expectations for the different genres of stories that were used for read-aloud time.

Cochran-Smith’s work demonstrates that, because hearing stories read aloud may be the very crucible in which children’s literary awareness is forged, literary theory may allow the development of exciting new perspectives in this vitally important area.
Picturebook Theory and Research

This review now moves to an even sharper focus, by considering the theory and research that currently exists for a particular literary form: the picturebook. The reasons for this sharper focus are that (1) picturebooks are by far the most common form in which young children experience literature; and (2) this study concerns young children's responses to and literary understanding of picturebooks.

In this discussion, the use of the term "picturebook" as a single word (rather than the words "picture book" or a hyphenated form) follows the work of Bader (1976) and Kiefer (1995), who argue that the use of one word is a sign of the unity of text and pictures, as well as indicating that these types of books are sophisticated art objects rather than mere collections of pictures.

Theoretical Definitions of the Picturebook

There have been various theoretical perspectives on how we may conceptualize what is commonly called the picturebook. Sutherland and Hearne (1977) suggest that "a picture book is one in which the pictures either dominate the text or are as important" (p. 158). They further differentiate this broad category into three main subcategories: those books (like ABC books, counting books, and wordless books) where the illustrations are of prime importance; books "in which the text and the pictures are of equal importance, in which neither would be as effective alone;" and the "picture story," in which "the balance between print and illustrations is maintained so that neither is as effective without the other, although they may not be necessary for each other, as in the second category" (p. 159). Sutherland and Hearne also add a less important category they call "early-reading illustrated books," where the text can stand alone, with the illustrations functioning "more as extensions or corroborating devices than as entities" (p. 160). Sutherland and Hearne's goal is to define so as to include "the broadest possibilities of the genre" (p. 160).

Perry Nodelman, whose Words About Pictures (1988) is one of the most comprehensive treatments of picturebooks, is satisfied with a very loose definition, which is relegated to his preface: "books intended for young children which
communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no texts at all" (p. vii).

A similar unconcern with definition is present in Schwarcz and Schwarcz (1991), who comment parenthetically that the picture book is the type of book "where text and pictorial narrations accompany each other, alternate, and intertwine" (p. 5).

Stewig (1995), in another book-length study, follows Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1991), in distinguishing "picture books" (for example, alphabet, counting, and concept books) from "picture storybooks," in that the latter have "a plot which tells a story" (p. 4). Stewig draws a further distinction between these two types of books and "illustrated books," in which "the illustrations are extensions of the text and may add to the interpretation of the story but are not necessary for understanding it" (p. 7). The focus of Stewig’s study is the "picture storybook, in which the story and pictures are of equal importance. The two elements together form an artistic unit that is stronger than either of them would be alone" (p. 9).

Kiefer’s book-length treatment (1995) makes use of the illustrator Barbara Cooney’s suggestion that a picturebook is like a string of pearls, where the pearls symbolize the illustrations, and the string symbolizes the verbal text. Kiefer points out that this analogy "supports the idea of the interdependence [italics in original] of pictures and text in the unique art object that is a picturebook," and goes on to state that,

for purposes of discussion in this book, the umbrella term picturebook will include those books in which the pictures could be thought of as pearls. This term will embrace formats such as concept books or wordless picturebooks (where there is a theme or meaning that unifies the images) as well as picture storybooks (in which pictures and words tell a story). Outside this umbrella lies the illustrated book, one where the occasional picture is present to add to the words but is not necessary to our understanding of the book (Kiefer, 1995, p. 6).

Marantz (1977) likewise emphasizes the interdependence of illustration and verbal text, and adds that this interdependence extends to every part of the book: "A picturebook, unlike an illustrated book, is properly conceived of as a unit, a totality that integrates all the designated parts in a sequence in which the relationships among
them—the cover, endpapers, typography, pictures—are crucial to understanding the book" (p. 3). Marantz asserts that, in a carefully crafted picturebook, each of the parts makes its own contribution to a harmonious whole. The choices involved in the size and shape of the book, the dust jacket, front and back covers, endpapers, and title- and front matter pages all work together to convey a meaningful and unified experience. Marantz goes on to assert that a picturebook must "tell a story" and that it is "much more a visual art object than a piece of literature." This particular definitional net excludes books like alphabet books or books of poetry, even though they are profusely illustrated. For Marantz, two of the crucial criteria are that the picturebook (1) is a unified narrative in some form; and (2) has a text (if at all) that would be incomplete without the illustrations. This definition is similar to the "picture storybook" defined above by Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1991).

Semiotic Perspectives on Picturebooks

A semiotic theoretical perspective (Eco, 1979; Scholes, 1982; Sebeok, 1994) on picturebooks seems natural and appropriate, given that semiotics assumes that language (written and spoken) is "only one subset of the many forms of communication used by humans to construct meaning about their world" (Rowe, 1994, p. 2). Picturebooks rely heavily on an illustrational sequence to convey meaning; this sequence of visual images constitutes, in semiotic terms, a visual sign system. Therefore, the semiotic view of the picturebook is that it is a combination and integration of at least two of the "many forms of communication used by humans to construct meaning about their world." As a literary form, the picturebook has shown itself to be endlessly protean, sometimes including moveable parts (through tabs, pull-outs, or "pop-ups"), lights, or sound (through small computer chips). All of these features constitute sign systems as well, so that a picturebook may be the locus for the interaction and combination of many sign systems. However, a picturebook without these additional sign systems is nevertheless a "gesture towards semiotic repleteness," where two sign types (the words and pictures) "comment on each other" (Steiner, 1982, p. 144), and which finds its counterpart in the more
technologically advanced forms of hypertext (Lemke, 1993). As well, a semiotic perspective provides a foundation for viewing children's literary understanding of picturebooks not as a deficient form of adult understanding, but the beginning of the same process of sign interpretation used by adults. Children learn to "read" the signs in illustration just as they learn to read printed text. Finally, a semiotic perspective suggests that every small detail in the picturebook has the potential for conveying meaning (Nodelman, 1988). Choices of colors, typefaces, the design of the endpapers, even the publishing information—all of these can function as signs. Moebius (1990) has analyzed commonly occurring clusters of conventional signs in picturebooks. He refers to these clusters as "codes," arguing that reading the "visual text" of a picturebook involves learning the meaning of the various clusters of signs in the illustrational sequence. Moebius identifies five groups of codes: (1) codes of position, size, and diminishing returns; (2) codes of perspective; (3) codes of the frame and of the right and round; (4) codes of line and capillarity; and (2) the code of color.

In group 1, how high an illustration of a character appears on the page "may be an indication of an ecstatic condition...or dream-vision...or a mark of social status or power, or of a positive self-image," whereas "being low on the page is often by contrast a signal of low spirits, 'the pits,' or of unfavourable social status" (Moebius, 1990, p. 139). Figures that are depicted close-up and in the center of a page may have greater power or be more important in the story, whereas figures that are drawn at the margins or have relatively small size may be marginalized (both literally and figuratively). The more frequently a character appears on the same page (in, for example, a series of small illustrations), "the less likely that character is to be in control of a situation" (p. 140).

In group 2, codes of perspective, Moebius asserts that if a horizon line is not showing in an illustration, this may indicate a complication or dangerous situation in the plot. In group 3, Moebius writes that "framed, the illustration provides a limited glimpse 'into' a world. Unframed, the illustration constitutes a total experience, the view from within" (p. 141). Similarly, Dooley (1980) comments that frames often
serve to convey the impression that we are looking through a window at the actions being depicted, and give us a more objective view. Illustrations without frames engage the viewer more directly, making the viewer more a part of the action. Doonan (1993) comments that the semiotic significance of illustrations that occupy the entire two-page opening in a picturebook, and which have no frames at all, but rather "bleed" off every edge of the page suggest "a life going on beyond the confines of the page, so that the beholder becomes more of a participant than a spectator of the pictured events" (p. 81). Because the frame is the borderline between the illusion of the illustration and the reality of the physical page on which it is printed (Uspensky, 1973; Whalen-Levitt, 1986), "a bounded time and space between the real and imagined world, or a transition from the real world and the world of representation" (Harms & Lettow, 1989), occasions where a figure or object breaks the frame may blur the distinction between illusion and reality. The shape of the frame may likewise have semiotic significance: "A character framed in a series of circular enclosures is more likely to be secure and content than one framed in a series of utterly rectangular objects" (Moebius, 1990, p. 141).

Group 4, line and capilarity, includes the meaning potential of various types of lines used by illustrators. "Thin, spare lines may suggest mobility and speed; thick, blurred or puffy lines, paralysis or a comfortable stasis" (Moebius, 1990, p. 142). An abundance or short cross-hatched lines ("capilarity") may indicate vitality or an excess of emotion or physical energy.

The fifth group, the code of color, includes the traditional association of dark colors with sadness, depression, or fear, and bright colors with joy, confidence, or light-heartedness. As well, a given picturebook may have its own "private" system of color codes, where, for example, one character may be associated with a particular color.

A semiotic theoretical perspective on picturebooks, then, carries with it the implication that the literary understanding of picturebooks includes learning to read the visual text of the illustrational sequence according to the conventionally presented
systems of codes that the illustrator has included. Research is needed on the ways in which children learn to understand these codes and apply them to new situations.

Perspectives from Aesthetic Theory on Picturebooks

Because the illustrations and illustrational sequence are so important in picturebooks, aesthetic theories of visual representation can provide valuable insights into these aspects of this literary form.

Arnheim (1986, p. 306) has asserted that "the visual image always dominates the cognitive aspect of the experience" when presented together with either speech (as in film) or writing (as in picturebooks). Arnheim (1969) also argues that visual perception is the sensory equivalent of understanding on the cognitive level; in other words, we see what we learn to see, and the act of viewing a picture involves our active construction of its elements in a meaningful whole rather than a simply passive reception. Gombrich (1972) agrees, stating, "However automatic our first response to an image may be, its actual reading can never be a passive affair" (p. 86). If, therefore, the visual image always dominates the cognitive aspect of our experience, and if the perception of this visual image is not automatic, but learned and formed by experience, the full literary understanding of picturebooks includes learning the conventions and principles of visual art.

Color, line, shape, and texture have been traditionally considered to be elements of visual design (Richard, 1969); Ocvirk (1968) adds "value," referring to the range of tones in either color or black and white. These elements comprise the artist's language or grammar in the sense that the artist uses them to communicate meaning in a nonverbal and visual manner (Cianciolo, 1984).

According to Ocvirk (1968), color has three aspects: hue, tone, and saturation. Hue refers to the different segments of the spectrum, allowing us to distinguish all that might be called red from all that might be called orange (though the distinctions are, of course, blurry, because the spectrum is a continuum). Tone refers to the amount of darkness or brightness of a hue, and can further be broken down into tint (the addition of white) and shade (the addition of black). Saturation
refers to the intensity or purity of a color. Artists’ choices of hue, tone, and saturation have particular effects on viewers. For example, colors of high intensity, bright tone, and hues on the red end of the spectrum would be most appropriate for illustrating a cheerful or hopeful scene, whereas colors of low intensity, subdued tone, and hues on the violet end of the spectrum would be most appropriate for illustrating a dream-like, sad, or fearful scene. These are the ways in which artists manipulate our attention and suggest symbolic meaning (Arnheim, 1974). Bang (1991) writes about the traditional associations of various colors with particular psychological states. Red, for example, suggests danger, high emotion such as fear or joy, and has associations with blood and fire.

The artist’s line can vary greatly, and is perhaps the most powerful expressive tool in his/her arsenal. Randolph Caldecott, arguably the first picturebook artist, relied on pen-and-ink drawing for a flowing, expressive line that needed very little shading to communicate life and energy (Cech, 1983-4). The thickness of a line may suggest the degree of refinement or delicacy of the people portrayed (Golden, 1990). The smoothness or roughness of lines can suggest either serenity or anxiety, stasis or energy.

Arnheim (1974) believes that all shape is meaningful: "Form always goes beyond the practical function of things by finding in their shape the visual qualities of roundness or sharpness, strength or frailty, harmony or discord. It thereby reads them symbolically as images of the human condition" (p. 97). Bang (1991) explains several general principles of shapes in pictorial art. Bang suggests that horizontal shapes give us a sense of "stability and calm," while vertical shapes are more exciting, and suggest energy. Diagonal shapes are the most dynamic of all, evoking a sense of motion or tension. Pointed shapes create more anxiety and fear because of their association with sharp objects, while rounded, curved shapes make us feel more comfortable and safe. The placement of the shapes on the page (one element of composition) is also important. According to Bang (1991), shape placement in the upper half of a picture implies freedom, happiness, triumph, or spirituality, while placement in the bottom half is a sign of greater "pictorial weight" or "down-to-earth-
ness" and may also mean more threat or sadness. Placement at the center of the page is what Moebius (1986) calls the "ham factor" (p. 148). "Center stage" in an illustration is associated with greater importance, just as it is in the theater. The larger the object in a picture, the stronger it feels to us. In a well-composed picture, the artist leads the viewer's eye around the illustration from shape to shape through the overall arrangement of the shapes and their colors. Another factor is the number of shapes, which determines how "busy" or sparse the illustration appears. An illustration with fewer shapes tends to give the impression of calm or quiet.

According to Arnheim (1974), positioning a figure or shape on the left side of the picture gives it more weight and force, since we tend to "read" pictures from left to right. This is one of the factors in the balance of the picture, which consists in the various "weights" each shape has. Arnheim also suggests that a detail may acquire "weight" if it has "intrinsic interest." In a sequence of pictures, a detail acquires weight if it recurs, because "the meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it" (Berger, 1977, p. 29).

On the flat, smooth, two-dimensional surface of a piece of paper or canvas, texture can only be suggested. Artists use various techniques to give the illusion of surfaces that are rough or smooth, delicate or sturdy. The artistic media an artist chooses have various potentials for indicating texture (Kiefer, 1995).

Value, referring to the range of different in the dark and light tones in an image, has symbolic associations. If there is only a small range of dark and light tones, and therefore little contrast, "the mood of the picture may be either serene or brooding" (Kiefer, 1995, p. 127). If the opposite case is true, and there is a wide range of tones and high contrast, an image will convey nervous energy or excitement.

These elements work together to produce a total effect that is usually referred to as style. Style is "name we give to all the aspects of a work of art considered together" (Nodelman, 1988, p. 77). According to Novitz (1976), style can be defined on three levels. First, there is "pictorial" style: a recognizable style characteristic of

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a particular time or place, and consisting of generally accepted conventions for painting "called umbrella conventions" (p. 336). The Renaissance fascination with perspective and the Impressionist fascination with the immediate, unmediated visual image would be examples of pictorial style. Second, there is "artistic" style, which involves "changes in emphasis or in subject matter but not in overall methods of depicting" (Kiefer, 1993, p. 76). Finally, an individual artist has a unique personal style; and some artists creatively employ very different styles for different projects. In picturebooks, artists may use both their personal style and make references to historic pictorial or artistic styles, as when Sendak gives a nod to the Impressionists in Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present (Zolotow, 1962) or the Northern Romantic style (particularly the work of Philipp Otto Runge) in Outside Over There (1981) and Dear Mili (1988). In The Castle Builder (1987), Dennis Nolan makes use of the pointillist artistic style of Seurat.

Gombrich (1961) argues that the history of art is largely the history of artists imitating the work of other artists. This is the way in which the conventions of pictorial representation--what Gombrich calls "schemata"--develop. Occasionally, a particularly imaginative artist will break out of the "prison of style" (p. 320), leading the way to a new set of conventions. DeLuca (1984) comments,

The importance of artistic forbears and schemata may also, ultimately, make us a little more tolerant of the fact that after Sendak or Lobel, everything published seems to look like them for awhile. For an artist like Sendak changes the way children's book artists view their world. Clearly he has created some of the schemata that shape the field, much as Caldecott did for him (DeLuca, 1984, p. 23).

Gombrich's argument suggests that we need to consider how the style of a particular artist relates to the conventions or schemata that are available to him or her; and to understand the historical sequence of interrelationships of picturebook illustrators with each other and with the wider world of art. The implication of Gombrich's argument for the use of picturebooks in educational settings is that children should be exposed to a wide range of artistic styles and media of presentation, and that children should learn to compare and contrast these styles.
Theoretical Perspectives on the Relationship of Text and Pictures in a Picturebook

The theoretical definitions of the picturebook outlined above consistently emphasize that one of the unique qualities of the picturebook is that the illustrations and illustrational sequence play as important a role in the total conveyed meaning as do the words of the text. Both the verbal text and the illustrational sequence would be incomplete without the other, and the total effect of the picturebook depends on the perceived interactions or transactions between these two parts. This idea was not always so readily accepted as it is today. Hall (1990) reports that, "prior to the late 1970's, authorities were still of the opinion that 'the story is the tune, the illustration its accompaniment'" (p. 17). Now, this musical metaphor would be changed--at least with respect to picturebooks--so that text and pictures were understood as the two equally important parts of a duet (Cech, 1983-84, p. 118) or in a "contrapunctual relationship" (Ward & Fox, 1984, p. 21) with each other. David Lewis (1996) writes of the "polystemic" relationship of words and pictures in picturebooks: "the piecing together of text out of different kinds of signifying systems" (p. 108).

How can we characterize this relationship, and more fully understand its dynamics? A few theorists have attempted to deal with this issue in detail, notably Joseph Schwarcz (1982), Perry Nodelman (1988), and Joanne Golden (1990).

Schwarcz (1982) makes the point that the quantity of illustrations (in relation to the amount of the text) is an important factor. The relative proportions of text and pictures make up a "sliding scale," and in the picturebook (which Schwarcz calls the "picture story book"), the proportions are such that "composite verbal-visual narration" is possible (p. 11). Schwarcz conceives of two general categories of relationships between text and pictures: what he calls "congruency" and "deviation." In the category of congruency, the text and pictures are in a harmonious relationship. There is never simple redundancy, even in the situation where the illustration refers directly to the text. The illustrations may elaborate, amplify, or extend the situation described in the text. Sometimes the illustrations complement the text by "running ahead of the text and pushing the action forward" (p. 15). The text and the illustrations may also take turns in telling the story; this is what Schwarcz calls
"alternate progress" (p. 15). In some cases, the pictures take over from the words entirely, continuing the story without any verbal accompaniment.

In deviation, Schwarcz’s second category of relationships, the illustrations "veer away" from the text by opposing it in some way. Another type of deviation is what Schwarcz calls "counterpoint," when the illustrations tell a different story from the text. Part of the enjoyment of this type of story lies in the reader-viewer’s perception of both stories at once.

In Words About Pictures, Nodelman (1988) devotes an entire chapter to exploring the relationship between text and pictures in the picturebook. He begins by pointing out that text and pictures don’t simply mirror each other (p. 193), and that this can be proven by experiencing the verbal text of a picturebook without seeing the illustrations, or (conversely) by experiencing the illustrative sequence without the verbal text. If we do this, we begin to understand what each sign system supplies. The sequence of illustrations alone can be interpreted in many different ways; what the words do is to impose a particular, specific narrative on the illustrations. Nodelman refers to the intriguing implications of split-brain research for understanding texts and pictures as involving two different kinds of thinking; but points out that this research cannot be used to suggest that we process the text and pictures separately, because "placing them [words and pictures] into relationship with each other inevitably changes the meaning of both, so that good picture books as a whole are a richer experience than just the simple sum of their parts" (p. 199).

Nodelman lists three effects that words have on the picture sequence. First, "words can provide a cognitive map, a schema that we can apply to inherently unassertive pictures in order to determine the varying significance we might find in their details" (p. 213). In particular, the words inform us about what "emotional or narrative significance of visible gestures" (p. 215) to find in the illustrations. Secondly, the verbal text can specify particular cause-and-effect relationships, which would otherwise be vague in the illustrative sequence. Third, the words (and what the words are silent about) can tell us what matters and what does not matter in the
illustrative sequence: what elements in the illustrations are important and what elements are incidental.

According to Nodelman, words and pictures have particular strengths and weaknesses in conveying information. "Words are best at describing relationships of details, pictures best at giving a sense of the whole" (p. 202). As well, "in picture books, the texts more significantly specify temporal information, just as the pictures convey the most significant descriptive information" (p. 214). Yet, it is not as if there is a sharp dichotomy between the temporal nature of narrative and the spatial nature of the pictures. We get spatial information from both the pictures and the words (though in different ways); and we also get temporal information from the both pictures and words. So, in understanding a picturebook, "we must integrate time and space, and two different versions of time and space, before we can understand the whole" (p. 200).

In Schwarz's description, the illustrations may "extend" the information given by the verbal text. Nodelman makes the opposite point: that what really happens is that the illustrations limit the words:

Many commentators say that the purpose of pictures in picture books is to "extend" the text, but cognitive theories of perception suggest that extension may be the wrong metaphor. It would be more accurate to say that the pictures limit the text--and to add that the text also limits the pictures (p. 220).

In truth, however, these positions may not be so far apart. Schwarz (and others) who use the metaphor of extension mean that the illustrations add additional information; this is certainly the case. But it is also true that the illustrations make the words more specific--more concrete and particular. In this sense, the illustrations limit the meaning of the words. Nodelman uses the example of a sentence from the first page of Nancy Eckholm Burkert's (1972) illustrated version of Snow White: "At a window with a frame of ebony a queen sat and sewed." What Burkert's illustration does is to both extend our knowledge of what the queen is like, exactly how and where she is sitting, etc., and to limit our interpretation of the words by presenting
this particular, specific queen, and no other. In the same way, the words limit the meaning of the illustrations. The sentence, "At a window with a frame of ebony a queen sat and sewed," tells us what is important in the illustration, limiting our attention. What she is sewing; the particular style of clothing she wears; the other furnishings we glimpse in the room—all these are given subsidiary status by the words.

Nodelman uses Roland Barthes idea of "relaying" to describe the process by which we relate the text and the pictures. Barthes, in writing about cartoons and comic strips, comments, "Here language . . . and image are in a complementary relation; the words are then fragments of a more general syntagm, as are the images, and the message's unity occurs on a higher level; that of the story" (p. 200; quoting Barthes, p. 30). Nodelman comments that, "By limiting each other, words and pictures together take on a meaning that neither possesses without the other—perform the completion of each other that Barthes calls 'relaying'" (p. 221).

Golden (1990) describes five types of relationships between text and pictures: (1) text and picture are symmetrical; (2) text depends on picture for clarification; (3) illustration enhances, elaborates text; (4) text carries primary narrative, illustration is selective; and (5) illustration carries primary narrative, text is selective. These categories seem to be differentiated by how much "work" the illustrations or the text do in conveying meaning. However, Golden's scheme is problematic. She asserts that, in category 1, the illustrations are redundant, only to admit later that there is no such thing as true redundancy. This tends to collapse category 1 with category 3. Then, too, what is the difference between the text depending on the picture for clarification (category 2) and the illustration enhancing or elaborating the text (category 3)? Although we would not expect rigid categories, these seem almost too blurred to be useful. As well, since the scheme depends mainly on the relative amounts of power the text and the illustrations have, Golden cannot attend to the dynamic way in which, as Nodelman puts it, "the words change the pictures and the pictures change the words" (p. 220). Thus, the relationship may not be so much a
matter of a balance of power as it is the way in which the text and pictures transact with each other, and transform each other.

All these theorists agree that the text-picture relationship is the *sine qua non* of the picturebook. Understanding this relationship is, therefore, a very important part of the literary understanding of picturebooks, and studies are needed that examine how children negotiate and construct meaning from both text and pictures.

**Empirical Research on Children's Responses to Illustrations in Picturebooks**

It has been established that picturebooks are the principal literary form in which young children experience literature. It has also been established that, in picturebooks, the illustrations play as important a part in conveying meaning as do the words of the text. It is therefore somewhat surprising that there is so little empirical research on children's responses to the illustrations in picturebooks. Flood and Lapp (1995) observe that "although educators have regularly recognized the importance of picture books in children's language and literacy development, the relationships between the pictures and the words (the language arts and the visual arts) have not yet been fully explored" (p. 9).

Working in Kindergarten/first grade, second/third grade, and a fourth/fifth grade classrooms, Hickman (1979, 1981) studied the literary response patterns of elementary school children. This study is noteworthy because Hickman "pioneered the study of children's responses to literature in naturally occurring contexts" (Martinez & Roser, 1991, p. 645). Although Hickman did not limit her study to picturebooks, many of the books to which children responded were in fact picturebooks, and many of the children's responses were connected to illustrations. Hickman defined response quite broadly as any behavior, verbal or nonverbal, which occurred in the classroom and showed a connection between the children and literature. Seven types or categories of response were noted: (1) listening behaviors such as applause or joining in refrains; (2) contact with books such as browsing or keeping books at hand; (3) acting on the impulse to share by reading together or sharing discoveries; (4) oral responses such as retelling or freely commenting on
stories; (5) actions and drama; (6) making things such as picture or games; and (7) writing about literature or using literary models in one's writing.

Driessen (1984) examined the response of six fifth grade students to picturebooks by conducting informal, open-ended interviews with the students individually and in groups. The students she selected had had extensive previous experience with picturebooks. She found that some of the students preferred to read and respond to the verbal text, while others displayed a preference for the illustrations. Two of the students approached the picturebook from an aesthetic perspective, "while the others were concerned only with the factual presentation of the story" (Driessen, 1984, p. 218). The students' previously rich experience with picturebooks enabled them to identify artistic styles and to speculate about the artistic media the picturebook artists had used.

In several first/second grade classrooms, Keifer (1982) studied how children responded to the illustrations in picturebooks. By employing this naturalistic setting and using real trade books rather than isolated illustrations or illustrational sequences constructed for a research situation, Keifer ensured that children's responses represented classroom experience rather than a clinical setting. She also wanted to focus on the aesthetic qualities of the children's responses rather than on their preferences for one medium over another. Keifer adapted Halliday's categories of the functions of language in order to describe four types of children's responses to picturebooks: informative, heuristic, imaginative, and personal. In informative response, children reported the contents of the picture or compared the picture to an aspect of the real world. In heuristic response, children wondered about events in the pictures, inferred the causes of pictured events or how illustrations were made, and predicted outcomes or events from pictures. In imaginative response, children entered the world of the book or created figurative language to describe it. In personal response, children associated their own experiences with the book, expressed their feelings about the book, or evaluated it. Keifer found that the teacher's role was very important in helping children construct and negotiate the meaning of picturebooks.
Books the teacher read aloud to the children achieved a "special status" in the classroom, and were more frequently sought by the children. The teacher's talk about the book often revealed nuances or special features that might be overlooked by the children. As well, the teacher enabled the children to make intertextual connections by modeling this activity, and probed children's responses by asking such questions as "How did that make you feel?" or "Tell me what you are thinking." Kiefer also found that response to picturebooks was an ongoing process, and that time was needed for children to fully develop their responses.

It has been shown that there is a pronounced imbalance between (1) picturebook theory and (2) empirical research that studies children's responses to and understanding of picturebooks. More studies are clearly needed that focus on the equal importance and the synergy of text and illustrations, and how children understand the text-picture relationship.

Summary

This chapter has presented a review of the theory and research that are relevant to the ways in which we may understand the storybook readaloud situation and its potential for increasing children's literary understanding. The review began by broadly outlining the social constructivist paradigm, in which emphasis is placed on the ways in which groups of people construct meaning, and children's active involvement in building their own understanding of the world. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky describes this construction of meaning and active involvement as heavily dependent on the use of oral language in social settings. The application of these principles to talk in the classroom was then discussed, and it was shown that some classroom practices militate against and severely curtail the free exchange of talk that is so crucial to learning.

The review then narrowed its focus to theory and research from several subject area disciplines that could illuminate how children learn to understand literature. Perspectives from reading theory, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and discourse processing were presented and critiqued for their somewhat restricted view of literary
understanding; their use of simple and short story models that have limited applicability to literature used in the classroom; and their lack of reference to the meaning-bearing qualities of illustrations. It was argued that perspectives from literary theories are valuable in examining literary understanding. The review then turned to these literary theories, summarizing both text-based and reader-based theories, and included discussions of naturalistic classroom research on children’s responses to literature based on these theories. It was noted that this body of research tends to use relatively few literary theories, and that studies were needed that utilized a greater variety of literary theoretical perspectives. Another characteristic of this body of research is that there is relatively little having to do with children below grade three, and that anecdotal formats are more prevalent than empirical studies for primary-aged children. Research on the storybook readaloud situation is extensive, but only rarely addresses the question of children’s literary understanding.

When the review moved to an even sharper focus on picturebook theory and research, it was shown that picturebook theory has been extensively developed. However, it was also argued that children’s understanding of the quality that is central to the picturebook--its integration of text and illustration--has received little attention from researchers, and that more empirical research studies are necessary.

In reviewing the relevant literature, therefore, it was shown that there is a need for studies of the storybook readaloud situation that focus on the developing literary understanding of young children, and which extend and broaden the theoretical construct of literary understanding. The study that this dissertation reports has these goals.

In the next chapter, the methodological choices and procedures of the study are explained.
1. I. A. Richards has been seen as an instrumental figure in the origins of New Criticism. Paradoxically, he is also been seen as one of the originators of reader response criticism. His work deals with reader response insofar as he actually analyzed the (written) responses of university undergraduates to poems. However, his work is New Critical in the sense that he considered that there was only one correct interpretation to the poems.

2. This explanation of New Criticism (and many other explanations and critiques written after its downfall) may leave the impression that New Criticism was a rather sterile affair, and that there wasn't much for critics to do. After the correct interpretation was arrived at, one could go on to the next poem or novel, but after a while, there wouldn't be any more worlds to conquer. In practice, the New Critical era was a very exciting time in literary criticism, with great deal of incisive intellectual debate. Its primary legacy, the importance of the "close reading" of texts, will probably never go out of fashion.

3. There is one other way in which behaviorist reading theory and New Criticism are similar. Both are extremely tenacious because they extol the attractive vision of pristine objectivity and the possibility of certain knowledge. Currently, people who say that they have no articulated theory of reading are probably teaching reading with the theories of behaviorism; and people who say that have no theory of literary criticism are probably teaching English using New Critical principles. On the articulated level, the behaviorist and New Critical principles still have many advocates in the academy.

4. Benton (1983) also refers to Suzanne Langer's (1953) belief that when we read literature (or have any other aesthetic experience), we are engaging in "virtual life" or "virtual experience;" to Craig's (1976) idea that the power of literature is not in the individual or in the text, but rather in the "space between:" and to Winnicott's (1974) "third area," which exists between the "personal or psychic reality that is biologically determined for each of us and the actual world that is our common property" (Benton, 1983, p. 69).

5. Cox and Many (1992) are aware of this problem:

When students are directed to assume an afferent approach to literature, for example in focusing on story content or analysis of the story through study of literary elements such as plot, character development, structure of the piece, or moral or lesson to be learned, they should examine these in light of an initial aesthetic experiencing of the work. Rosenblatt (1978) underscores the importance of the reader involved in analyzing literature to "keep his sense of...[his personal evocation] as vividly and fully in mind as possible" (p. 174). This is substantiated by the shallowness and analytical distance found in many of the
responses written from an efferent stance. ... In contrast, some of the responses which mingled efferent analysis of the work with reports of the richness of the lived-through experience or even the lack of such experience, were more mature and meaningful. ... As mentioned earlier, the distinction between efferent and aesthetic stances is not categorical or a simple dichotomy. Nor do all aesthetic responses embody fuller understanding or interpretation of a work, just as not all efferent responses suggest a lack of it (p. 117, italics mine).

6. Another example of this overreaction is evident in McGinley, Kamberelis, and Mahoney's (in press) research on two classrooms (third/fourth and fourth/fifth) in which the teachers were vitally concerned with the potential of literature as providing "life-informing" and "life-transforming" experiences for children. In this fascinating article, McGinley et al discuss six specific ways in which the "children's reading seemed to function in personal and social ways:" "as a means [1] to envision and explore possible selves, roles and responsibilities through the lives of story characters, both real and fictional; [2] to describe or remember personal experiences or interests in their lives; [3] to objectify and reflect upon certain problematic emotions and circumstances as they related to important moral and ethical dilemmas in their lives; and [4] to 'experience' or participate in the storied lives and worlds of imaginary characters. Reading also functioned in more social ways, [5] providing children with a means to understand, affirm, or negotiate social relationships among peers, family members, and community members, as well as [6] to raise and develop their awareness of significant social issues and social problems." These classrooms are clearly wonderful places, and the children are truly having life-informing and life-transforming experiences through literature. But I would be willing to bet that the expert teachers who facilitate such experiences were also teaching the children a great deal about literary understanding; however, the clear aversion McGinley et al feel towards literary understanding may have prevented them from seeing this. They appear to set up a straw man when they argue that "it may be that literature instruction that focuses primarily on the analysis and interpretation of literary texts denies students access to significant personal, social, and political possibilities and consequences that might be afforded by adopting different and perhaps more life-informing perspectives concerning the functions of literature." I heartily agree with them on this point, but their dichotomization of literary experience and literary understanding is so rigid that it may blind them to the possibility that there could be, not merely a balance, but a synergy, between them. Thus they inadvertently perpetuate the same false dichotomy which is implicit in the research on reader stance.

7. Frye's ideas have been criticized by many contemporary theorists as too "culture-specific," and as imposing a Western European interpretation on cultural traditions which may have entirely different worldviews, and thus a different set of archetypes. His assumption of objective and eternal truths which undergird all literature has also
been questioned in the poststructuralist era, where truth is conceptualized as partial, positioned, and contextual. Frye's is perhaps the last grand scheme which attempts to view all of literature as a comprehensive system. It is an attractive and compelling vision, powerful in scope and magisterial in its articulation. The religious overtones of his conception of literature are clear; and it is perhaps no accident that, aside from his vast knowledge of literature and formidable powers as a critic, he also did theological training and was an ordained minister.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the methodology of the study. In the second section, the epistemological assumptions of the study are laid out by explaining the constructivist research paradigm that framed the study, guided the research design, and enabled the methodological decisions. In the third section, a rationale is provided for the choice of the research site; issues of access and entre are discussed; and the site is described. Section four describes the collection of data, considering the role of the researcher, the phases of data collection, the types of data collected, and the procedures followed in data collection, ending with the decisions surrounding the transcription system that was employed. The fifth section describes the procedures followed for data analysis, including the theoretical foundations of the analysis; preliminary coding procedures and the emerging categories; the choice of selected transcripts for in-depth analysis; the stages involved in arriving at the final coding categories; and the search for patterns and relationships. The sixth section presents the processes and activities that ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, and deals with the question of the generalizability of the study to other situations.

Overview of the Methodology

This qualitative, descriptive, naturalistic study, set within the constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1994), investigated the literary understanding constructed by first- and second-grade children as they heard picture storybooks read
aloud. The study took place over seven months (three days a week) in a first- and second-grade classroom in a school with a long history of using children’s literature in creative ways. The school’s population was middle, lower-middle, and lower class-- mostly blue collar families, with a racial and cultural mix. The teacher (who collaborated extensively with the researcher in the day-to-day decision-making of the study) used trade books to teach reading, and storybook readalouds were done twice daily. Although response to literature permeated the classroom— in creative play, drama, art, writing, and many other ways (Hickman, 1981), the focus of the study was the talk before, during, and after storybook readalouds. The study considered this talk in three contexts: in readaloud sessions the teacher did with the entire class; in readalouds done by the researcher with two small groups of five children each; and in one-to-one readalouds that the researcher did with each of the ten children in the two small groups. The researcher’s stance, therefore, ranged on the continuum from "participant-observation" (Spradley, 1980) to "observant participant" (Erickson, 1992) The readaloud discussions (20 whole group, 28 small group, and 20 one-to-one) were audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher; other data sources included field notes and interviews with the teacher. Nine whole group, 16 small group, and all 20 of the one-to-one readalouds were chosen for in-depth analysis; the other data was used in a supplementary way. Data was analyzed recursively and iteratively, according to the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), by assigning codes and categories and modifying them as the analysis proceeded (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In this way, a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of this classroom’s construction of literary competence emerged through "data-theory bootstrapping" (Richards & Richards, 1994). The research questions for the study were: (1) What are the verbal indications that children are developing literary understanding of picturebooks during storybook readalouds? (2) How do "expert others" (adults and more knowledgeable peers) scaffold the children’s developing literary understanding during picture storybook readalouds? (3) How does the type of text (in terms of genre, narrative complexity, or the relative
"openness" of the text to varying interpretations) appear to affect the nature of the discussion and response during picture storybook readalouds?

The Constructivist Research Paradigm

Standard texts on both qualitative (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Patton, 1990) and quantitative (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990; Borg & Gall, 1989; Tuckman, 1978) research are unanimous in their insistence that the questions for a study should determine the methods used. In the area of qualitative research, theorists have also insisted that there is a stage that comes between the formulation of research questions and the determination of methods. Before we determine the methods by which we are going to discover X, we must be sure we understand what it means to find out or discover. These are epistemological and ontological questions, and there is no one answer to them. Researchers have an obligation to make their epistemological and ontological assumptions explicit, because there is choice of various paradigmatic stances or "places to stand" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Sipe & Constable, 1996).

This study is framed within the constructivist (or interpretivist1) research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1994). Guba (1990, p. 17) defines a paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action," in this case the actions taken by the researcher. The constructivist research paradigm bears more than a passing resemblance to the social constructivist paradigm of teaching and learning discussed in chapter 2; indeed, the constructivist research paradigm may be conceived as the application of the same set of principles to research. Thus, there is a match between the underlying paradigmatic assumptions regarding the dynamics of children's acquisition of literary understanding (the principal subject of this study) and the underlying paradigmatic assumptions regarding the way in which these dynamics were investigated (the method of the study).

It was stated in chapter 2 that the constructivist paradigm is characterized by two basic shifts in the ways in which human beings view reality and the possibility of knowing that reality. The first is the shift from an objective view of reality to a
subjective view. The second is the shift from the view of language as transparent to and directly descriptive of reality to the view of language as constituting and creating reality. Several implications for research flow from these shifts.

In the constructivist paradigm, knowledge is not conceived as something that is objectively discovered or found. All facts are seen as "theory-laden" because they are not collected independent of theoretical assumptions of those who collect them. According to Thomas Kuhn (1970), the dominant scientific theory at any historical time even determines what is seen or understood as a fact. All accounts are therefore partial (Guba, 1990). The implication for research is that any account or report is one interpretation, not the interpretation. This is especially true for research in the human sciences, where there is a multiplicity of social relationships to consider (Ball, 1990).

The theory-ladenness of facts also implies that there is no rigid distinction between the knower and what is known. For researchers, this means that the researcher is inextricably part of his or her data. The entire research design is the researcher's construction. Each piece of data is the result of a decision by the researcher to collect it. Moreover, in the act of recording observations, the researcher is automatically involved in interpretation, because description cannot be rigidly separated from interpretation.

The lack of a clear distinction between the knower and the known also means that the researcher and the human beings who participate in the study are related and necessarily interact with each other. Even if the researcher attempts to be a "neutral observer," his or her very presence will affect the social dynamics of the situation. There is no outside, objective viewpoint. Participants in the study are not "subjects," but valued informants; the researcher's task to attempt to understand their perspectives and worldview. Knowledge is the outcome of human activity and interaction, and does not exist outside this interaction. If the researcher and the researched interact, it is not possible or desirable totally to specify the research design beforehand. The idea of an emergent design is based on the assumption that the

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interaction of the researcher and the researched will produce some unexpected but heuristically useful directions that could not have been predicted.

Because the researcher/researched distinction is blurry, the researcher’s own predispositions, prejudices, theoretical assumptions, and values cannot be separated from the interpretation he or she constructs. This has two implications. First, any account is positioned. Inquiry is not value free (Guba, 1990) because values are part of the lens through which researchers look at life. Second, the "I" of the researcher cannot be erased. Therefore, the researcher should not hide himself or herself in the written presentation of interpretation. Research accounts based on the constructivist paradigm, whether they are articles, books, or dissertations, appropriately include first-person narration. To exclusively use the passive voice ("the data were analyzed") and report actions in third-person narration ("the researcher hypothesized") subtly elides or erases the researcher’s presence; ironically, this erasure gives the researcher more authority (Van Maanen, 1988). This is the theoretical justification for the use of first-person narration in this chapter and chapter 4 of this report.

In constructivism, the goal is to describe/interpret, not to predict. "Constructivism thus intends neither to predict and control the ‘real’ world nor to transform it but to reconstruct the ‘world’ at the only point at which it exists; in the minds of constructors. It is the mind that is to be transformed, not the ‘real’ world” (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

This goal of transforming the mind highlights the importance of language, because language is our chief cognitive tool (Vygotsky, 1978). However, since language is not transparent to reality, but rather constitutes reality, propositional statements must be contextualized, just as words are defined by context of networks of other words. For researchers, this means that data must be contextualized. The social situation in which the data was collected is important. The implication for research protocols is that research which studies human behavior should be conducted in natural, rather than clinical situations. Another implication is that research reports framed in the constructivist paradigm appropriately provide a "thick description"
(Geertz, 1973) of the social context in which the data were collected. In this case, the social dynamics of its classroom are described in some detail.

If the constructivist paradigm abandons the objective for the subjective, and asserts that language constitutes rather than describes reality, what prevents the paradigm from falling into complete relativism and solipsism? This is a question with which constructivists continually struggle. One answer is that no researcher functions in a vacuum, but as a member of a community of scholars. This social group constitutes the "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980) for that researcher. The standards of the whole community are not objective, either; they are socially constructed as well; but as Kuhn (1970) suggests, a paradigm is a paradigm precisely because a large number of people in a given discipline commonly accept it and work within it. The qualitative research community, of which constructivists are a part, has set certain standards for the trustworthiness of its own research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The ways in which the methodology of this study meets those standards are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

The Research Site

The research site for this study was the first- and second- grade classroom of Ms. Tracey Bigler, in Highland Park Elementary School. Highland Park Elementary is located in the South-Western City School District in Grove City, in the southwestern metropolitan area of Columbus, Ohio. This section contains a discussion of the considerations surrounding the choice of the research site; the issues of access and entre; and a description of the site.

Choice of the Research Site

One overarching principle, that of purposeful sampling, guided the choice of the school (and the particular classroom within the school) as the site of the research, and of the teacher and students who were the collaborators and informants for the study. According to Patton (1990), "perhaps nothing better captures the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods than the different logics that undergird
sampling approaches" (p. 169). Patton states that quantitative methods often utilize large samples that have been chosen randomly; this type of sample allows the researcher to generalize from the sample to a larger population. Researchers using qualitative methods, on the other hand, usually choose relatively small samples, selected purposefully, rather than randomly:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990, p. 169, italics in the original).

The "issues of central importance" to this study were the research questions relating to the literary understanding of picturebooks by young children, displayed during storybook readalouds: the nature of this understanding; the influence of expert others on the formation of that understanding; and the influence of the type of text on that understanding. Since the purpose of this research was to "learn a great deal" about these issues, it was clear that a research site had to be chosen which would be "information-rich."

In his discussion of purposeful sampling, Patton (1990) goes on to specify several different strategies that may be used in the purposeful selection of information-rich cases. One of these strategies is extreme case sampling, which "focuses on cases that are rich in information because they are unusual or special in some way" (p. 169). The rationale for extreme case sampling "is that lessons may be learned about unusual conditions or extreme outcomes that are relevant to improving more typical programs" (p. 170). Another strategy of purposeful selection is intensity sampling:

Intensity sampling involves the same logic as extreme case sampling but with less emphasis on the extremes. An intensity sample consists of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely (but not extremely). Extreme or deviant cases may be so unusual as to distort the manifestation of the phenomenon of interest. Using the logic of intensity sampling, one seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not unusual cases (Patton, 1990, p. 17).
The strategy of intensity sampling seemed to be the most appropriate for the purposes of this study. Specifically, a site was sought in which the teacher read picture storybooks aloud to children on a regular basis; where there was a great deal of talk by the children during these readaloud sessions, since talk was to be the focus of the study; where the teacher displayed an interest in the children's developing literary understanding as shown by attempts to assist them in developing this understanding; and where a great variety and quantity of texts were selected for storybook readalouds. A site that manifested these phenomena intensely was likely to be the most fruitful for answering the research questions. To avoid an extreme case sampling, a school was sought in which such practices were not peculiar to one teacher, but which were manifested in many classrooms in the school, and which were part of the entire school's general philosophy of teaching and learning. It seemed that a school which used children's literature extensively in its reading program, privileging trade books over basal readers, would be a likely choice.

Guided by the principle of purposeful sampling (and the specific strategy of intensity sampling), a search was initiated for a site that would also meet the more pragmatic criteria of being within reasonable driving distance, and that would be receptive to the presence of a researcher for an extended period of time. Advice was solicited from faculty at the university, from teachers who took courses in children's literature at the university, and from fellow doctoral students. Some faculty members had conducted research at local schools themselves, and provided information about their experiences at these research sites. Some of the Ohio State doctoral dissertations concerning children and their literature mentioned specific teachers and schools in the Columbus area where the dissertation research had been conducted; this was important information because it identified schools and classrooms in which similar research had already taken place. Faculty and teachers mentioned the Ohio State EPIC program (Educational Program for Integrated Curriculum/Classrooms), a preservice training program for teachers that had given a pronounced emphasis to children's literature and the ways it could be used in the classroom. Also mentioned was an organization of former EPIC teachers and other interested teachers called The
Literacy Connection, which emphasized the use of literature in classrooms; I attended one of the meetings of this group, and talked with several teachers about their interest in children’s literature and children’s response to it.

All of these consultations took place in the winter and early spring of the 1994-5 school year, the year before the study was conducted. During these conversations, the names of several schools (including Highland Park Elementary) kept recurring as places that had various professional ties to the Ohio State University, which were receptive to research; and which utilized children’s literature extensively, valuing it as a resource for developing children’s literacy as well as for its power in evoking aesthetic response. Conversations with my advisor connected the names of these schools with the names of several teachers (members of The Literacy Connection) who were primary teachers at these schools.

During the winter of 1995, a course in qualitative research required that students log a number of hours of observation at a school. I took this as an opportunity to visit a first- and second grade teacher in a school located in suburban northwest Columbus. The series of seven whole-day visits was a chance to closely observe a teacher who was a very active member of The Literacy Connection, and who taught in a school that used trade books to teach reading, and that was one of the schools mentioned by several of the people who had been consulted about possible research sites. This school was also one of the district’s "informal" schools, meaning that the school philosophy was based on the model of the British Primary Schools (Blackie, 1971, 1978; McKenzie & Kernig, 1975; Webb, 1974; Weber, 1971). Therefore, the environment was one in which children had a great deal of choice in what they studied; where thematic units of study integrated a great deal of the time and curricular subjects in an "integrated day" (Blackie, 1974; Brown & Precious, 1968; Taylor, 1972); where talk and collaboration was encouraged among the students; and where literature was much in evidence and use, permeating the school day. The intention of these visits was to ascertain whether this school might be an "information-rich" research site; this was indeed the case.
Seven whole-day visits allowed not only general observation, but the opportunity of focusing on storybook readaloud sessions. I began to make detailed field notes about the diversity and types of responses, and the indications of literary understanding that were being constructed by the children with the teacher’s help. Thus, although these visits did not comprise a pilot study, they did constitute an exploratory study that enabled the clarification and refinement of the research questions.

This school and classroom seemed an excellent site. However, the school was located in a very affluent suburban area; the socio-economic status of the children was uniformly high; and there was almost no ethnic diversity. The children could therefore be fairly described as children of privilege. I had expected that they would be very knowledgeable about literature, having had many rich experiences with books prior to coming to school, and observations of their conversations about literature proved that such was certainly the case. Indeed, the whole situation was so unusual,--with such an experienced and dynamic teacher in a school where literature was so much in evidence, and with children of such privileged status and such uniform ethnicity--that it seemed that the choice of such a research site would represent crossing the line from intensity sampling to extreme case sampling; because of this, the decision was made to look elsewhere.

The experience, however, was quite valuable, in that it not only clarified the research questions, but also focused and clarified the qualities being sought in a research site. What was being sought was an equally dynamic teacher in a school that was equally committed to literature and had an equally clear (and informal) philosophy of teaching and learning, but that served a population of students which represented a generally less privileged socio-economic status and was more ethnically diverse.

Highland Park Elementary School was another of the schools that had been frequently named as possible research site. It had been the site of several Ohio State dissertations involving children and literature. As well, it had a twenty-year history of using children’s literature as the basis of its reading program, and it was, like the
school I had already visited, an "informal" school, based on the British Primary School model. It served a less privileged and more ethnically diverse school population than the school I had previously visited. These qualities made it a likely prospect.

My approach was "top-down." A call to the school’s district central office resulted in the approval to inquire at the school level. At the time, the principal of the school was a doctoral student at Ohio State, and was known to my advisor, so contact was easily made. After speaking with the principal on several occasions, and receiving assurance that she would welcome a researcher at the school, I also spoke with the Staff Development Person at the school, who recommended the names of three primary teachers who might be interested in working with a researcher. Contacts with these teachers confirmed that they were, indeed interested, and visits were arranged. During the spring of 1995, five whole-day visits were made to the school during which observations were made: of the dynamics of the school day, the functional ways in which literacy was taught, the ways in which literature permeated the curriculum, and the nature of storybook readaloud situations. Two of the teachers taught together in a first- and second-grade class with approximately 45 children. The third teacher, Ms. Tracey Bigler, taught in another first- and second-grade class with 26 children. I observed in both of these classes, and talked with the three teachers.

Although the class of the teamed teachers was clearly a lively and interesting place, it was noticed that the large number of children might make audiotaping readaloud sessions difficult. Since this was certain to be one of the data collection methods, perhaps the principal method, I decided to focus on Ms. Bigler and her class. She was quite receptive to the idea of a research study, and several conversations assured us both that working with each other would be not only possible, but pleasurable. Accordingly, the decision was made to seek the various formal approvals from the Ohio State University Human Subjects Review Committee and the school board, and this was done in the fall of 1995-96 school year, the year in which the study was conducted. Although all the official approvals did not come
until early December, preliminary observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) began in late September.

In summary, the process of choosing a research site was both theoretically and pragmatically driven. The general theoretical principle that informed the search was the concept of "intensity sampling;" and the pragmatic aspects of the search suggested themselves as the search progressed and narrowed. The process of the search itself was also useful in refining the research questions and in clarifying the criteria for selection. In these ways, it was similar to the theories of writing (Graves, 1983; Hansen, 1987) that view the process of writing as way of finding out what we really want to say, and of clarifying our thought.

**Issues of Access**

The many contacts, conversations, and school and classroom visits described above were not only a part of the process of choosing a research site; they were also an important part of gaining access to the research site as well. Access is an ongoing concern rather than a one-time affair (Bogden & Biklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991; Patton, 1990). It must be viewed as something that is continually re-negotiated over the course of the study, because gaining permission to do research in a school or a classroom is only the beginning of the access issue. When the researcher needs to relate to many people (for example, the school board office, the school’s principal, the support staff, teachers, parents, and children), access has many levels and layers. Therefore, access must be socially constructed as an unfolding process (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The researcher enters as an "outsider," with etic perspectives, and will remain so throughout the study, though the goal is to understand the emic perspectives of those who are "insiders" in the situation (Pike, 1967; Harre, 1980) and to be accepted by those insiders. Highland Park Elementary School presented few problems in this regard, possibly because it was a school in which many research studies had already been conducted, and whose culture, therefore, had created a niche for researchers. Denzin’s observation that "cultures do not provide within their social structures a role called participant observer" and that "participant observers must
convince those they are studying to accept them and allow them to question and observe" (Denzin, 1989, p. 162) may be generally true; however, the Highland Park school culture may be said to have provided a place for this role, unlike most other schools, in which the role of researcher may be unknown. A measure of the acceptance I quickly gained was the request from several teachers to come and observe them in their classes. My own research interests and educational background also provided bridges for access. The study concerned children's talk about literature, and this was an especially welcome topic at Highland Park. My love and knowledge of children's literature were also valued by the teaching staff, who shared these interests, as evidenced by the frequent enthusiastic discussions we had about various children's books.

The ethical aspects of access cluster around the concept of "informed consent" (Eichelberger, 1989, p. 37). All the parties involved in the research study must not only give their permission; they must also be informed about the methods and the structure of the study so that they will have enough information to make a rational decision. A formal, detailed research proposal was submitted to the school district and official approval was given for the study. The principal, Staff Development Person, and Ms. Bigler were also given a copy of the proposal, so that they knew, in a detailed way, what was going to be done.

The principle of informed consent also had relevance for the children who participated in the study and their parents. An oral explanation was given to the children, and a detailed letter explaining the study was sent home to their parents. As well, Ms. Bigler and I scheduled a meeting with the children's parents, during which the purposes and procedures of the study were also explained. Parents and caregivers gave consent for all the children in the classroom to participate in the study by signing the permission form and returning it. The children were not forced or coerced into the study; indeed they gave indications of enjoying their part in it. The storybook readalouds to the whole group, led by Ms. Bigler, were a normal part of the school day that was looked forward to by the children. The small-group and one-to-one readalouds, led by me, were equally anticipated, as shown by the alacrity with
which they came together when these activities were announced, and by the 
enthusiasm with which they participated.

Access is deeply impacted by the interpersonal relationships that are formed 
between the researcher and all the people involved in the study. In this study, the 
interpersonal relationship with the classroom teacher was very important. Eisner 
(1991) comments that "the way in which mutual understanding and agreements are 
reached between the researcher and the teacher is very important. . . . Interpersonal 
comfort and mutual trust are the critical elements" (p. 174). Because we had in 
common the experience of teaching first- and second-grade children, and because we 
shared both a remarkably similar philosophy of teaching and learning as well as a 
knowledge of and regard for children and their literature, Tracey and I found that the 
day-to-day negotiation of the research agenda was without significant stresses. She 
was deeply interested in educational research, finishing her master’s degree work 
during the course of the study; she often spoke about the value for her in seeing 
research done from a close-up viewpoint. In addition to learning more about 
children’s literary understanding, she valued the experience of being involved in the 
research process itself. These interests made her stance one of openness; both of us 
felt that we were working collaboratively on a project upon whose importance we 
both agreed.

Description of the Research Site

The District and the School

Highland Park Elementary School is located in the South-Western City School 
District, a public school district located in the Grove City area. Grove City is part of 
the greater Columbus metropolitan area, and is residential in character. During the 
time of the study, the South-Western district was the seventh largest in the State of 
Ohio, serving approximately 17,800 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. 
Approximately 92 percent of these students were European-American; about 6 percent 
were African American; 1 percent were Asian; and Hispanic and Native American 
students comprised less than 1 percent of the population. The district had 17
elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 3 comprehensive high schools, one vocational school, and two special schools.

Highland Park Elementary School, with an enrollment of approximately 514 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, was a mid-sized elementary school for this district. Approximately 93 percent of the students were European-American; about 6 percent were African American; and Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students comprised less than one percent of the population. Approximately 24 percent of the students in the district qualified for the free or reduced lunch programs sponsored by the federal government; at Highland Park, approximately 23 percent of the students qualified for these programs.³

Highland Park was self-described (and described by the school district of which it was a part) as a school with an informal program, based on the model of the British Primary Schools (Brown & Precious, 1968; McKenzie & Kernig, 1975; Thomas, 1990; Weber, 1971. The school had a literature-based reading program in all its grades and classrooms, and had maintained this philosophy and approach for over twenty years. According to the principal and the Staff Development Person, the teaching staff at the school shared this common philosophy, and were concerned to maintain the special school culture that had developed over time. The Staff Development Person felt that the staff had a great commitment to professional development, as shown by the large number of teachers taking university courses, particularly in children's literature, and the number of teachers voluntarily attending the children's literature conference sponsored annually by the Ohio State University. As well, at least six of the teachers had published articles in educational journals. This commitment was also confirmed by the great interest displayed by the staff in this research study; teachers would frequently ask about what was being learned.

The students at the school were quite accustomed to visitors and to researchers, because Highland Park had been chosen as an "exemplary language arts site" by the Language Arts Planning Team of the Central Ohio Regional Planning Development Center; part of the program involved frequent visits to the school by parents, teachers, and administrators from other school districts. This designation as
an exemplary site was also objective evidence for the high quality of the school’s language arts program. A second indication of the excellence of the teaching/learning environment at Highland Park was its designation as an "exemplary Venture Capital site" in another program sponsored by the Department of Education of the State of Ohio. A third indication of the high quality of the school’s program was, during the year of the study, it was chosen as one of the eight sites in the Columbus area for the student teaching experience of the newly formed Master of Education program at The Ohio State University. Highland Park had a long history of involvement in professional development of pre-service teachers from Ohio State. Highland Park had received permission from the South-Western School District to construct its own reporting system to parents that was felt to be more reflective of the school’s philosophy of teaching and learning than the standard district report card. This was another piece of evidence for the school’s commitment to an articulated theory of informal education. During the time of the study, the school had several "family groupings," of more than one grade together in a classroom. Indeed, of the 21 classes, 9 were family groupings, as shown by the starred classrooms in the following chart (Figure 3.1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Grade(s)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Grade(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Three/Four*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>One/Two*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Four/Five*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Two/Three*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Five</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Classes at Highland Park Elementary School During the 1995-96 School Year
The school’s decision to group children in this way was based on the philosophy of informal instruction that values the help children can give one another in natural situations; the presence of a range of ages in a classroom causes it to resemble the more natural situation of a family.

The physical layout of the school also embodied its philosophy of informal education. Ten of the classes were located in a very large area, surrounding a central library/resource center. Book shelves and other furniture divided the classrooms from one another, but there were no high walls between classes; the arrangement was an open space, meant to encourage the interaction of classes with each other. The rest of the classes in the school were in traditional, self-contained classrooms, but had full-time access to the library/resource center. The classroom in which this study was conducted was a self-contained classroom, just outside the large area. There was a hallway outside the classroom that was not shared with any other classroom, being a connecting hallway to one of the school’s exits. This hallway was frequently used as another instructional area; hallways were commonly utilized as extensions of the classroom at Highland Park.

The Teacher

At the time of the study, Ms. Tracey Bigler was in the sixth year of her teaching career. Her teacher preparation program had emphasized informal education, the importance of talk in the classroom, and the use of literature to teach reading. She had never used a basal reading series as the basis of a reading program, but had always relied on children’s literature trade books. She had a great interest in children’s talk in the classroom; this was the chief focus of her master’s degree program. Before the study began, I knew that she was knowledgeable about children’s literature and was keenly interested in collaborating with a researcher in classroom research on children’s literary understanding. I also knew that she preferred teaching a family grouping rather than a single grade.
The Students

There were 27 students in the class when the study began; during the course of the study (after Christmas), one student's family moved, leaving 26. No new children entered the class during the study. Therefore, there was a great deal of stability in the make-up of the class during the period of data collection. Of the 27 children, 23 were of European-American ethnicity; 3 were African-American; and 1 had Native American ethnicity. Although there could be no certainty, the classroom teacher's opinion was that eight of the children had Appalachian heritage. This opinion was based on the children's speech patterns and on their comments about visiting relatives in areas of Appalachia. There were 18 first-graders (11 boys and 7 girls) and 9 second-graders (4 boys and 5 girls). All of the students' parents gave permission for their children to be involved in the study. Seven children (26 percent of the class) participated in the school's free or reduced lunch program. Nine children received remedial assistance in reading from the school tutor, the school Reading Recovery teacher, or the Early Reading Intervention teacher.

The ten students who participated in the small group and one-to-one readaloud sessions will be described in more detail in the data collection section. As well, the beginning section of chapter 4 contains a more detailed contextual description of the teacher's social-constructivist philosophy of learning; the way literature was used in the classroom; the routines that organized the school day; and the various ways in which response to literature was manifested.

Data Collection

This section contains a discussion of the roles assumed by researcher; the phases of the data collection; and the types of data collected.

The Researcher's Roles

One of the foundational assertions of the constructivist paradigm is that we cannot study a social world without being part of it (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Fine (1994) suggests that researchers must "probe how we are in relation with the
contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations" (p. 72). Qualitative researchers, then, do not have one role, but several. My role as a researcher may be conceptualized as ranging along a continuum of participation and observation (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Spradley, 1980). When reading aloud to children in small groups or in one-to-one situations, my role was what Erickson (1992, p. 10) describes as an "observant participant," because of the active involvement with children. In these cases, I was playing the part of another teacher in the class. At the other end of the continuum lies my role as a detached observer, as when I observed and made field notes as the teacher read stories aloud to the whole class. (During these whole group read alouds, the teacher would occasionally involve me in the discussion if she felt I had something to contribute; and I would occasionally enter the discussion myself. Both the teacher and I decided that my participation was a natural consequence of my being present at the read alouds, and that to refrain from any participation at all would be inconsistent with my participatory stance at other times. Nevertheless, the occasions when I did participate were infrequent.)

When I interacted with children during work-time, I tended to function in the middle of the continuum of roles, as a participant-observer. For example, I would observe and make field notes on various ways literature was reflected in the children’s writing, but I would also participate in their writing as they asked for help with spelling or asked me what I thought should happen next in a story. At these times, there was an undeniable tension between the two roles of observation and participation, as several writers have noted (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Jorgensen, 1989; Patton, 1990; Von Maanen, 1988). This tension was most visible when a child wanted some immediate help with a problem at the same time that I was concerned to make detailed field notes on something of interest in the situation. Over the course of the study, most of the children did seem to accept that I could not help them when I was writing; a few continued to insist that I play the role of a teacher and active participant.
Phases of the Data Collection

Data were collected from November 1, 1995 through May 29, 1996. The study was organized in a series of three phases. Although I visited the classroom several times during September and October, a systemized routine of classroom visitations did not begin until November 1. During Phase I, from November to mid-December, the goal was to become familiar with the school and classroom culture, the routines of the classroom, and to describe the many ways in which literature was responded to and utilized. Within this phase, there was also an increasing focus on the observation of storybook readalouds by the classroom teacher. During this phase, 13 of these storybook readalouds were observed. As well, the first teacher interview was conducted.

Phase II consisted of three sub-stages. In Phase II.a (from mid-December to the beginning of the Christmas recess), I began to audiotape readalouds by the teacher to the whole group. The teacher and I collaborated on the choice of the ten children who would be the members of the two small groups for the small group storybook readalouds I would conduct. Phase II.a also included the first (trial) small group storybook readaloud, the reading of Chicken Little (Kellogg, 1985) to the two groups of five children on December 14. Phase II.a was a period of experimentation, as the teacher and I tried out different positionings of the audiotape recorder, made a tentative choice of the children for the small groups, and decided where the small groups should meet. The first small group storybook readaloud went quite smoothly, and the children in the groups seemed to function well together; therefore, group membership did not need to change after the Christmas holiday.

Phase II.b (January and February) was the most intensive stage of data collection. During this phase, a whole group storybook readaloud was observed and audiotaped at least once every week; small group readaloud sessions were conducted twice every week; the first group of one-to-one readalouds was conducted; and there was a second interview with the teacher.

During Phase II.c (March and the first half of April), whole group storybook readalouds continued to be observed and audiotaped once every week, and the number
of small group storybook readalouds was reduced from twice every week to once every week. The reasons for this reduction were that (1) the children had established a good working relationship during Phase II.b and it was felt that this cohesiveness would continue on a reduced schedule; (2) the discussions surrounding these small group readalouds were lengthy and rich (determined by the ongoing analysis), so that there was no need for sessions to be held twice per week. Phase II.c also included another group of one-to-one readalouds.

Phase III (the latter half of April and May) included exiting procedures. The intensive audiotaping of whole group and small group storybook readalouds was discontinued; the teacher was interviewed for a third time; and there was a return to general observation in the classroom in order to re-contextualize the readaloud situation. During this time, two visits were scheduled specifically to say goodbye to the children and to celebrate my relationship with them and with the teacher. As well, a meeting was held to present preliminary findings to the staff of Highland Park School. Parents of the children in Ms. Bigler’s classroom were also invited to attend this meeting.

During the phases of the study, there were two thematic units that guided much of the work in the classroom. The first thematic unit (from Phase I to mid-way through Phase II.b in beginning February) was a genre-based unit on fairy tales and folk tales. The second thematic unit (from the second half of Phase II.b until the end of Phase III in May) was a content-based theme on "Night," including such topics as nocturnal animals, sleeping and dreaming, and the night sky. During this content-based theme, there were two genres chosen for storybook readalouds: contemporary realistic fiction and contemporary fantasy.

The three phases of the study, the types of data collected, and the classroom themes are summarized in chart form in Appendix A.

**Types of Data Collected**

The types of data collected included observational field notes of several varieties; interviews with the teacher; audiotaped storybook readalouds to the whole
group; audiotaped storybook readalouds to the two small groups; and audiotaped one-to-one storybook readalouds. A researcher log was kept in which I noted the various types of data collected in chronological order.

**Observational Field Notes**

Handwritten observational field notes were kept through the study in a series of spiral-bound notebooks. The notes were of various types. There were notes taken as I observed the day-to-day dynamics of the classroom, paying particularly attention to the literacy activities in which the children were engaged. There were notes relating to the teacher and the ways in which she managed the classroom and interacted with the children. Some notes consisted of my self-reflective comments on my procedures, the progress of the study, and my developing relationships with the teacher and the children (Richardson, 1994). Comments about the children and hypotheses about their specific learning and/or response styles were included. After the formation of the two small groups, particular attention was paid to observing the ten children who were members of these groups.

The notebooks also contained summaries of my informal conversations with the classroom (both in school and on the telephone), and a record of the member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) with the teacher. There were notes relating to the methodology I was constructing, and the ways it diverged from the methodology described in the research proposal, because qualitative research designs cannot be totally specified beforehand (Erickson, 1986; Evertson & Green, 1986). Finally, notes took the form of preliminary analysis through my recording of hunches, hypotheses, questions, and speculations about the observations I was making (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Observational notes were kept on the right side of the pages, and the left-facing side was reserved for this preliminary analysis. In all, there were over 400 pages of handwritten notes.
Interviews

Three "open-ended" interviews, combined with an "interview guide approach" (Patton, 1990, p. 287) were conducted with the classroom teacher during the course of the study. The interviews occurred near the beginning of the study (November 27), three months into the study (January 10), and near the end of the study (May 15). The purpose of these interviews was four-fold. First, I wanted to understand the teacher's philosophy of teaching, learning, and the use of literature in the classroom as a part of my effort to contextualize the children's literary understanding. Second, I wanted to be able to quote her directly and precisely when she spoke about these issues. Third, I wanted to have a record of her reflective attitudes, interpretations, and concerns about the study that would be helpful in keeping the study on track. Fourth, these interviews constituted a more formalized member check (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) than the weekly conversations, as Ms. Bigler and I shared our developing assertions (Erickson, 1986) about the emerging patterns of response and the types of literary understanding these responses indicated. The interviews were conducted during free periods of the school day or immediately after school. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed by me. The questions that guided the interviews are listed in Appendix B.

Whole Group Readaloud Sessions

In Ms. Bigler's class, stories were read aloud to children on a regular basis. The usual pattern was to read aloud in the morning and again in the afternoon. The morning readaloud usually happened as part of the beginning activities called "Morning Meeting," during which all the children were seated on the carpet of the reading area, which was partitioned off from the rest of the classroom by bookshelves. The afternoon readaloud invariably happened as the first activity for the afternoon, as the children sat in the same carpeted area. Ms. Bigler sat in a chair, holding the book so that children could see the illustrations. She encouraged a great deal of talk during the reading of the story. Her style was nondirective, and she rarely asked a direct question to which she already knew the answer. Rather, her
questions were ones that reflected a wondering or speculative stance. She rarely stopped discussion during the reading of the book, even when it had gone on for some time; it was much more common for a child to say, "Can we get on with the story now?" than for her to intervene. These features of her storybook reading style (described more fully in chapter 4) are included in this section because they became the basis for the methodological choices I made about my own storybook reading style during the small group and one-to-one readalouds: after I studied her style, I tried to emulate it. In actuality, I did not need to make major changes, because her style differed very little from the way I was accustomed to reading stories to young children.

During the reading of the story, I was seated behind the children with my notebook. I recorded nonverbal behavior and aspects of the situation that would not be reflected in the audiotape. For example, notes were made on the form and content of the visual aspects of the picturebooks that were read so as to contextualize the children’s comments about the illustrations. The bulk of my notes, however, consisted of telegraphic versions of what was said with a notation that identified the speakers. The notes were used to reconstruct the situation and add to the accuracy of the transcriptions.

A total of 35 whole group readalouds were observed. Thirteen of these sessions were readalouds that I observed during Phase I of the study, during which I made observational notes. During two other readalouds, there was a failure of the audiotaping equipment, so only observational notes were available. For the remaining 20 readalouds to the whole group, there were observational notes and transcriptions. Eight of these transcriptions were selectively transcribed; in other words, I listened to the audiotape, referred to my observational notes, and transcribed those sections of the discussion that seemed, in my informed judgement, to be the most salient. I omitted sections that seemed to deal with management, inserting only the word "[management]." In other words, the selective transcriptions omitted very little of substance in the discussions. There were therefore selective transcriptions and
observational notes for 8 whole group readalouds, and full transcriptions and
observational notes for 12 readalouds.

**Small Group Readaloud Sessions**

The decision to choose five as the number of children in the small groups was
based on the experience of researchers who had studied literature discussion groups in
the primary grades, and on the advice offered by practical guides on literature
discussion. Although these discussion groups had differed in significant ways from
the readaloud situation (for example, the discussion most often occurred after the
reading of the book or after the children had read the book themselves), it was felt
that the group dynamics would be similar. McGee (1995), drawing on her literature
discussion experience with young children, suggests groups of five to eight; Peterson
and Eeds (1990) suggest five to seven. Daniels (1994) suggests that the optimum size
is four or five. Nussbaum and Puckett (1990) describe groups of five for first grade.
After discussing these suggestions, Ms. Bigler and I also talked about the children in
her class, and decided that there would be five children in each small group.

There were several criteria for the choice of these small groups. Both the
criteria and the choice of the children were the result of a collaborative effort on the
part of Ms. Bigler and me. At this point, I was no longer involved in intensity
sampling, but in a form of representative sampling to ensure that the small groups did
not reflect an entirely different set of social dynamics than the classroom. First, we
decided that the groups should represent the make-up of the whole class in the
proportion of genders and of the number of first- and second-graders. Since there
were significantly more boys than girls, this meant that each group would have three
boys and two girls. Since there were far more first-graders (19) than second-graders
(8) in the class, this meant that, out of ten children, seven would be first-graders and
three would be second-graders. We also felt that the children should represent a
continuum of reading ability, and that a variety of ethnic groups and socio-economic
categories should be represented. Lastly, we felt that the small groups should reflect
the range of participation in storybook readalouds that existed in the large group.
Some children hardly spoke at all in the large group, and we felt that some of these children should be included in the small groups as well as those who were more voluble in the large group setting. Taken together, these criteria were meant to ensure that the children in the small groups did not represent solely the "star" responders in the whole class, and that they would be representative of the whole group in a variety of ways.

Each group consisted of two girls and three boys. Group I consisted of two second-graders and three first-graders; Group II consisted of one second-grader and four first-graders. Group I included three European-Americans, one African-American, and one Native-American; Group II included four European-Americans and one African-American. Each group included one child who, in the teacher's opinion, had Appalachian roots. In each of the groups, two of the five children participated in the school's free or reduced lunch program.

The procedure for conducting the small group readalouds was as follows. Almost invariably, the small group readalouds occurred while Ms. Bigler was reading a story to the rest of the whole group. The whole group readalouds were usually done near the beginning of the morning session and the beginning of the afternoon session. This timing ensured that the participants in the small group did not miss any of the large blocks of time called "work-time" or any of the special subjects (music, art, and physical education). It also ensured that the readalouds in the small group would be perceived by the children as simply an extension of the regular readaloud time to the whole group. The children were unobtrusively told that it was time for a storybook readaloud, and proceeded with me to the hallway just outside the classroom door. Locating the small group work in the hallway provided a somewhat quieter space for audiotaping. Working in the hallway, however, was not perceived as unusual by the children, because they were quite accustomed to working in this space as an extension of the classroom. In the hallway was a small half-circle table (approximately 3.5 feet by 2 feet), and six chairs. I sat on the straight side of the table in a chair the same size as those of the children, and the five children sat around the curved part. The purpose of this seating arrangement was to ensure that everyone
could see the book, that everyone was comfortable, and that everyone was close to
each other and to the book. Every child was able to reach out and touch the book if
he or she wished, in order to point out something in the text or illustrations.

Modelling Ms. Bigler’s procedures for reading to the whole group, I usually
chose a story, but occasionally allowed the children to choose from several books. I
attempted to read the title, half-title, dedication, and publishing information (city and
date of publication) as well as the text of the book. I stopped reading whenever the
children wished to talk, and encouraged their talk in as non-directive a manner as
possible. Like Ms. Bigler, I only rarely asked direct questions, and these questions
were open-ended, for the purpose of encouraging discussion, rather than directing the
discussion. The storybook readaloud sessions were audiotaped from the time I
showed the children the book until the readaloud ended and the children had nothing
more to say. Immediately after the children returned to the classroom, I made
whatever observational notes were necessary to record non-verbal behavior and other
aspects of the session that the audiotape would not record.

The choice of the picturebooks for the small-group readaloud sessions was the
result of collaboration between Ms. Bigler and me. During the fairytale and folktale
theme, the books for the small-group readalouds were invariably fairytale and
folktales. During the "Night" unit, the books for the small-group readalouds were
invariably contemporary realistic fiction or contemporary fantasy, but did not
necessarily have to do with the theme of night-time. Thus, the books matched the
genres, but not always the content, of the books that were used for readalouds to the
whole group during this unit of study. Another aspect of the choice of the
picturebooks for these small group readaloud sessions was the group’s interest. Two
books were read a second time to the small groups. The books for re-reading were
Chicken Little (Kellogg, 1985) and 3 Billy Goats Gruff (Dewan, 1994), which had
both provoked lively discussion during the first reading.

In all, there were 14 readalouds with each of the two groups, making a total of
28. All of these readalouds were transcribed in full. Appendix C summarizes all of
the readaloud data in all three contexts; and Appendix D lists all the picturebooks cited in this study.

One-to-One Storybook Readalouds

One-to-one storybook readaloud sessions with each of the ten children in the two small groups were conducted twice during the study. The first group of one-to-one readalouds was done during the first half of the study, in mid-January. The second group of one-to-one readalouds was done during the second half of the study, at the end of March. These readaloud sessions were conducted in a similar manner to the large group and small group readalouds. For the mid-January group, the site of the one-to-one readalouds was the hallway just outside the classroom: the same site as the small group readalouds. At the same time that children were coming individually for the one-to-one readalouds, other children were seeing Ms. Bigler individually for reading work. The reason for scheduling these two activities at the same time was so that the children would not see anything unusual or out of the ordinary about the one-to-one readaloud. For the end-of-March group of one-to-one readalouds, the site was one of the small offices used for support staff in the school. The reason for this change was a practical one: during the time scheduled for this activity, a number of children from an adjoining classroom were using the hallway space to paint a mural. By this time, however, the children were accustomed to me in the readaloud situation, and the precedent of one-to-one readalouds had been set. Therefore, this change of venue was not considered to affect the nature of the readaloud.

Like the large and small group readaloud sessions, the tone of these one-to-one readalouds was accepting and unpressured, as I attempted to encourage response without directing the course of the discussion. When each one-to-one session was finished, I made observational notes about the session regarding non-verbal behavior and other aspects of the readaloud that would not be captured on audiotape.

The choice of the books for the two one-to-one readaloud times was difficult. During the first of these times (mid-January), the class was still studying fairytales
and folktales. I wanted a picturebook that I felt would evoke a rich response, yet with ten interviews, the book could not be inordinately long. Anthony Browne’s *The Tunnel* (1989) was chosen because it contained elements from many fairytales, thereby relating to the classroom’s unit of study at that time. The text of the book was not overly long, yet its plot, structure, and frequent intertextual connections to fairytales were qualities that would be likely to elicit a good deal of talk. (This proved to be the case.) During the second group of one-to-one readalouds, the unit of study had changed to the "Night" theme; however, in the opinion of both Ms. Bigler and me, this seemed to be too restrictive. Instead, it was decided to choose another book, *Changes*, by the same author, Anthony Browne (1990), on the speculation that some children might make interesting thematic or stylistic connections between the two books, even though ten weeks had elapsed since the reading of *The Tunnel*. (This proved to be the case, as well.)

Altogether, there were 20 one-to-one readalouds, representing two sessions with each of the ten children in the two small groups. All of these one-to-one readalouds were transcribed in full.

It should be noted that the purpose of the small-group and one-to-one storybook readalouds was three-fold. First, the goal was to gather more data from a small group of children that would supplement the data gathered during readalouds to the whole group. However, the goal was not merely additional data; the *small group readalouds* enabled a form of "relational and variational" sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 185). According to Strauss and Corbin, once the data is scrutinized for individual qualities or characteristics, the researcher tries to group these individual qualities or characteristics in relational categories. Relational and variational sampling thus "focuses on uncovering and validating those relationships" discovered during initial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 1985). In other words, it was hoped that small groups would enable the tracing and tracking of these conceptual relationships because the smaller number of participants would lessen the number of conversational trajectories, thus making the relationships stand out more clearly. In the case of the *one-to-one readalouds*, the nature of the supplemental data was the
result of what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as "discriminate" sampling (p. 187), a type of sampling in which "a researcher chooses the sites, persons, and documents that will maximize opportunities for verifying the story line, relationships between categories, and for filling in poorly developed categories" (p. 187). In this case, my developing "story line" included the hypothesis that some children might have identifiable individual response styles. The one-to-one readalouds therefore represented a type of discriminate sampling because they maximized the opportunities for verifying this hypothesis.

The second goal (of both the small group and one-to-one readalouds) was to enable children who might not speak so readily in a large group to express themselves, so that their responses could also inform the construction of a view of literary understanding. It was thought that such children’s responses might represent the result of a great deal of active listening and the linking together of a great many ideas from the story and the discussion, and that the literary understanding represented by these responses might therefore be of a high level. The small group and one-to-one settings might enable these types of responses, which might be lost or remain unvoiced in the large group setting.

The third goal was to gather data in three nested social contexts. For this third purpose, the goal was not to compare large group, small group, and one-to-one situations, but rather to assure that the ultimate description of these children’s literary understanding was as complete and rich as possible.

Transcriptions

Although I had considered hiring a professional to transcribe the audiotaped data, I quickly discovered that this would have been unsatisfactory. The natural background noise of the classroom or the hallway; the immaturity or indistinct quality of several of the children’s voices and speech patterns; their tendency to talk over each other at the same time; the fast pace of the discussions; and the situation-specific comments about a particular illustration or section of text that would be puzzling or opaque to someone who had not been present and who had not seen the book that was
being discussed: all of these factors, taken together, made it imperative that I be the transcriber of my own data. In actuality, this proved to be quite advantageous. First, in the act of transcribing, I became more familiar with the data, subjecting it to a line by line "replay" in my mind and recreating the situation. Second, since transcription is an aspect of data reduction and data analysis (Atkinson & Heritage, 1994), I had control over the decisions about these activities. Third, I was able to make interpretive observations as I transcribed; I was able easily to create footnotes with the word-processing program I was using (WordPerfect 6.0) to record these interpretations while at the same time keeping them separate from the transcribed data themselves. Fourth, I could interleave my observational field notes on nonverbal behavior as I transcribed, allowing a more complete recreation. In the great majority of cases, the transcriptions were made on the same day as the audiotape was made, or the day following.

Genishi (1982) observes that the level of detail in transcriptions must be related to the level and type of analysis the researcher intends. Following this principle, I devised a transcription system that would enable me to analyze the conceptual content of the children’s and teacher’s utterances that indicated aspects of literary understanding. A very finely-grained transcription system, therefore, was not necessary. The transcription system for this study eclectically utilizes elements from the conventions devised by Allen (1994); Dyson (1989); and Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974), and adds several original elements; it is not adapted from any single system. The transcripts were printed with a generous margin on the left side of the page, in order to facilitate hand-coding. A chart of the complete transcription system appears in Appendix E and a sample transcript appears in Appendix F.

The transcription system needed not only to represent the children’s and teacher’s talk, but also to indicate the portion of the book that was being examined at any point. The pages in picturebooks are rarely numbered, so the page turns were indicated by bracketed indications, such as "[half-title page]," "[dedication page]," or "[endpages]" (see Appendix G for a glossary of picturebook terminology). Following Bader’s (1976) and Moebius’s (1986) convention for identifying the pages of the text,
the term "opening" was utilized. The "first opening," for example, indica-
facing pages on which the text of the story began.

Data Analysis

By discussing data analysis in a separate section, I do not intend to imply that analysis was completely separate from collection, nor that analysis chronologically followed collection of all the data in a linear fashion. Analysis began with the first piece of data (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988); in qualitative research, data collection and data analysis have a transactive relationship, affecting each other (Spradley, 1980), so that to delay analysis until all the data was collected would be to rob the method of a great deal of its power. At the same time, there is a sense in which data collection does precede analysis, because research that draws on ethnographic techniques deals with "unstructured’ data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 248, emphasis mine). In other words, the researcher does not begin with a set of categories or codes that shape the data as they are being collected, but rather attempts to ensure that codes and categories will emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994), even though it is acknowledged that the researcher’s mind is not and cannot be a totally blank slate (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), and that there is no truly neutral stance toward data (Erickson, 1992). One of the principal tenets of the constructivist research paradigm is that "findings," the results of analysis, are created and constructed: "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111, emphasis in the original). I would qualify this statement with the observation that "creation" in this context refers to the construction of findings from the raw material of the data, and not to creation ex nihilo.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) state that "each phase of data analysis entails data reduction as the reams of collected data are brought into manageable chunks, and
interpretation as the researcher brings meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants in the study” (p. 113, emphasis in the original). In this study, observational field notes were used extensively in reconstructing the social context of the literacy environment of the classroom, and served to heighten the recreation of the storybook readaloud situations; the notes also served the purpose of cross-validating the other data sources in the process of the triangulation of emerging patterns (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990). However, the bulk of the data analyzed for this study were in the form of transcripts of the audiotaped storybook readalouds and transcripts of the formal teacher interviews. Audiotapes are a form of technological data reduction insofar as they make a record of only one (auditory) aspect of the situation. The decision to audiotape flowed from the research questions, which focused the study on the talk surrounding storybook readalouds. It has already been noted that transcription is also a form of data reduction. More specifically, transcription reduces the speech of the participants to the flat and uninflected form of silent written language. Transcription also reduces the dynamic interchange of conversation to a basically linear, line by line format. It is true that transcription can indicate points at which the participants talk at the same time (and the transcription system devised for this study includes a conventional notation for this); still, the energy and the excitement of the conversation can be indicated only indirectly. Transcription, however, is necessary before further analysis and data reduction can proceed. In this case, the transcripts did retain a sense of the ideas and concepts the children were developing about picturebooks, and these indications of literary understanding (the particular interest of this study) are therefore represented in the transcriptions, albeit in a fossilized and static form.

The analytic process from this point on followed Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) description of coding procedures. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that coding involves three phases: "open coding," "axial coding," and "selective coding." The three types of coding involve higher and higher levels of generalization and the specification of broader patterns of relationships.
Preliminaries to Open Coding

As already noted, the transcripts for this study included interpretive footnotes; these footnotes comprised the first hunches, speculations, and tentative interpretations of the data. The observational field notes also included such speculations and tentative interpretations relating to the 13 storybook readalouds I had observed during Phase I of the study, as well as to the children's literary conversations with each other during other classroom activities. These two sources were guides to the first step in systematically describing and interpreting the data, in what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as "open coding:" "the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 62). The other (implicit) guide in this systematic description and interpretation was, of course, the theoretical background implied by the research questions, and my broader background in literary theory, picturebook theory, and research having to do with children's response to literature.

Another preliminary task before the systematic and close examination of the data could proceed was to decide what the unit of analysis would be. For this study, where the focus was on the children's and teachers' talk and where the bulk of the data was transcribed conversations, it seemed logical that the unit of analysis should be the conversational turn, defined as the utterance that occurred until someone else spoke. Naturally, there were cases when children spoke at the same time, and children interrupted each other as the conversation became animated; even so, it was still possible to analyze by conversational turns. At times, however, a conversational turn seemed to have two clear and distinct topics or units of meaning, and in these cases, the turn was coded twice. This happened very rarely during the children's conversational turns, but was not uncommon during the teacher's talk.

Open Coding

The close examination of the data began when three transcripts of readalouds to the whole group were finished, and continued as transcripts of more readalouds were added. The goal was to name and describe what was happening in each
conversational turn: to name and describe what seemed to be the essence of the turn. For example, during the reading of James Marshall’s *Red Riding Hood* (1987) on December 11, 1995, the following conversational turn occurred:

Jackie: In *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, there’s three cats there and three cats here [pointing to the illustration on the first opening of *Red Riding Hood*].

I noted that Jackie seemed to be making a connection and a comparative link between the text being read and another text, also by James Marshall. The essence of this statement seemed to be that it was an intertextual connection, and it was so noted. As I continued to read the transcript, I noted several instances where the children seemed to be connecting the book being read aloud to another book, warranting the same description. In this way, a preliminary concept was slowly emerging from the open coding. These codes soon began to proliferate, until I had many, in an unorganized hodgepodge. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) wryly comment,

"In the course of our research, we may come up with dozens, even hundreds of conceptual labels. . . . these concepts also have to be grouped, like with like, otherwise we would wind up in a plight similar to that of the old lady in the shoe with so many children (concepts) she wouldn’t know what to do (and that is exactly how students sometimes feel at this point)" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 65).

Thus began the process of categorizing. Continuing to explore the concept of "intertextual links," I began to notice that the connections were sometimes made to the illustrations in two books, and sometimes to the plot or characters; this was an opportunity to begin to form the idea of a general category with sub-categories beneath it. When I happened upon conversational turns that seemed to indicate connections to films, cartoons, and videos, I found that I could broaden the category to include a wider definition of "texts" to that of "cultural products," including these connections in the same category of intertextual connections. Thus, open coding proceeded by the naming of categories, by splitting the categories into sub-categories, and by broadening a given category through redefining the concept that the category seemed to embody. Data analysis involved taking apart (as the Greek root for the word "analysis" implies); but the process also involved synthesis, or putting together.
This, of course, is only one example of the decisions surrounding one descriptive category that emerged during open coding. "Intertextual connections" eventually became an important category in the other phases of coding, as well. However, some descriptive codes did not survive for long because they were either too specific or too general to be of use; these codes "emerged" only to submerge again. For example, my theoretical knowledge of the concept of "gap-filling" (Iser, 1978) made me sensitive to the conversational turns which seemed to indicate that the children were using their background knowledge to fill in gaps in the text or the illustrations. However, after I excitedly coded several transcripts with this descriptor, I began to understand that virtually everything the children said could be construed as gap-filling in some way, and this code was discarded.

Very early in the process of open coding, I began to understand that it would be necessary to formulate two sets of codes—for teacher talk and the children’s talk. Although the teacher was a participant in the discussion, she also seemed to be making conversational moves that reflected her position as an instructional leader. One of the research questions for the study dealt with the ways in which adults or expert others scaffolded the children’s developing literary understanding; this system of coding allowed the addressing of part of that question.

During open coding (and during all phases of coding), the process is recursive and iterative (Patton, 1990). Codes are "tried out" on the data, and they may seem to work for a time, like the code of gap-filling. When it is clear that the data do not support these conceptualizations, however, the researcher must go must go back to the beginning and recode, as new hypotheses are tested. Thus, one of the essential qualities of the process is its recursive nature. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state, "There is a constant interplay between proposing and checking. This back and forth movement is what makes our theory grounded!" (p. 111). This movement is also known as the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and this aspect of the process may be conceived as occurring on a horizontal linear axis, with already-coded data at the left-hand side and newly-coded data at the
right-hand side. Coding proceeds from left to right until there is some anomaly or mismatch, and then loops around to begin again at the left-hand side.

A second essential quality of the process is the interplay between part-to-whole reasoning (induction) and whole-to-part reasoning (deduction) that is usually termed "analytic induction" (Erickson, 1986; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Richards and Richards (1994) write of this process as "data-theory bootstrapping," suggesting the constant interplay between proposing hypotheses (theories) and checking them against the data. This aspect of the process may be conceived of as a vertical linear axis, with induction at the bottom and deduction at the top. In other words, the process involves inductively reasoning from part to whole ("bottom-up") and then deductively reasoning from whole to part ("top-down") in a cycle.

Transcripts Chosen for In-Depth Analysis

Open coding continued throughout data collection, but not all transcripts were coded completely. Rather, transcripts were read and coded selectively, with particular attention to conversational turns and clusters of conversational turns that represented new concepts that could contribute to the formation of new categories. After all the data were collected, it was necessary to choose a certain number of the transcripts for in-depth analysis and the next phases of coding. Only full transcriptions were chosen for in-depth analysis; the rest of the transcripted data were used in a supplementary way. As noted above, there were 20 transcripts of whole group readalouds; and of these 20, 12 were full transcriptions. There were 28 full transcripts of the small group readalouds, and 20 full transcripts of the one-to-one readalouds.

A rationale was developed for the choice of transcripts for in-depth analysis. There were several aspects to this rationale. First, it was desirable to represent data from the beginning, middle, and end of the study. Second, data from each of the large group, small group, and one-to-one contexts needed to be included. Third, one of the research questions dealt with the possible differences in response and literary understanding across various genres. Therefore, data that represented the three
genres of fairy- and folktales; contemporary realistic fiction; and contemporary fantasy were included. Within the genre of fairy- and folktales, it was desirable to choose a set of variants of the same tale, so that comparisons and connections between the variants could be more easily drawn. Fourth, transcripts needed to be included that would allow the analysis of books that were reread and discussed.

On the basis of this rationale, transcripts of 9 whole group readalouds; 16 small group readalouds; and all 20 one-to-one readalouds were chosen (Figure 3.2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nov--Dec</th>
<th>Jan-Feb</th>
<th>Mar-Apr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Group</strong></td>
<td>Chicken Little (Kellogg, 1985)</td>
<td>3 Billy Goats Gruff (Dewan, 1994)</td>
<td>Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2 readalouds of each book)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chicken Little (rereading)</td>
<td>Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Billy Goats Gruff (rereading)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Piggybook (Browne, 1986)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One-to-One</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Tunnel (Browne, 1989)</td>
<td>Changes (Browne, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10 readalouds of each book)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2. Readalouds Chosen for In-Depth Analysis

**Axial Coding**

After the choice of transcripts for in-depth analysis, another level of coding could proceed. This type of coding, "axial coding," is described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as the process of putting data together in larger categories by "making
connections between a category and its sub-categories" (p. 97). Strauss and Corbin explain that, "Here, we are not talking about the relating of several main categories to form an overall theoretical formulation. . . but the development of what will eventually become one of several main categories (p. 97). Axial coding, in other words, is the intermediate stage between open coding and the final coding phase (called "selective coding") in which the major categories that have been developed are related to each other in a theoretical synthesis.

As the transcripts chosen for in-depth analysis were re-coded, an attempt was made to combine concepts and categories into a smaller number of broader categories that would nevertheless be reflective of the concepts and categories that these broader categories subsumed. Like opening coding, this process involved the vertical process of alternating between inductive and deductive reasoning as well as the horizontal process of going back to refine and change the codings in an iterative and recursive manner.

The result of the axial coding was the development of five broad categories that were descriptive of the children's responses and literary understanding, and five broad categories that were descriptive of the adults' part in the readalouds. These conceptual categories are discussed in detail in chapter 4.

**Selective Coding**

At this point, with a manageable number of broad conceptual categories, what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as "selective coding" could begin. In this stage, the most difficult interpretive work begins, because the researcher's task is to try to relate the broad conceptual categories to each other in the attempt to perceive patterns and relationships that involve these categories. In the case of this study, selective coding involved a dual task. First, the categories of the children's responses needed to be related to each other. Second, the categories of the children's responses and the adults' talk also needed to be related.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), this process results in the identification and naming of the "core category" that subsumes all the others.
Here, you might first look at your list of categories to see if one of them is abstract enough to encompass all that has been described in the story. Sometimes you already have such a category. It now becomes the core category. At other times no single category seems broad enough to say it all, so what do you do then? The answer is you must give the central phenomenon a name (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 120-121).

In this study, the "core category" or central phenomenon was *literary understanding*, specifically the literary understanding of picturebooks by young children.

Explaining the relationships and patterns constructed as the result of this analytical process is the goal of chapter 4, because these constitute the findings of the study. As well, the arrangement and interrelationships of the categories formed the basis for the grounded theory of literary understanding that is set out in chapter 5.

It should be noted that open, axial, and selective coding involved successive stages of ever-broader conceptualizations and the perception of ever more inclusive patterns in the data. However, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out, this process was not totally linear. At each stage, dissonance or mismatch resulted in going back to previous stages of coding in order to reconfigure the coding system so that the data once again supported the conceptual interpretations that were being made. It is in this fashion that the interpretive description that resulted was grounded in the data themselves.

**Issues of Credibility, Trustworthiness, and Generalizability**

This section is divided into two parts: (1) criteria for credibility and trustworthiness, and (2) the case study approach. The criteria for credibility and trustworthiness are those developed by Lincoln and Guba (1989). A rationale for the case study approach is included because any study that deals with one classroom must explain in what ways the information gained from this one situation can be useful in other situations. In other words, the issue of generalizability to other situations must be explored.
Criteria for Trustworthiness and Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1989) have developed a set of "parallel criteria" for assuring that qualitative research satisfies the need for validity and reliability. The criteria are termed "parallel" because "they are intended to parallel the rigor criteria that have been used within the conventional paradigm [quantitative, positivistic research] for many years" (p. 233). If these criteria are met, readers of the research have assurance that the research has been conducted properly, according to the standards set by the field.

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time. Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest that "overlapping methods" of data collection and theoretical perspectives will ensure the dependability of a study. In this study, there were a number of sources for data that overlapped. There were three contexts in which children heard stories read aloud: the whole-group situation; the small group situation, and the one-to-one situation. All of these sources overlapped one another in the sense that they nested, as it were, within the contexts of one another. The theoretical perspective of the social constructivism, explained in chapter 2, was used in describing the ways in which the children built their own concept of literary understanding through talk with the teacher and with each other in the social situation of the classroom. The constructivist research paradigm was used to frame the methodology of the study. Therefore, there was an overlap between the theoretical orientation to the phenomenon being researched and the theoretical orientation to the methods used in researching this phenomenon.

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the integrity of the interpretations of the findings "are rooted in the data themselves" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). In this study, the use of the constant comparative method of iterative and recursive data analysis assured that the findings were data-based rather than the product of the pre-determined stances of the researcher. The conclusions of the study are data-driven, in two senses. First, the findings and conclusions were derived through analysis of the data. Second, the findings and conclusions are supported by numerous examples drawn from the data.
Credibility was assured in several ways: by (1) prolonged and persistent engagement; (2) peer debriefing; (3) negative case analysis; (4) progressive subjectivity; (5) member checks; and (6) triangulation of various types of data.

(1) This study lasted seven months, and the researcher was in the classroom for three days per week. An initial six weeks of observation of the entire school day ensured an understanding of the classroom context. The accumulated data include audiotapes and transcripts of 20 readaloud sessions to the whole class; 28 readaloud sessions to two small groups of five children each; and 20 readaloud sessions to individual children, for a total of 68 transcripts. In addition, there were observational notes on 15 readalouds to the whole group. Therefore, there were notes or transcripts and notes of 83 readaloud sessions (see Appendix C). Data also included three formal interviews with the teacher, at the beginning, middle, and end of the study, and over 400 pages of field notes and observational notes. These factors assured that the researcher’s engagement was prolonged and persistent.

(2) The researcher chose a fellow doctoral student in the field of literacy to be a "peer debriefer" for the study. This doctoral student was also engaged in research in children’s response to and understanding of literature. The researcher discussed data gathering methods, possible interpretations, and findings with this person. According to Kvaale (1995), talking with other members of the community of scholars is a matter of "communicative validity," which "involves testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue" (p. 11). Of course, the researcher’s dissertation committee also became peer debriefers for the researcher during the course of the study; and one additional faculty member assisted the researcher in analysis as well.

(3) To assure that the researcher was not imposing his predetermined patterns on the data, special attention was paid to negative case analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Patton, 1990), sometimes referred to as "discrepant case analysis:" cases or situations that do not "fit" the emerging interpretive codes and categories. This type of data gives us surprises and stretches our knowledge and understanding because it challenges our pre-conceived ideas and assumptions. Negative case analysis was an important topic raised with peer-debriefers. Discrepant
case analysis was employed at the level of individual children's statements, and was a major factor in the emergence of an entirely unexpected category of response, Category 5 of the "performative," described chapter 4.

(4) "No inquirer engages in an inquiry with a blank mind, a tabula rasa" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 238). Self-reflective comments (Ball, 1990) were noted in the field note journals; this allowed me to continuously reflect on my own process of research. This self-reflection is called "progressive subjectivity" by Guba and Lincoln (1989). The logged notebook entries provided "systematized reflexivity" that "gives some indication of how a priori theory has been changed by the logic of the data" (Lather, 1986, p. 67).

(5) Member checks are the "single most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 239). In this study, a particular effort was made to involve the classroom teacher as a collaborator in the entire research process (Shulman, 1990), so that research was done "with, not on" the teacher (Nofke, 1990). Erikson (1986) suggests that member checks with the participants in the research provide a "stereoscopic social vision." Formal interviews with the teacher were conducted three times during the study; more importantly, the teacher and the researcher discussed the research on a daily and weekly basis. The teacher's own self-reflections, along with the researcher's self-reflective notes, provided documentation of these member checks. The notes also document the differing interpretive perspectives we took, and the ways in which the teacher's perspectives influenced my own interpretations.

(6) Triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) involves the use of multiple sources of different types of data that cross-validate each other. These multiple sources also yield richer description, providing what Richardson (1994) calls "crystalization": a "deepened, complex, thoroughly partial [given that any description is necessarily partial], understanding of the topic" (p. 522). The several sources of data listed in the Data Collection section of this chapter provide a variety for both comparison and rich description.
The Case Study Approach and the Issue of Generalizability

This study is a case study insofar as it deals with one classroom and a specific group of children. Qualitative research designs that involve small numbers of people, classrooms, or other single "units of integrity" (Dyson, 1994) must deal with the questions of validity and generalizability. From the perspective of positivistic, quantitative research, an "N of 1" (whether one classroom, one teacher, or one child) is problematic. Yin (1989) comments, "The case study has long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods" (p. 10). Yin's solution to the problem of external validity and reliability is to ensure that the case study is replicatable (pp. 41, 57); yet it is questionable whether any case study, let alone the type of study reported here, is capable of being repeated. In his explanation of the term "thick description," Geertz (1973) states that the extensive, finely detailed description of the study is not intended to give readers the ability to repeat the study, but rather to supply enough information so that readers can themselves determine what is applicable to another situation. Given the particularities in which case study research is embedded by its very nature--a particular classroom or child, examined by a particular researcher with his/her own assumptions and predispositions, for example--it would seem that we cannot expect that this unique situation would be repeatable. Nevertheless, Stake (1978) argues that, if the reading experience of the study is richly textured, readers will easily relate and integrate these reading experiences with their past. Stake (1988) suggests that "The case study researcher does not guarantee that the reader will have an equal share in the interpretation, but it is common for responsibility to be shared between case study researcher and reader" (p. 262). Thus, in the interpretivist paradigm, generalizability is partly the responsibility of the reader, since only the reader can decide whether the information reported in the study is applicable to his or her own particular situation.

Stake (1978, 1988, 1994) and Donmoyer (1990) have reflected on the case study approach from within the constructivist paradigm. Donmoyer suggests that the case study, far from being repeatable, is valuable precisely because it provides unique information: "uniqueness is an asset rather than a liability. . .[W]hen we are
interested in expanding cognitive structures, the outlier is prized, for the outlier has
great heuristic value" (p. 194). Donmoyer's basis for making this argument is the
theoretical framework of cognition and learning provided by schema theory
(Rumelhart & Ortony, 1977; Anderson, 1984), which makes use of Piaget's (1977,
1985) concepts of assimilation and accommodation. New information, from the
schema-theoretic standpoint, is prized because it expands and refines cognitive
structures by the process of accommodation: "reshaping...to accommodate novel
aspects of what is being perceived" (Donmoyer, 1990, p. 191).

In a modification of schema theory, Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz,
Samarapungavan, and Boerger (1978) have argued that learning proceeds by building
up knowledge across cases, and that we learn best "by a method of case-based
presentations which treats a content domain as a landscape that is explored by 'criss-
crossing' it in many directions, by reexamining each case 'site' in the varying
contexts of different neighboring cases, and by using a variety of abstract dimensions
for comparing cases" (p. 178). This is the basic premise of cognitive flexibility
theory (Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 1994). While Spiro et al are using
the word "case" to refer to any item of knowledge, this view of building up
knowledge across cases is germane to the case study approach, because the case study
provides us with an intimate knowledge of one situation that can then be combined
with knowledge of other situations to build up our knowledge across many situations.
Stake (1994) refers to this process as the "epistemology of the particular" (p. 240);
and this view would privilege the individual case as the foundational material of
thought, as the classical "inductive" approach suggests. A similar point is made by
Erickson (1986), who asserts that interpretive research is concerned with the
formulation of "concrete universals." Mishler (1990) argues that individual cases act
as "exemplars," and have a critical role in the development of understanding. The
field of law employs the case study method for training practitioners (Fish, 1994); this
practice provides further evidence that we can build up knowledge across individual
cases, and that authorities in this highly disciplined field believe that individual and
particularized knowledge is generalizable in this manner.

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A final issue in generalizability and the case study (related to the "epistemology of the particular" discussed above) is the basic question of how broad and expansive our generalizations can and should be. Where is the line between the particular and the universal, and how is the distance between them measured? Is this distance a quantum leap, or is it a graduated continuum? How general does knowledge have to be before it counts as knowledge? Contemporary researchers and theorists are becoming dubious about the idea of making extremely broad generalizations. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that "the search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific solutions" (p. 11). Clifford Geertz (1983) argues that knowledge is "always ineluctably local" and situated (p. 4). Accordingly, such theory-building as exists in this dissertation is a "small-scale" theory of literary understanding: a theory of the literary understanding of picture storybooks by young children, rather than a grand narrative of literary understanding for every age and every type of text. In addition to legitimizing the case study approach, which deals with the particular and the local, this view of the localized nature of both theory and knowledge suggests an even greater role for the case study in the knowledge production of the future.

To conclude, the issue of generalizability is inextricably interwoven with epistemology. One epistemological view valorizes the general, arguing that knowledge is only knowledge if it is universal, applying to all situations. Another view valorizes the specific, arguing that knowledge is only valid if it is grounded in particulars. The case study approach subscribes to this latter formulation, arguing that we can only build up knowledge across cases if we first have many detailed cases to study and to relate to each other, as cognitive flexibility theory suggests. The ability to generalize results from this building up of knowledge across cases.
Endnotes for Chapter 3

1. Although a few writers, for example Schwandt (1994) attempt to distinguish between the terms "constructivist" and "interpretivist," the great majority of researchers and methodological theorists use them interchangeably. This study uses the terms interchangeably.

2. None of these names is a pseudonym. Permission was given by the Supervisor for Personnel of the South-Western City School District and the principal of Highland Park Elementary School to identify these institutions in this way. Ms. Tracey Bigler requested that her real name be used, as well. The issue of anonymity versus visibility arises frequently in educational research because of the increasing importance of collaboration and the designation of teachers as "co-researchers" (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1993; McDonald, 1986; Shulman, 1989). Shulman (1990) states that "many teachers no longer wish to remain hidden behind a cloak of anonymity; they prefer to be credited and recognized for their contributions" (p. 11). This was Ms. Bigler's position. She expressed interest in the possibility of co-writing articles based on this study for publication in educational journals, and felt that if she were to be named as a co-author of such articles, her name should appear in the dissertation study. The only pseudonyms in the study are those used for the children, in order to preserve confidentiality and their anonymity.

3. The source of all the information in this and the preceding paragraph was the statistical records in the Personnel Office of the South-Western City School District. This information was shared by Dr. Robert Rinehart, the Supervisor of Personnel, in a telephone conversation on June 5, 1996.

4. It should be noted that the preliminary analysis included a sixth category for children’s talk. This category might be characterized as "conversational glue" or comments that would universally be considered extraneous to the discussion. Some examples of "conversational glue" were:

   Scoot over, Sally.
   It's my turn next.
   Can I see the book?

Some examples of extraneous comments were:

   Can I use the washroom?
   Did you hear me burp?
   Want to see my tattoo?
   Kiss my butt.

Neither of these types of comments was considered conceptually relevant to the children's literary understanding, and so the category was not utilized in further analysis.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents an analysis of the construction of literary understanding made by children in a first- and second grade classroom as they listened to picture storybooks read aloud. It begins with a contextualization of this literary understanding by considering the teacher’s philosophy of instruction and the philosophy of the school; classroom physical arrangement; the workshop atmosphere of the classroom; classroom routines, particularly those relating to literary; the use of literature as it permeated the curriculum of this classroom; and evidence of response and literary understanding in situations other than the storybook readalouds.

After this discussion, the remainder of the chapter is organized to present the findings of the study in terms of the three research questions which guided it.

The first research question was:

What are the verbal indications that children are developing literary understanding of picturebooks during storybook readalouds? What is the nature of this literary understanding, and how does it proceed for selected children?

The section which deals with the findings related to this research question is by far the most extensive, since it concerns the central construct of the study, that of literary understanding. In answering this question, the codes and categories which emerged during the data analysis described in chapter 3 will be presented. The focus will be on what each category enabled the children to do or to know in terms of literary understanding, and on what type of literary competence each category represents. As well, there will be a discussion of other relational patterns including eight ways in
which the children made use of intertextual connections; the types of predictive and explanatory hypotheses generated by the children; and several ways they used illustrations in making meaning. This section also includes a presentation of findings which provide evidence for the existence of individual or "signature" styles of response; the individual response styles of four children are traced. These response styles, in turn, indicated that, although the children’s literary understanding had many common elements, at least some children had added a unique perspective.

The second research question was:

How do "expert others" (adults and more knowledgeable peers) scaffold the children's developing literary understanding during picture storybook readalouds?

The section which deals with this question presents patterns of relationships between children's and adults' talk during storybook readalouds. It traces the ways in which children scaffolded each others' developing understanding, as well as how adults functioned in the scaffolding process, thus providing evidence for the social construction of meaning. The section also provides evidence for the ways in which knowledge of various literary elements was enabled, as well as how these elements were added to the "literary tool kit" of the children.

The third research question was:

How does the type of text (in terms of genre, narrative complexity, or the relative "openness" of the text to varying interpretations) appear to affect the nature of the discussion and response during storybook readalouds?

The section which deals with this research question contains a discussion of the textual influences on response and literary understanding, including the personal responses associated with contemporary realistic fiction; the social issues and problems discussed by the children; the ways in which various qualities of narratives influenced response; and the role of textual variants in building up children's knowledge across cases.

The chapter is thus organized in the following manner:

Contextualization: The Literacy Environment of the Classroom

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The Construction of Literary Understanding (Question 1)

Summary of conceptual categories for children’s talk
Examples of the five conceptual categories
Category 1 for children’s talk: The analytical
Category 2 for children’s talk: The intertextual
Category 3 for children’s talk: The personal
Category 4 for children’s talk: The transparent
Category 5 for children’s talk: The performative
Other relational patterns
Children’s individual response styles

Expert Others as Scaffolders and Enablers of Literary Understanding (Question 2)

Summary of conceptual categories for adults’ talk
Examples of the five conceptual categories
Scaffolding provided by teacher talk in Category 1: Reader
Scaffolding provided by teacher talk in Category 2: Manager/encourager
Scaffolding provided by teacher talk in Category 3: Clarifier/prober
Scaffolding provided by teacher talk in Category 4: Wonderer/speculator
Scaffolding provided by teacher talk in Category 5: Extender/refiner
Children’s enabling of their peers’ response and understanding

Textual Influences on Response and Literary Understanding (Question 3)

Contemporary realistic fiction and personal response
Discussion of social issues and problems
Qualities of narrative and associated responses
The role of textual variants in building up knowledge across cases

Contextualization: The Literacy Environment of the Classroom

School and Teacher Philosophy

According to its Visitors’ Handbook, the philosophy of schooling at Highland Park Elementary School emphasized both the social nature of learning and the
importance of providing meaningful experiences for children. The philosophy was one of active involvement by learners in an inquiry approach which was "centered around general themes which include many concepts from the curriculum areas" (Visitors’ Handbook, n.d., p. 1). In describing "work time," the blocks of time in the morning and afternoon devoted to class and individual projects, the Handbook states,

Work time is a busy, active, community time, in which talking, constructing, and moving about is natural and appropriate. The students are involved in previously planned and spontaneous activities. Socialization is developed, creative efforts are shared, and independence is experienced (Visitors’ Handbook, p. 2).

The school’s philosophy of literacy learning is stated in the Student Progress Report Parent Handbook (1995), which states that literacy includes the four areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, and that these are best learned in situations where they are integrated rather than being separated into discrete sets of competencies. The goal of the school is "to create life-long readers and writers who can read and write not only for specific purposes, but also for enjoyment" (p. 6). This document also takes the view that "children do not become literate through work in bits and pieces, but only through experiences that are meaningful to them and occur in positive, supportive environments" (Parent Handbook, p. 6). Accordingly, teachers at Highland Park used trade books of children’s literature to teach reading; this was the case in every classroom during the time of the study, and had been the tradition of the school for over twenty years.

Ms. Tracey Bigler, the first- and second-grade teacher in whose classroom the study was conducted, had developed a philosophy of teaching and learning which paralleled that of the school. Her undergraduate teacher education was with the Ohio State University EPIC program (Educational Program for Integrated Curriculum/Classrooms), which had been specifically designed to highlight the importance of active learning in meaningful situations, a thematic, integrated approach to teaching, and children’s literature:
My preparation was based around the British Primary model of teaching, informal education; and so we believed that children should have a variety of experience, active experiences, experiences with literature, experiences with life; that learning is just as much social as it is cognitive (Teacher Interview, November 27, 1995).

One of the three schools in which she taught as an intern was Highland Park; the two other schools also had a philosophy of informal schooling and used trade books to teach reading. Ms. Bigler felt that her teacher training in EPIC had demonstrated the active learning process by the ways in which the instructors taught the undergraduate students. In other words, the instructors did not teach by the transmission model of learning (with the teacher very much in control and the students passively writing notes), but rather actively involved the students in constructing their own learning.

In her master’s degree work at Ohio State, which she completed during the time of the study, Ms. Bigler pursued an interest in children’s talk in the classroom. She contrasted the view of schooling as the transmission of knowledge with view that was instantiated in her classroom:

We believe differently here. We believe that children construct their own learning. And as adults, one of the most natural ways we do that is through talk. We exchange ideas, we negotiate meaning. So we provide for that in our environment: we set up a classroom, first of all, which provides places for children to talk, and things for children to talk about (Teacher Interview, November 27, 1995).

Ms. Bigler stated that her literacy program was based on children’s literature. She felt that the exposure to good books assisted children’s development in writing as well as in reading: "Children are writing their own stories right from the start, in a variety of forms. . . and they’re making those connections with literature right from the beginning" (Teacher Interview, November 27, 1995). She encouraged children to use a variety of strategies in reading: grapho-phonemic information, and information from the context and pictures: "We want them to gain meaning from the pictures, and we want them connecting graphophonemics to illustration using visual cues, auditory cues, all of the different things together, rather than focusing on one or two aspects" (Teacher Interview, November 27, 1995). Ms. Bigler also stated that she
wanted the children to be able to share these various strategies with each other, to "be able to talk about them and articulate their understanding of them, and not just to use them, so that they can help others in the room" (Teacher Interview, November 27, 1995).

Ms. Bigler had never used a basal reading series to teach reading; rather, her formal training and her student teaching experiences had emphasized the use of literature. She felt that although contemporary basal readers were improving, "quality literature" was far superior. She felt that such literature provided memorable language that children would be attracted by and would easily remember. She felt that trade books "model very strong writing" and that the literary connections between stories--their "intertextuality"--also helped children to develop a schema which facilitated reading: "So I see literature as really a tower that can build for learning, I mean it sets a basis. It allows the children to connect, just like talk does to background experiences, to bring that into the classroom" (Teacher Interview, November 27, 1995).

The Classroom

During the year of the study, Ms. Bigler used one of the self-contained classrooms, immediately outside the large space where the library/resource area was surrounded by open space classrooms. During the previous year, her class had been located in the open area. These moves from the open space arrangement to a self-contained classroom were common among teachers at Highland Park, and did not reflect any philosophical change; teachers taught in the same way in both arrangements, feeling that an informal classroom was more a matter of teaching philosophy than of a particular physical setting. Nevertheless, the physical arrangement of Ms. Bigler's classroom seemed to assist in the implementation of her philosophy of teaching, as well as of her views of literacy teaching and learning.

The classroom was approximately 30 feet by 35 feet, was divided into a number of areas by bookshelves, storage cabinets, and other dividers, and was entirely carpeted. (Appendix H provides a schematic map of the room.) The overall
impression was one of plentitude. The "housekeeping" area contained several bins of clothing for dress-up, including dresses, shoes, ties, scarves, and hats; a toy sink, stove, and refrigerator, with imitation fruit and vegetables, pots and pans; a telephone, notepad, and various pens, pencils, and markers; and an array of puppets. There were also various medical props, including a stethoscope, plastic splints, bandages, and imitation syringes. The mathematics area included many manipulatives for measuring, counting and sorting: several kinds of blocks and Cuisinaire rods, balance scales, meter- and yardsticks, beans, clothespins, popsicle sticks, and plastic disks, all arranged in labeled containers. The math area also contained large blocks for building. The science area contained collections of rocks, crystals, fossils, bones, and other realia; graph paper and record sheets for observations and notes; and a globe. The chief attractions of this area, however, were live animals. There were two aquaria with various types of fish, live plants, and a frog; two large turtles (kept in a sandbox) and a three-foot iguana named Icarus.

The art area was quite extensive and well-stocked. An inventory of this area on December 14, 1995 resulted in the following list:

- Boxes of paper scraps
- Straws
- Pompons
- Buttons
- Glue sticks
- Watercolors
- Sponges
- Containers for water
- Egg cartons for mixing paint
- Three sizes of brushes (approximately 50)
- Two sizes of scissors
- Paper towels
- Painting smocks
- Cotton Balls
- Tempera paint in containers
- Paint blocks
- Nine colors of construction paper
- Two types of pastels (chalk and oil)
- Colored pencils
- Crayons
- Markers
- Scraps of cloths
- Tissue paper in many colors
- Yarn
- Pipe cleaners
- Feathers
All these materials were stored on shelves in labelled containers, and the children had full access to them during worktime. There were also two cut-down kitchen counters on which to work; the children also frequently used the hallway for large-sized paintings. In addition, in the hallway just outside the classroom was a contrivance holding eight rolls of different colors of butcher paper (36 inches wide) which were also available for art projects. Although there was no sink in the classroom, the boys’ and girls’ washrooms were just across the hall, and were used for washing brushes and the like.

The classroom could be fairly described as a print-rich space. Books were stored on shelves which delineated the "meeting area," which was used for whole group instruction, "morning meeting," and storybook readalouds. Ms. Bigler estimated that there were approximately 700 books in the classroom’s permanent collection. "Little books" which were easy to read were stored in labelled bins with numbers corresponding to the levels of difficulty to which they had been assigned by the system of Reading Recovery® (levels 1 through 25). Full-sized picturebooks were arranged alphabetically by the author’s last name. Strips of various colors of library tape indicated whether a book was fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or a chapter book. The collection of books in the school’s resource center was also available to the children at any time. In addition, Ms. Bigler made extensive use of the public library, usually borrowing between 50 and 75 books for each thematic unit in order to supplement what was already there. My field notes indicate that, over the course of the study, over 250 additional books were made available in this way. Books having to do in some way with the thematic unit were highlighted by being displayed on shelving designed to show their front covers. Other literacy materials included many large charts with poems and chants, as well as various games and frequently changing displays of children’s writing.

The working spaces in the classroom included seven individual desks and seven tables (of various shapes) which each seated three or four children. The floor and the hallway were also used extensively. Clipboards were available for every child who wished to have a mobile workspace, and there was an ample supply of
pencils, erasers, staplers, cellophane tape, and various types of paper. There were three computers with tables of their own, used mainly to practice mathematics skills.

This physical arrangement was one in which active learning and collaboration among the children could easily take place. Lindfors (1991) writes of the classroom as a workshop, in which the various spaces contain the tools and materials the children need in order to pursue projects which they have decided to do. Ms. Bigler's classroom could also be described as a workshop, with a similar emphasis on individual and collaborative activities in an environment which facilitated the use of many concrete materials.

**Classroom Schedule and Routines**

The ebb and flow of all these individual and collaborative activities was given structure by the classroom schedule and by the routines and rituals which guided them. In general, the schedule was characterized by the allowance of large blocks of time for integrated thematic work rather than short periods devoted to specific curricular areas. The class day usually began with a silent reading period, during which children chose books to read alone or in quiet pairs; or with a brief work time that carried over the activities of the previous day. At this time, a child often helped with the attendance list and the lunch count list. After this, there was a scheduled "morning meeting" for the whole class, during which the teacher made announcements and outlined what was going to happen on that school day. Morning meeting usually included a storybook which was read aloud by the teacher; occasionally there was a large group lesson in reading or mathematics. At this time, the teacher would direct children to certain activities (for example, writing in their journals or finishing a project which had already been started). After morning meeting, there was a large block of time of at least one and one half hours called "worktime," during which group and individual projects were accomplished. Children wrote in their journals, did research on topics related to the theme being studied, published books, worked on plays or other presentations for the class, and engaged in other kinds of projects which related to the theme. These activities were
done both individually and in small groups which were formed by the children themselves. During this time, the teacher met with small groups of children for reading instruction or conferenced with individual children. There was no recess at mid-morning, and worktime usually lasted until the scheduled clean-up period just before lunch. After lunch, there was an afternoon meeting with the whole group which almost always included another storybook readaloud session. Children who wanted to share their writing or their art projects usually did so during this meeting. Following this, there was another worktime and another cleanup period just before dismissal. The afternoon was the time for "special" subjects: physical education, library time, art, and music; thus, the afternoon was often less integrated than the morning. There was often a second silent reading time in the afternoon, though the time of this activity varied.

The beginning morning schedule was routinized to the point that, as they came into the classroom, children would automatically choose a book and begin to read. They knew that quiet talking and sharing were permissible. During any given morning, more than half of the children chose books which were related to the thematic unit being studied, though this was never a requirement or even a suggestion on the part of the teacher. Children who particularly enjoyed writing were also given permission to write during this time. The teacher often heard individual children read at this time, logging anecdotal records on an index card for each child, and noting particular strategies used by the child.

The routines of morning meeting included the children sitting cross-legged on the carpet in the meeting area, facing the teacher; listening to the teacher and each other; and being expected to bring nothing to the meeting which might distract themselves or others. Although there was no formal "show and tell" or "sharing" time, children often wanted to share an event which had happened at home. When the monthly Scholastic book order arrived, or when new books were brought from the public library, the teacher would always take the time to talk about each book briefly, so that the children were aware of the new books in the classroom and the new books their classmates had purchased. Children frequently brought items from home which
related to the thematic unit being studied; books relating to the topic were the most commonly shared objects.

During worktime, the children worked on both the form and content of projects. For example, they might share an idea with the teacher about representing a character in a fairytale. The teacher would encourage them to decide what artistic medium or media would be the most suitable for their representation. If a child wrote a story, the teacher would talk with the child about the format in which the story would be best displayed. If a child had done a tally of favorite fairytale characters, the teacher and the child would talk about how to construct a visual representation of the tally which would be most attractive and clear. These conversations were an expected part of project choice and planning, and the children learned to come prepared with suggestions of their own.

The routinized nature of the storybook readaloud situation was particularly clear. The teacher had chosen the book ahead of time, often telling children what would be read on the following day. The children’s opinions, requests, and preferences were taken into consideration when the teacher chose a book. The children were expected to be seated on the carpet, as they were for all morning meeting activities. The teacher sat in a chair and held the book to one side, making sure the children could see the illustrations. There was never any "lead-in" talk about what the children should know before the book was read. The teacher always began with reading the title and the name of the author (and illustrator) on the front cover. If the author or illustrator were already known to the children, they would volunteer information about what other books that author or illustrator had produced. Comments about artistic media used in the production of the book were expected and encouraged by the teacher. No part of the book was left out; the endpages, title page, and dedication page received as much scrutiny as any page of the text. The teacher always read the publishing information on the title page, and frequently referred to the date the book was published by reading the fine print and finding the copyright date.
Ms. Bigler usually read a story during both the morning and the afternoon. Her records indicated that, during the entire school year in which the study was conducted, she documented 256 storybook readalouds; because she had sometimes not recorded which book she had read, she estimated that there had been an additional 60 readalouds, making a total of well over 300 books she had read to the children.

Ms. Bigler’s storybook reading style was characterized by a high degree of dramatic reading. She took on the voices of various characters, and emphasized any sound effects which were in the story. She encouraged children to talk at any point during the story. Her manner was receptive and accepting of the children’s comments, not directive or evaluative. She was willing to pursue conversational tangents with the children, particularly if the children were making connections between the story and their own lives. She did not expect children to raise their hands before speaking unless several children were talking at once, and she encouraged children to respond to the point that another child was making. Occasionally, the conversation went on so long that the storyline was in danger of being lost; at this juncture, it was usually one of the children who said, "Can we get on with the story now?" Thus it was usually the children, not the teacher, who redirected attention to the story. At the end of the story, Ms. Bigler always invited comments, questions, and responses. This invitation was invariably met with a show of hands, as children vied for the chance to respond. Any response, on whatever level, was accepted. Children usually began by asking to "see the book." If there was a second or third copy of the book in the classroom, these copies were circulated as well. Children often had a particular illustration to comment upon, or a particular part of the text to question. A child would take the book, look for the part of the story on which she wanted to comment, and hold the book so that everyone could see it while the comment was being made. If a child was taking more than a few moments to find the part of the story which was of interest, Ms. Bigler asked if anyone had a response which could be made without physically handling the book. There were always far fewer comments made without the book than with it, however. The children frequently made connections between the content or the illustrational
style of the book and other books. In these cases, children attempted to find the book they were linking to the readaloud book; this was facilitated by the location of the readaloud sessions in the meeting area, which was surrounded by bookshelves. These intertextual links often resulted in the spontaneous comparison of two or more books; it was a common practice for a child to ask a friend to stand with her so that both books could be shown together. Children were encouraged to express agreement or disagreement with a comment; the teacher and the children worked hard at disagreeing without being hurtful. Disruptive children were asked to sit outside the meeting area, and could return to the group when they felt they were ready to participate. Discussion after the story was read almost invariably took a shorter time than the discussion during the reading of the story. After the discussion, the book was always made available to children who wanted to revisit it or discuss it with friends.

The Potential of Literature Throughout the School Day

Literature permeated the school day and was connected to many of the projects and activities in the classroom. Children used the narrative models of books to scaffold their own writing in various ways. Many children used books with clear repetitive patterns as models for their own efforts. For example, Trent wrote a book modelled on Dear Zoo (Campbell, 1983), in which a child writes to the zoo to send a pet. None of the zoo’s choices please the child, and the book is structured around the refrain, "He was too ___ [grumpy, big, small, etc.]. I sent him back." The opening lines of Trent’s book, entitled "Dear Haunted House," closely modelled this structure: "I wrote to a haunted house to send me a friend. They sent me a ghost. He was too scary. I sent him back." Trent’s book represents an understanding of the basic narrative structure of Dear Zoo at a level which allowed him to produce his own story with a parallel structure. On a more sophisticated level, hearing a non-traditional variant of The Three Little Pigs entitled The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig (Trivizas, 1993) inspired Trudy to write a "twisted tale" (the children’s and teacher’s term) of her own called "The Three Goldilocks’ and the Big Bad
Bear." After a reading of *The Jolly Postman* (Ahlberg, 1986), which includes imaginative letters written by and to several fairytale characters, more than half the children in the class responded to the teacher's invitation to write letters to their own favorite fairytale characters. The teacher arranged for children in fourth and fifth grade classes to respond to these letters by taking on the character's role, and the children eagerly checked every morning for these replies in the mailbox which they had constructed during worktime.

The children were alive to the possibility of being authors themselves because of their experiences with books. On 11/15, there was the following exchange among Mickey, Peggy, and Sally, showing the children's awareness both of how edited collections are produced and how they could engage in the same activity:

**Mickey:** Maybe we can study poems after we study fairytales and everybody makes a poem and then we put it in a hard-back book—one book.

**Peggy:** Like the *Big Book of Tell Me Why*.

**Sally:** Or like *The Dragons are Singing Tonight* or *The Butterfly Jar*.

(Field notes, 11/15/95)

Occasionally, a single episode from a book would provide the catalyst for a creative speech act which would later be turned into written form. During the reading of *Strega Nona* (dePaola, 1975) on 11/15, at the point when an excess of pasta from an unstoppable magic pasta pot threatens to overwhelm the town, Robert began singing, "Here comes pasta, here comes pasta, right down the street," to the tune of "Here comes Santa Claus." Later that afternoon, Robert wrote further lyrics to this song, with a group of children who offered suggestions for revision.

Both spontaneous and planned drama were often rooted in literature. On 11/22, Charles took on the role of the peddler in a favorite book of his, *Caps for Sale* (Slobodkina, 1947), by racing over to the housekeeping area, snatching a man's hat, and spontaneously interacting with various groups of children, saying, "Do you want to buy a cap? Caps for sale, fifty cents a cap." Knowing the plot of the story, some
of the children played along, pretending to be the monkeys which steal the peddler’s caps.

The many planned dramatic productions, usually involving three to five children, relied almost exclusively on books for their inspiration. On 11/20, Robert, Trudy, May, Peggy, and Nicole began a Three Bears drama by dressing appropriately with props from the housekeeping area, writing a list of characters, and beginning a script. Since there were only four characters in the traditional Three Bears story and five children involved, they invented the part of Goldilocks’ mother, who would appear at the beginning and end of the story to warn and chastise Goldilocks for going into the forest. Although this production never reached the performance stage, it was an example of the ways in which children used books as a platform for their own creativity, rather than simply imitating a text. More polished productions of favorite books, like the performances of Grandpa, Grandpa (Cowley, 1980) on 11/20 and The Little Red Hen (Galdone, 1973) on 11/22, involved elaborate painted backgrounds, puppets, and props.

Intrigued by illustrational style and media, the children often modelled their own artwork on particular features of books. Kristin wanted a poster she was making to have borders “like [the well known illustrator] Jan Brett’s.” Sally felt that watercolor, in the style of illustrator Jerry Pinkney, would be the appropriate way to paint her country scene. When he made his large stuffed figure of Goldilocks, Kenny gave his representation the striped stockings and missing teeth of Paul Galdone’s (1985) illustrations of Goldilocks for The Three Bears.

Books also provided the basis for philosophical discussion and new ideas. After glancing at the title of a Thanksgiving poem, "If Turkeys Thought," Mickey sparked a spontaneous exchange worthy of Chomsky or Vygotsky:

Mickey: Turkeys think?

Teacher: Do we know if they can?

Alice: If you can’t talk, you can’t think.
Teacher: Alice, I was just talking about this to someone last week, about whether talking helps you think. I think you're way ahead of me. (Field notes, 11/27/95)

Even the minor technical details of books fascinated the children and found a way into their activities. After observing me making a list of classroom books and finding the copyright date by locating the miniscule circled "c" (©), Alice wanted to help me, and I gave her a brief explanation of what a copyright meant. At the end of the day, she ran to me with her math paper, which had a small circled "c" at the bottom of the page, and said, "I did it, so I copyrighted it" (Field notes, 11/27/95).

Finally, books entered the children's everyday conversation, and they sometimes playfully spoke about storybook characters as if they were additional members of the class. When Joey's mother surreptitiously left a bunch of balloons in the classroom for his birthday, Charles smilingly wondered whether Goldilocks had brought them from her birthday party in The Jolly Postman (Ahlberg, 1986).

All these examples have been purposely drawn from observations made during just four school days (in late November) in order to show the intensity of the influence of literature in this classroom. Like Hickman (1981), I found that the children responded to literature in a great many ways: through art, drama, creative play, music, and in the everyday conversations of the classroom.

The Construction of Literary Understanding

In this section, the children's construction of literary understanding is explored through a discussion of the conceptual categories which emerged from the analysis of their talk during storybook readalouds in large groups, small groups, and in one-to-one situations. The interrelationships and patterns which manifested themselves are discussed. The goal is to build up a descriptive interpretation of what constituted literary understanding for these children, and to also build up a portrait of several children's individual response styles which indicate the unique aspects of their various literary understandings. These were the concerns of the first research question for the study.
The categories which described the talk of the teachers (Ms. Bigler and me) are discussed in the section dealing with the ways in which the teachers scaffolded and enabled the children's developing literary understanding, and are the concern of the second research question, which is dealt with in a separate section.

**Summary of Conceptual Categories for Children’s Talk**

The qualitative analysis of transcripts enabled the building of five major categories into which the children's responses could be placed. These conceptual categories emerged through the use of the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), specifically the three-stage process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding ( Strauss & Corbin, 1990) described in chapter 3. Following a brief description of the five categories and examples of the categories from a readaloud transcript, each category will treated more extensively.

Category 1, **The Analytical**, included all responses which seemed to be dealing with the text as an opportunity to construct narrative meaning. Children stayed within the text (conceived as a union of visual and verbal sign systems) and made comments which reflected an analytical stance. For example, they discussed the media used to produce the illustrations; the structure and meaning of the verbal text; the illustration sequence; the ways in which the verbal text and pictures related to each other; conventional visual semiotic codes; and the traditional elements of narrative (setting, characters, plot, and theme), as well as narrative techniques such as foreshadowing. Also included in this category were responses which dealt with the book as a made object or cultural product, as well as discussion about the relationship between fiction and reality. This category was by far the largest, comprising approximately 73% of the children's conversational turns in the coded data.

Category 2, **The Intertextual**, reflected the children's abilities to relate the text being read aloud to other cultural texts and products: other books; the work of other artists and illustrators, movies, videos, advertisements, TV programs, or the writing or art of classmates. In this category, the text seemed to be viewed in relation to other texts, serving as an element in the matrix of interrelated cultural texts. This
category comprised approximately 10% of the children's conversational turns in the coded data.

Category 3, **The Personal**, included responses indicating that the children were connecting the text to their own personal lives. There were two directions to these responses: from their lives to the text, and from the text to their own lives. A life-to-text connection was one in which the children utilized some experience from their own lives to understand or illuminate the text being read aloud. A text-to-life connection was one in which the children used the text in order to understand or illuminate something in their own lives. The responses in this category were thus essentially personal in nature, and the text seemed to act as a stimulus for a personal connection. This category comprised approximately 10% of the children's conversational turns in the coded data.

Category 4, **The Transparent**, included responses which suggested that the children had entered the narrative world of the story and had become one with it. The world of the text, for the moment, seemed to be identical with and transparent to the children's world. Verbal responses in this category were rare, providing only tantalizing glimpses of what was probably happening inside the children's minds. This category comprised approximately only 2% of the children's conversational turns in the coded data.

Category 5, **The Performative**, included responses which indicated that the children were entering the world of the text in order to manipulate or steer it toward their own purposes. In Category 4, the children were, so to speak, manipulated by the text; in Category 5, responses suggested that the text was being manipulated by the children. The text seemed to function as a platform for the children's own creativity or imagination; or the text became a playground for a carnivalesque romp. The children took some situation or event in the book and used it as the basis for a flight of their own imagination, a type of playful performance² or "signifying" (Gates, 1988). This category comprised approximately 5% of the children's conversational turns in the coded data.

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Taken together, these five categories and the patterns of their interrelationships describe what constituted literary understanding for this group of children as suggested by their verbal responses: what they (and their teacher) had constructed as the appropriate ways of displaying literary competence. The children analyzed the text; linked the text with other texts and cultural products; formed relationships between the text and their own lives; entered the world of the text and allowed it (momentarily) to become their world; and used the text as a platform for their own creativity.

The frequencies and percentages for the five categories of children's talk during all the readalouds are summarized in the following chart (Figure 4.1). (Frequencies and percentages of the categories of children's talk for each readaloud in the large group, small group, and one-to-one situations appear in charts in Appendix I.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 The Analytical</th>
<th>Category 2 The Intertextual</th>
<th>Category 3 The Personal</th>
<th>Category 4 The Transparent</th>
<th>Category 5 The Performative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3048</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1. Frequencies and percentages of coding categories for children's talk in all coded data.

**Examples of the Five Codes**

The following vignette is an excerpt from the transcript (dated 3/22/96) of one of the small group readalouds of *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991), the story of an African American girl who wants to be Peter Pan in her school play. Some of her classmates discourage her, claiming that she can't be Peter Pan because she is a girl, and because she is black. Grace's grandmother, however, takes Grace to the ballet to
see an African American ballerina dance the lead role in *Romeo and Juliet*. The text of the book (which I read) is in **bold** font, the numbers of the codes are in brackets, and the conversational turns are numbered, beginning with 100. The term "opening" indicates that a page has been turned, and refers to the sequence of double-page spreads, with the "first opening" designated as the double spread on which the text of the story begins. (This designation is necessary because the pages in picturebooks are rarely numbered.) The bracketed opening designation includes a description of the illustrations for that double page spread. Julie, Sally, Gordon, and Terry are the child participants. Charles, the fifth child in this small group (designated as Group 1), was absent for this readaloud.

[tenth opening; right-hand page shows Grace in eight different dancing poses]

100 Larry: [reading; text of story in bold font] *After the ballet Grace played the part of Juliet, dancing around her room in her imaginary tutu. I can be anything I want, she thought.*


103 [5] Terry: Ballet, ballet! [singing and moving his body to and fro]

104 Larry: Why do you suppose there are so many pictures of Grace?

105 [1] Sally: Because they want to:

106 [1] Julie: She's practicing all of her moves:

107 [1] Sally: They want to show how she moves.

108 [1] Gordon: This one's the same as this one [pointing to one picture at the top of the page and one at the bottom]. Oh, no, not exactly.

109 Larry: Similar, yeah.

[eleventh opening; illustration shows Grace dancing while her classmates watch]

*On Monday the class met for auditions to choose who was best for each part. When it was Grace's turn to be Peter, she knew exactly what to do*
and all the words to say—she had been Peter Pan all weekend. She took a
deep breath and imagined herself flying. When it was time to vote, the
class chose Raj to be Captain Hook and Natalie to be Wendy. There was
no doubt who would be Peter Pan. Everyone voted for Grace. "You were
fantastic!" whispered Natalie.

110 [5] Gordon: "Grace, oh Grace, you were great!" [high falsetto voice]

111 [3] Terry: I’ve got a secret to tell you, Mr. Sipe, but don’t tell anybody
else. [speaking in a low voice] I like to play ballet at home.

112 Larry: Oh, that’s nice, ballet is fun.

[twelfth opening; left-hand illustration shows Grace as Peter Pan, dancing in a
pale green costume, while the right-hand illustration shows the faces of Grace,
her mother, and grandmother]

113 [2] Sally: That doesn’t look like any Peter Pan I’ve seen.


115 Larry: The play was a big success and Grace was an amazing Peter
Pan. After it was all over, she said, "I feel as if I could fly all the way
home!"

116 [5] ?: [high whistling sound in a falling pitch, like an airplane]

117 [1] Gordon: [frustrated] Why don’t they put arrows on who’s Nana and
who’s not?

118 [1] Sally: You don’t need to, because Mama looks younger, and Nana’s
older [pointing to right and then left figure above Grace]

119 Larry: Do you think that the kids in the classroom changed their minds
about who could be Peter Pan?

120 [5] Terry: Yeah, I want to be Peter Pan, please pleaseeeese!

121 [1] Sally: Because Grace put her mind to it, I guess, and she, and she
got chosen. 

(Amazing Grace, Group 1, 3/22/96)

This excerpt was chosen because it provides examples of each of the five
categories of the children’s talk within a small number of conversational turns. At
105, 106, 107, 108, 117, 118, and 121, the children are focused in various ways within the text, intent on analyzing and interpreting it. At 105, 106, and 107, the responses of Sally and Julie are answers to my question about the multiple images of Grace on the page. Sally and Julie are interpreting these images as indications of Grace’s movements as she dances. At 108, Gordon questions whether two of the images are identical, deciding that they are slightly different. He is responding to details of the illustration. At 117 and 118, Gordon and Sally have a conversational exchange which identifies characters in the illustration. At 121, Sally makes a generalizing or quasi-thematic statement which summarizes a great deal of the story: Grace "put her mind to it," and achieved her goal. All of these responses are examples of Category 1, The Analytical, and most function primarily to make narrative meaning from the text and pictures. All are focused within the text and interpretive in intent.

At 113 and 114, Sally and Terry make implicit comparisons between the image of Grace as Peter Pan and other cultural products. Although it is not clear whether Sally is referring to a movie, a play, or other illustrated books, she is obviously making a comparison with several other "texts," in the broad sense of that word. Terry’s intertextual link is a bit more explicit; later in the transcript, he repeats his observation that Grace looks like the Joker, adding "I hate Batman." So we know that this link is to the appearance of the character of the Joker in the television or movie version of Batman or possibly a comic book. These two responses are examples of Category 2, The Intertextual.

At 102 and 111, Julie and Terry make connections between the text and their own lives. Julie remembers that her sister had studied ballet, and Terry shyly reveals that he likes to pretend to be a ballet dancer at home. These responses are examples of Category 3, The Personal.

At 101, Gordon’s comment ("Oh, yeah, yeah,") suggests that he is in the world of the text, and that he is talking back to it. Grace has just thought, "I can be anything I want," and Gordon replies pessimistically. The fact that he speaks under
his breath suggests that this is an automatic response which is not intended for an audience. It is an example of a response which was coded as Category 4, The Transparent. For the moment, Gordon’s world and the world of the text are identical. Another way of conceptualizing this is to use the metaphor of transparency: Gordon has mapped or transposed his world on the world of the text, and made his world transparent to the text world.

At 103, 110, 116, and 120, Terry and Gordon’s responses are examples of Category 5, The Performative. They are using the text as a platform for their own expressive creativity. Terry’s singing response at 103 ("Ballet, ballet!"), while swaying his body back and forth, is a miniature sprezzatura performance. At 110, Gordon takes on the role of the story character Natalie, speaking in the high falsetto voice in which boys often imitate girls. At 116, a child I could not identify provides sound effects for Grace’s exuberant feeling that she could "fly all the way home." At 120, Terry comically inserts himself into the story, pleading, "I want to be Peter Pan, pleecease." These responses, in various ways, manipulate the story and use it as a springboard for a performance.

This excerpt provides examples of each of the five categories of children’s talk during storybook readalouds. In the following sections, each category is given in-depth consideration, with an emphasis on what the category reveals about the children’s implicit definition of literary understanding.

**Category 1 for Children’s Talk: The Analytical**

In chapter 3, it was stated that Category 1 of the children’s talk was built up from a large number of codes and sub-codes. Since approximately 73% of the children’s conversational turns occurred within Category 1, it was useful to undertake another level of finer analysis and recoding which would further clarify the various types of responses within this category. This more finely-grained analysis resulted in five subcategories for Category 1:

1.1 The book as made object or cultural product
1.2 The language of the text
1.3 Illustrations
1.4 Making narrative meaning
1.5 The relationship between fiction and reality

A list of the subcodes for each of these subcategories is shown in Appendix 1.

In subcategory 1.1 (The book as made object or cultural product), the children discussed the author and the illustrator as the makers of the book, questioning their decisions and choices. A commonly heard question began, "I wonder why the illustrator [or author]..." Evaluations of an author's or illustrator's work, such as Charles's appreciative comment upon seeing the front cover of Chicken Little (Kellogg, 1985)—"Steven Kellogg, he gettin' right good!"—were also included in this subcategory (Transcript of Small Group readaloud of Chicken Little, 12/14/95). The children also discussed the awards or medals the book had won. The catalyst for this type of discussion was usually the silver or gold Caldecott medallion on the cover of books which had been designated Caldecott honor books (silver) or had won the Caldecott Award (gold) for the year in which they were published. Talk about the publishing information (date of publishing, versions of the book in hard cover binding or paperback, and the mechanics of editing and publishing) was also included in this subcategory. Responses within this subcategory comprised approximately 8% of Category 1, and approximately 5% of all the coded data (in all categories).

Examples of subcategory 1.1 include the following, all excerpted from the transcript of the readaloud of Little Red Riding Hood (Hyman, 1983) to the whole group on 1/23/96. Most of the examples for the other subcategories of Category 1 are also drawn from this transcript.

[Teacher shows the front cover, which has the silver Caldecott medallion.]

Peggy: It got a Caldecott Honor. [Award talk]

??: Yeah, a silver. [Award talk]

Kenny: It's second best. [Award talk]

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Teacher: Yes, if the medal is silver it means it was a Caldecott Honor, like Peggy said. If the medal is gold, it means it was the number one. So it’s a Caldecott Honor book; that means its illustrations are considered some of the very best illustrations in that year in a picturebook.

Mickey: What year was it illustrated? [Publishing talk]

Teacher: Where could I find that out?

Mickey: In the back, in the copyrighting. [Publishing talk]

... [Title page. On the right-hand page is the title and publishing information; on the left-hand page, an illustration of a little girl in a red cape, sitting on a bench beside her house, reading a book. The book she is reading is Little Red Riding Hood, and it is just possible to see that the book she is holding in her hands has the same front cover as the book we, as readers, are holding in our hands.]

Teacher: It was her favorite story, she drew a picture of herself as Red Riding Hood reading it.

Gordon: She, um, probably, um, she’s probably reading the same book. She probably read the book after she got done with it. After she got done writing it. [Author/illustrator talk]

Teacher: She probably read her book after she got done writing it?

Mickey: They probably got done, when they were all done with the book, they probably sent it back to her so she could look at it. [Author/illustrator talk and publishing talk]

In these excerpts, the children are talking about the medal which was awarded to the book; about the book as an object which is made by other people (the author and the illustrator); and about the process of publishing it. For the children, then, one aspect of literary understanding was knowledge about how books were made and the people who made them.
In subcategory 1.2 (The language of the text), children displayed an interest in or awareness of the visual features of print. This curiosity and interest were natural in emerging readers, and also led to attempts to read the text. Also included in this subcategory were occasions when the children imitated the language of the story by repeating it, questioned the meaning of a word or phrase, provided suggestions for alternative wording, described or evaluated the language of the story, or attempted to prove a point they were making by referring to the specific language of the text. All of these responses were grouped in this subcategory because they suggested a careful focus on the language of the text itself. Responses within this subcategory comprised approximately 6% of Category 1, (or approximately 4% of all the coded data).

Examples of subcategory 1.2 (all drawn from the transcript of the Hyman version of Red Riding Hood) include the following:

[First opening]
Teacher: [reading] **One day the grandmother sewed a red velvet cloak with a hood, and gave it to Elisabeth for her birthday. It looked so pretty, and she liked it so much, that she would never wear anything else, and therefore everyone called her Little Red Riding Hood.**

Trudy: But she doesn’t ride anything.

Charles: What about "hood"? The last one’s "hood." She got a hood on.

Peggy: Maybe it’s a hood for riding horses, or a bike or horses.

Teacher: That’s interesting; sometimes they would wear capes like that when they rode horses.

In this excerpt, the children are questioning the meaning of the word "riding" in the story, and together with the teacher, reach the conclusion that "riding" is a modifier of "hood," so that it is a hood used for riding. The children sometimes suggested alternative wording for the story, as the next vignette demonstrates:

Teacher: [reading] "**You’ll have to lift the latch and let yourself in, dear,**" the grandmother called out. "**I’m feeling too weak to get out of bed.**"
Peggy: She could have said, "feeling too nauseous."

These examples for this subcategory demonstrate that, for the children, literary understanding included a close examination of the specific language an author had chosen to use in a story.

In subcategory 1.3 (Illustrations), the children’s responses indicated an analytic approach to the illustrations. They discussed the artistic medium or media which may have been used to produce the illustration. They described the arrangement of the illustration or the illustration sequence, by referring to double-page spreads, borders, or the physical arrangement of the words and the pictures on the page opening. They constructed semiotic significance for various illustrational conventions and codes, such as the code of color, conventions for portraying movement or shadows, and the portrayal of illusional space through perspective and point of view. They also made comparisons across illustrations and described the details or general background of illustrations. Responses within this subcategory comprised approximately 31% of Category 1 (or approximately 23% of all the coded data).

Examples of subcategory 1.3 (drawn from the Hyman Red Riding Hood transcript) include the following:

Krissy: On the inside of the endpages, there’s a card-board.

Teacher: There’s a what?

??: A border!

Mickey: I think she means a border. [illustration layout and arrangement]

Gordon: It’s on, all over, on all the pages. [comparison across illustrations]

Teacher: Yes. Did you guys happen to notice what color was selected for the endpages?

??: Red.
Krissy: I know why they put red there.

Teacher: May, why did they select red?

May: 'Cause it's Little Red Riding Hood, and her cape is red. [Semiotic significance of color]

For the children, an important part of the literary understanding of picturebooks was an appreciative comprehension of the form and content of the illustrations, and in learning the language of visual analysis which both enabled and expressed this understanding. This analytical approach to illustrations is discussed further in a section below.

In subcategory 1.4 (Making narrative meaning), the children described, evaluated, speculated, or made inferences about the actions or characters or other plot events; predicted the plot of the story; or provided alternative suggestions for the plot. They made comments about the structure of the story, comments which involved several incidents or episodes, and also made thematic or quasi-thematic statements about the story. They questioned the text, in an effort to understand what was happening in the narrative. They described or wondered about the external characteristics of characters: their appearance, location, identity, or their relationships with each other. The basis for these comments was almost invariably the information provided by the illustrations. The children also described or wondered about the internal characteristics of characters: their feelings, thoughts, personalities, or capabilities. They used the illustrations to interpret the verbal text of the story, and the verbal text of the story to interpret the illustrations. The children employed specific pieces of their general background knowledge for interpretive purposes; attempted to interpret events or objects symbolically; and made general evaluative comments about the story. The responses in this subcategory comprised approximately 55% of Category 1 (or about 40% of all the coded data). Comprehension of the various aspects of plot development was clearly of prime importance in the children's developing literary understanding.
This subcategory is complex, representing a variety of ways in which the children made narrative meaning. Several ways in which the children made use of the interpretive impulse are discussed in separate sections below. The following examples are intended to give a concrete sense of the category, rather than exhaustively instantiating it.

Structural comments by the children indicated that they could step back from the particular episode or illustration which was being discussed at the time and adopt a more inclusive perspective. The common element of "threes" in fairy- and folktales is an example of a structural feature which was familiar to the children. This feature was so familiar to Kenny that he insisted that his own written story (which adapted *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*) conform to the pattern in even minor details. As he wrote about the "snapping" bridge which the goats crossed, he commented, "We have to put in three 'snaps' because it's a folktale" (Field notes, 12/5/96). During the reading of James Marshall's (1988) version of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, Sean noted that the illustrator had included many patterns of three, including three toy blocks for Baby Bear (11/20/95). During the readaloud of *The Three Bears* (Galdone, 1985), Gordon stated that "It keeps on repeating itself after a few pages. The print copies itself" (11/17/95). During a rereading of *The Napping House* (Wood, 1984), the children made several general statements about the structure of this book, which is a cumulative tale. They noticed that "it gets smaller and smaller" because each of the successive characters is smaller than the one before, but also that each page contains "more and more" text. A unidentified child summarized, "The words go from small to big, and the animals go from big to small" (*The Napping House*, 4/15/96).

The children invested a great deal of energy in piecing together the actions of the plot and in understanding the cause and effect relationships involved. During the reading of Hyman's version of Red Riding Hood, the teacher suggested that the wolf wanted Red Riding Hood for supper. Krissy agreed, commenting "'cause he was so hungry," but disagreed about the meal: "No, *breakfast*, 'cause they just woke up." In this case, Krissy was correct; in this version of the story, Red Riding Hood's
mother sends her on her way "early in the morning," and the clock in grandmother's house indicates that the wolf is caught and killed well before noon.

A good example of the children's use of prediction is Charles' comment after the children noticed that a black cat is following Red Riding Hood or appears close by her in all the illustrations:

Charles: The cat must be there, whenever, the cat, whenever Red Riding Hood's at the house, and like the wolf, eats the grandma, that cat'll go on back and say Meowww to her mom, and her mom call hunter, to the hunter.

Charles predicts that the cat will be involved in the rescue of Red Riding Hood and her grandmother; this is indeed the case in this version of the story, although the cat meows to the hunter directly, rather than going back to Red Riding Hood's mother.

The children also made alternative suggestions for the plot. At the point in the Red Riding Hood story when Red Riding Hood first speaks to the wolf in the forest, Sally felt that "She should have ignored him." Gordon disagreed, feeling that this strategy would not have worked:

Gordon: No, he wants answers.

Charles: He'd probably say, "Answer me, or I'll chop you to bits."

In subcategory 1.5 (The relationship between fiction and reality), the children grappled with the various ways in which the story (both the verbal and visual texts) related to what they understood as "real life." The responses in this subcategory comprised approximately 2% of Category 1 (or about 1% of all the coded data).

Examples of this subcategory include Charles' speculation that the wolf must not have chewed when he swallowed Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, because otherwise they would not have had whole bodies when the hunter cut the wolf open and saved them. This is an application of real-life eating to the eating that happens in the story. When Krissy questioned, "Was Red Riding Hood a real people?" she was also wrestling with the relationship of the story to reality. This question launched a
discussion about the origins of folktales (reminiscent of the rationalist explanations for the ancient myths), which included the speculation that perhaps real children were eaten by wolves, and that the story may have been an attempt to warn children of the dangers of going into the forest alone.

The aspect of the children's literary understanding that is highlighted by this subcategory is their awareness that reality and story are not categories which are hermetically sealed off from one another, but that interact in complex ways. The children's discernment of the relationship between the story world and the real world (and their grappling with the intricacies of that relationship) is explored in greater detail during the discussion of individual response styles and in a separate section. For Sally, one of the children whose response style is discussed, this concern seemed to be paramount.

In all these subcategories of Category 1, the children stayed within the story and tried to make sense of it and interpret it by bringing several different strategies to bear. They also considered the storybook as a made object; paid close attention to the language of the text; analyzed the form and content of the illustrations; and attempted to relate the story to reality. The type of literary understanding represented by these responses was a "close reading" of the text.

Category 2 for Children's Talk: The Intertextual

When the children were functioning in Category 2, they shifted their focus from within the text to its relationship with other texts they knew. The word "text" in this sense refers to any other cultural product involving language and/or visual art: a television program, a video or movie, the work of other classmates, and even (in one instance) a T-shirt. They contextualized, placing the text at hand in a conceptual matrix of related texts. These intertextual links were hermeneutic in intent: the children used them to interpret the story. The children forged three types of intertextual connections: associative links, analytical links, and synthesizing links.

Associative links were characterized by an unelaborated statement of "likeness." The language utilized by the children followed the pattern of "That is like
"That reminds me of ___." The subject of the link could be either the picture or the story. During the discussion following the reading of *Owl Moon* (Yolen, 1987) to the whole class on 2/27/96, Alice made a connection between an illustration (on the thirteenth opening of *Owl Moon*) of an owl flying with its wings outstretched and an illustration in *Owl Babies* (Waddell, 1992), which also depicts an owl in flight. Alice looked for *Owl Babies*, found it, and showed the class that the two illustrations were indeed similar. When the teacher read *The Rough-Face Girl* (Martin, 1992) to the class on 1/9/96, the children quickly realized that it was a variant of the Cinderella story, commenting that it was "like" Cinderella. In this Native American variant, "a poor man had three daughters. The two older daughters were cruel and hard-hearted, and they made their youngest sister sit by the fire and feed the flames" (Martin, 1992). The younger sister is burnt and scarred from her work, and she is tauntingly called the "rough-face girl" by her sisters.

**Analytical** links were characterized by making the association and then going on to analyze the similarities or differences in the texts: what might be called "intertextual analysis:" A simple example of this analysis is Julie's comment about the rough-face girl: "Where she was doing her chores, it was like Cinderella, 'cause Cinderella has chores also." However, this intertextual analysis could become quite complex, as the following vignette from the transcript of *The Rough-Face Girl* demonstrates. In this exchange, Mickey refers to the Invisible Being, whom all the young women in the village want to marry, a clear parallel to the prince in the European versions of Cinderella.

100 Teacher: Now, Mickey, all along through the story you kept saying that this was similar to another story that we had read. Could you tell me more?

101 Mickey: Cinderella, cause, um, the two sisters, the two sisters were mean. And, but in the middle I noticed it wasn't, it wasn't like Cinderella, kind of.

102 Teacher: How so?
103 Mickey: Because she asked the father, her father, and that wasn’t there, but I think it’s a little bit related because, I think kind of the father is like the fairy godmother.

104 Teacher: [nodding] Giving her the things that will help her become the wife of the Invisible Being. Were there any other connections, Mickey, to Cinderella, other than the father and the fairy godmother and the sisters?

105 Mickey: Because only the rough-face girl could see the thing, the invisible person, and um, only the slipper fit Cinderella.

106 Teacher: Um. Charles.

107 Charles: It is kind of like Cinderella.

108 Teacher: Tell me more.

109 Charles: 'Cause, like, Cinderella is the only one that dress raggedy, so does the girl in the book [the rough-face girl]. and the Invisible Being's, um, sister is like the fairy godmother.

110 Teacher: The invisible being’s sister is like the fairy godmother; I’m interested in that thinking. Tell me more.

111 Charles: the invisible being’s sister’s like the fairy godmother, she gives the rough-face girl the pretty clothes.

... 

112 Teacher: She does make things possible for her, doesn’t she? She makes it possible to live happily ever after.

113 Charles: Like, the sister probably has a wand or something and she lost it, and she can make magic. 

(The Rough-Face Girl, 1/9/96)

At 101, Mickey begins the intertextual analysis by comparing the two cruel sisters in The Rough-Face Girl to the stepsisters in Cinderella. He also begins to tease out the differences. Cinderella’s father is hardly present in the European version of the tale, but the father of the rough-face girl figures in the plot of this Native American variant because he gives the rough-face girl clothes to wear to meet the Invisible Being.
Therefore, Mickey thinks that the two stories are "a little bit related" because the father in *The Rough-Face Girl* is parallel to the fairy godmother in *Cinderella* (103). As well, the Invisible Being is only visible to the rough-face girl, and Mickey makes a sophisticated connection between the uniqueness of the slipper and the uniqueness of being able to see the Invisible Being (105). At 109, 111, and 113, Charles argues that there is a character who is a better candidate for a fairy godmother figure in *The Rough-Face Girl*: the sister of the Invisible Being. In the story, the Invisible Being's sister tells the rough-face girl to wash in the lake; through the washing, the rough-face girl becomes magically beautiful. The sister also gives regal garments to the rough-face girl. Charles points out that, because the sister "can make magic," and because she gives "pretty clothes" to the rough-face girl, she is a more suitable fairy godmother than the rough-face girl's father.

*Synthesizing* links were characterized by using multiple intertextual links to make generalizations and draw conclusions about sets of stories. For example, the children began to notice that the front and back covers of picturebooks often depict the main character and other characters in the story. Furthermore, they noticed that the front cover often depicts the "good" character and the back cover depicts the "bad" character. The children reached this general understanding by the intertextual links they made among several books. They noticed that the versions of *Red Riding Hood* by James Marshall (1987) and Christopher Coady, and the version of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* by Ted Dewan (1994) all conformed to this pattern. In the Marshall and Coady versions of *Red Riding Hood*, Red Riding Hood appears on the front cover and the wolf is depicted on the back cover; in the Dewan version of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, the three billy goats appear on the front cover and the troll appears on the back. This use of intertextual links to make generalizations was a powerful interpretive strategy, and is discussed in a separate section below, along with several other ways in which intertextual links figured in the children's developing literary understanding.

The three types of intertextual connections—associative links, analytical links, and synthesizing links—represented three levels of increasing cognitive complexity.
These levels seem to have built on each other; associative links enabled analytical links, and analytical links enabled synthesizing links. At the same time, it must be noted that the verbalizations of the children are not necessarily a transparent window onto their cognitive processes. In other words, an associative link may have included the (unverbalized) analytical process, or even the synthesizing process; we ultimately have no way of knowing whether, at any given moment, a child was merely making a simple associative connection between texts or whether she was also mentally comparing and contrasting them or generalizing at the level of synthesis.

Literary competence has a quantitative element, in that the more stories we know, the greater number of critical tools we can bring to bear on any particular story. The aspect of the children’s literary understanding which is highlighted by this category is the knowledge that stories do not stand alone; that stories (as Jane Yolen puts it) “lean on other stories” (Yolen, 1981). Moreover, the children knew that stories lean not only on other stories, but also on a variety of other cultural products as well.

**Category 3 for Children’s Talk: The Personal**

The impulse to link the events or characters in a narrative with one’s own life was common in the data: one out of every ten of all the children’s conversational turns represented this personalizing connection. In this category, the text seemed to act as a stimulus for what Cochran-Smith (1984) calls "life-to-text" and "text-to-life" connections. The children connected their lives with some element of the text or used knowledge gained from a text to inform their lives.

Life-to-text connections were much more common than text-to-life connections; in fact, there were only a handful of text-to-life links. Life-to-text connections were associated with an element of interpretation, but they seemed primarily to represent a drawing of the story toward oneself. For the children, as for all of us, there seemed to be a pleasure in perceiving the ways in which the story (or details of it) mirrored their own lives. The simplest of these connections was an unelaborated statement of likeness. During the reading of *The Napping House*
(Wood, 1984) to the whole class on 4/15/96, the teacher read about the various characters "thumping" and bouncing on a bed; Nicole offered, "Miss Bigler, I did that to my old bed." At this point, Nicole seemed less interested in interpreting the story than in simply taking pleasure in seeing the characters of the story performing the same actions she had performed on her bed. The children could also elaborate on their life-to-text connections, as Kenny demonstrated during the same reading of The Napping House, which is a gentle fantasy in the form of a cumulative tale about an increasing number of characters (humans and animals) that go to sleep on a "cozy bed":

[Sixth opening; depicts an old woman, a child, a dog, and a cat all sleeping on top of each other in a bed]
Teacher: [reading] And on that dog there is a cat, a snoozing cat on a dozing dog on a dreaming child on a snoring granny on a cozy bed in a napping house, where everyone is sleeping.

Kenny: Hey, that’s just like at daycare, at snacktime, we, we all napped for two hours.

Teacher: In the daycare, everyone was asleep like that?

Kenny: [nodding] Two hours.

Teacher: Two full hours, you had to sleep?

Kenny: Uh huh. I used to play in the cot, though.

Teacher: When did you use to go to daycare?

Kenny: I still go to daycare. I go to daycare right now. Um, since it’s in [name of nearby community]? The days that we don’t have school, we go to daycare.

(The Napping House, 4/15/96)

Here Kenny’s connection, with the teacher’s assistance, turned into an evocation of his past daily routine and his schedule on "the days that we don’t have school."
Again, although these experiences obviously assisted Kenny in understanding and
interpreting the visual image and text, the primary function for the child seemed to be to provide a pleasant personal detour from the storyline (sanctioned and encouraged by the teacher) which was enjoyable in its own right.

Kenny’s personal connections often went even further, turning into full-fledged stories with beginnings, middles, and ends, as the following excerpt, also drawn from The Napping House readaloud, demonstrates. Kenny’s story was sparked by the movement of the flea in the seventh opening of the book:

Kenny: Well, I saw this ### once, and I took a magnifying glass, and I looked down there, and there was tons of fleas. And then I got a bucket, I mean I got a little like #, and ### couldn’t get out, with no holes, because if I put a hole in it, they get out, but no holes, um, they, um, then I caught ‘em? And I put one in my house?

Teacher: The fleas? You put the fleas in the house? Oh boy!

Sean: Oh yeah! [in a dubious tone]

Kenny: And then my brother, my sister, my sister had a fork, and she put holes in it, and the fleas ran all over the house.

Teacher: And then what?

Kenny: Then, everybody was itching.

Teacher: What did your mom do?

Kenny: Well, she, my dad, when he opened the door, he had a thing of them, and ### and my punishment was putting fleas down my underwear! And my mom spanked me, and I couldn’t sit down for a week!

??: ### [uproarious laughter]

Kenny: I couldn’t sit down on my butt for a week! (The Napping House, 4/15/96)

For Kenny, then, stories seemed to provide an opportunity to become a storyteller. And, like all well-told stories, it was difficult to tell how much of his plot was based on personal experience and how much was pure fancy. We all assumed, however,
that Kenny’s day-to-day life was not quite as crammed with drama as his stories. (During the readaloud of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Kellogg, 1991), he declared that his father had been taken up into the sky by a tornado, only to be set down again unharmed.)

A special type of life-to-text connection took place with well-loved stories which were old favorites with the children. *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) was one of these stories: according to what they reported, the great majority of the children in the class had heard this book read aloud several (or many) times before, and a little less than half had a copy of the book at home. The following excerpt is taken from the beginning of the transcript of the readaloud of this book to the whole class on 3/11/96:

Teacher: You know what? This book, I had this book when I was a little girl.

?: I have a small one of it.

?: I have a video.


Teacher: You have a videotape of this?

Jim: When I was six years old, I went to this library that looked like the airport?

Teacher: A library looked like the airport to you?

Jim: Yeah, it kinda looked like it, and I went into the library shop and I bought that. That’s where I got it.

*(Where the Wild Things Are, 3/11/96)*

In this instance, the children are not making connections with the storyline, characters, or details of the text, but with the book--the physical object--itself. Such a popular and well-known book as *Where the Wild Things Are* is a protean text, as the children know; it is available in a great variety of forms and formats. Jim even
remembers where he bought his copy--at a "library that looked like the airport"--, much as adults might personalize President Kennedy's assassination by remembering exactly where they were when they heard the news.

Yet another type of life-to-text connection began with questioning the storyline. This type of connection was much more clearly interpretive. During the reading of Where the Wild Things Are, the following exchange occurred:

Teacher: [reading] His mother called him "WILD THING!" and Max said "I'LL EAT YOU UP!" so he was sent to bed without eating anything.

Peggy: Just for saying, "I'll eat you up"?

Teacher: Well, that's not very nice to talk back to your parents, is it?

Joey: I always go, "I don't wanna do that!"

Teacher: Really? You should respect your parents and say, "OK."

. . . [unintelligible; several children talking at once]

Teacher: [pointing to Max's frowning facial expression in the illustration] Look at him. Looks like he feels like you might feel, Joey, when you say that.

Joey: I, I, um, I was that close to not eating.

(Where the Wild Things Are, 3/11/96)

In this excerpt, Peggy's questioning of the text (how can Max's mother send him to his room for what Peggy considers such a minor infraction of the domestic rules?) is the catalyst for Joey's memories of similar struggles of will between himself and his parents. Peggy's question is interpretive in nature, and Joey's identification with the character of Max almost certainly allows him to interpret this episode of the plot in a profound way.

Connections from "the other direction,"--from text-to-life--were rare, but when they occurred, they were obviously deeply meaningful for the children. These connections formed the basis for informing and possibly transforming the children's lives. In other words, the emphasis was not on interpreting the story or making an
associative link (however elaborate), but rather using the story as a form of (vicarious) experience to assist in understanding or dealing with life. The reading of Princess Furball (Huck, 1989), a variant of the Cinderella story, to the whole class on 12/19/95, provoked a very serious discussion about death. The frontispiece for this book (or, as Robert put it, "the bit that happened before the writing starts") is an illustration of a funeral procession with figures in mourning garb carrying a bier through a graveyard. The children had glanced at it and interpreted it as a funeral early in the discussion. As the teacher’s reading of the verbal text began, they realized that this illustration depicted the funeral of the mother of the princess--"Princess Furball"--who is the principal character in the story, identifying the small child in the funeral procession as the younger Princess Furball. The children asked the teacher to turn back to the illustration on the left-hand side of the title page, which shows a portrait of the dead queen, with the young princess standing beside it. At the end of the story, there is an illustration of Furball with her own children. At this point, Alice commented that "Now her children look like she did when she was little. And she looks like her mother." Don further developed the connections between the illustrations by pointing out that the governess "who took care of Furball when her mother died" in the frontispiece is also depicted on the dedication page, watching while the princess and other children play together.

The discussion about these illustrations provided the impetus for the children to share some of their fears about death and their memories of people they knew who had passed away. In a lengthy discussion, the children talked about various reasons why people die, and the teacher pointed out that "Dying happens to every single thing that’s alive." Sean denied this emphatically by declaring, "Not me!" Mickey told the story of a mechanic, a friend of the family, who had died of a heart attack and was cremated: "You get burned into ashes, and that’s all that’s left." Terry recounted the story of a relative who died of a stroke, commenting that "He was smoking a lot." The teacher shared her feelings about her grandfather’s death. Children spoke of visiting their grandparents’ graves and placing flowers there, and Mickey shared his disappointment that he had never known one of his grandparents (who died before he
was born) and his jealousy of his older brother who had known this grandparent. Immediately after this discussion, both the teacher and I noticed that the children seemed remarkably calm; it is possible that this experience had functioned as a catharsis for their personal anxiety and grief about death.

Life-to-text and text-to-life connections did not exhaust the types of personal connections the children made; there were other ways in which the children personalized stories. They gave themselves agency in stories, arguing what they would do if they were a certain character. These "I would" statements allowed the children to insert themselves in a story and shape it, like clay, nearer to their own view of how things should proceed:

Teacher: [reading] "I'm going to Grandmother's. She is sick in bed, you know." "Is that so?" he [the wolf] murmured. "And what have you got in your basket?" "A loaf of bread, some sweet butter, and a bottle of wine."

Gordon: I wouldn't do that, I would say, "oh nothing" [looking up innocently and whistling]

... 

Trent: If I was Little Red Riding Hood, and um, the wolf asked me where grandma's was, I'd say, she's in New York, and a hundred miles [away].

... 

Sean: If I were Red, I wouldn't care, I'd just go through the shortcut.

(Hyman's Little Red Riding Hood, 1/23/96)

At some points, there were indications that the children considered characters to be protean creations whom the children could personally control. During the readaloud of Paul Galdone's (1985) version of The Three Bears, there was a discussion about how old Goldilocks might be, given the fact that the illustrator had depicted her with missing front teeth:

Teacher: How old are children who are losing their teeth?
Sean: Twenty-nine?

Trudy: Real tiny babies.

Teacher: But there are children in here [the classroom] who have missing teeth. Do you think Goldilocks could be your age?

Gordon: Let's make her our age!

(Galdone's The Three Bears, 11/17/96)

For the children, then, stories were malleable, not immutably etched in stone. There was room in stories for them—their personalities, their choice-making, and their capabilities. This recognition led them to another way of following the personalizing impulse: envisioning themselves as the tellers of the entire tale:

Krissy: We could make a story about Little Red Riding Hood, like a puppet show. We could make a puppet show about Little Red Riding Hood, after reading a whole bunch of stories about Little Red Riding Hood.

(Hyman's Little Red Riding Hood, 1/23/96)

Here, Krissy imagines giving herself (and her friends) agency, not in specific details or episodes of the story, but rather over the entire story. Krissy and her friends will personally own the story, and their story will stand alongside the "whole bunch of stories" about Red Riding Hood. As Sally commented on 11/15/96 during the reading of Strega Nona (dePaola, 1975), "We are retelling the tale again today."

The type of literary understanding which is highlighted by this category is the aspect which is valorized by all reader-response criticism: the reader's awareness of her own reactions, feelings, and personal associations with a text.

**Category 4 for Children's Talk: The Transparent**

The rare responses in this category (only two out of every hundred conversational turns) suggested that the children had entered the "secondary world" (Benton, 1992) of the text as, for the moment, they surrendered to the "power of the text" (Scholes, 1985) and had a "lived-through experience" (Rosenblatt, 1978) of the
story. Since their focus was on engaged reception of the story by active listening, their expressive verbalizations represent, as it were, only the exposed tip of an iceberg. Thus, the very interiority of this lived-through experience, in a study based on the verbal responses of children, demands circumspection and a tentative stance when interpreting the data.

I have already referred to the inadvertent quality of these responses, which did not seem to have communicative intent, for example, Gordon’s sotto voce comment expressing his pessimism regarding Grace’s ability to "be anything I want to be" in the readaloud of Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991). It is possible that the chunks of silence on the children’s part were more indicative of their aesthetic reception than any verbal responses could be; yet, silence constitutes only negative evidence.

Responses which seemed to be directed to an audience (the other children or the teacher) were not included in this category. However, this logic depended on the validity of my inference about a child’s intention: did the utterance have communicative intent or was it verbalized "inner speech" (Vygotsky, 1986)? In Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters (Steptoe, 1987), one of the characters declares vehemently, "I will be queen. I will be queen." Immediately after the teacher read this, several children I could not identify said quietly, "No she won’t!" These responses were just barely audible on the cassette tape. The spontaneous immediacy of the responses, coupled with the low tone of voice in which they were spoken, seemed to indicate an engagement in the world of the story. Other spontaneous expressions of delight, disgust, caution, or fear included Krissy’s comment, "Rotten girl!" after the teacher read Red Riding Hood’s promise not to stray from the path on her way to see her grandmother; and Trent’s voiced "Uh-oh" following the description of the huntsman’s sighting of the wolf. (Both comments took place during the reading of the Hyman version of Red Riding Hood.)

Rose was a child who very rarely spoke during readalouds; in fact, during all 35 whole group readalouds which I observed, she made only one audible utterance. This single response occurred on 2/27/96 during the reading of Owl Moon (Yolen, 1987), a gentle and quiet story about a little girl who goes owling with her father late
at night. The catalyst for Rose’s response was Alice’s comparison of the image of a flying owl in Owl Moon to a similar image in Owl Babies (Waddeil, 1992), which has already been mentioned in the previous section on intertextual connections. When Alice showed the illustration of the mother owl flying back to her babies, Rose said slowly, quietly, and with great emotional intensity, “Here she comes. Here she comes.” Rose was looking directly at the illustration as she spoke, not at any other child. The utterance was not picked up by the tape recorder, and if I had not been sitting beside her, I would not have heard it. My inference is that Rose was, for the moment, placing herself in the world of the story as one of the owl babies, and that her utterance was intended for herself alone, as she experienced the joy of the babies (who had been feeling frightened and abandoned) at seeing their mother return to their nest. This elusive and exquisitely delicate response constitutes the best evidence in the data for the children’s engagement in the secondary world of the story.

The type of literary understanding which responses in this category represent is the ability to position oneself in the dynamics of the narrative to such an extent that the story and one’s own life, for an evanescent moment, merge with and are transparent to each other.

**Category 5 of Children’s Talk: The Performative**

Although the responses in this category comprise only 5% of the conversational turns, they are some of the most interesting in the data set. In discussing Category 3, The Personal, a type of personal response was described which was evidence for the children’s understanding that stories were plastic and malleable, like clay. They personalized the story by talking about what they would do if they were a story character. In Category 5, this idea of malleability was carried by the children to an even higher level: the text was stretched and kneaded until it became the platform or “pretext” (O’Neill, 1995) for the children’s own expressive creativity. Responses in this category are also related to Category 4 (The Transparent) by seeming to be aesthetically expressive whereas the responses in Category 4 were aesthetically receptive. In other words, whereas in Category 4 the
children seemed to surrender to the power of the text and were therefore manipulated by it, in Category 5 the tables were turned: the children manipulated the text and controlled it (occasionally to the extent of hijacking it). The responses in Category 4 seemed inadvertent and often just barely audible since the intention was not to communicate but to represent the experience to oneself. The responses in Category 5, by contrast, were definitely intended for audience consumption: they constituted a performance.

These responses were characterized by creativity, playfulness, wry humor, sly puns, or flights of fancy which seemed (at first blush, anyway) to have only a tangential relationship to what most adults might consider the proper and sensible storyline. Thus, the responses were often mildly (or wickedly) subversive, transgressive, or Dionysian; in some quarters, they would probably be considered totally off-task. They threatened to deconstruct the story into a totally free (and in some cases anarchic) play of signifiers: in Bakhtin's (1968) terminology, a manifestation of the "carnivalesque." As such, their very existence depended on the liberal and tolerant atmosphere of the classroom; in a more conservative environment, these exotic blooms may have been quickly squelched.

Before I came to appreciate these types of responses (or even interpreted them as responses at all), I ejected Krissy from one of the small group discussions because she got up from her chair and began twirling around and chanting, "I'm a helicopter! I'm a helicopter!" (Transcript of Chicken Little, 1/24/96). Actually, this was the last straw in a series of disruptions from Krissy on that occasion, which included lots of pinching, shoving and name-calling--actions which I still would refrain from classifying as literary responses. However, her imitation of a helicopter was based on the fact that Steven Kellogg's (1985) zany retelling of Chicken Little includes a "Sky Patrol Helicopter" whose whirling blades are jammed by an acorn thrown into the air by Foxy Loxy as he is about to take Chicken Little and her friends to their demise. The jamming causes the helicopter to plummet to the earth, destroying Foxy Loxy's poultry truck; in this version of the tale, therefore, the Sky (patrol helicopter) literally does fall. After the emergence of the performative category in the data analysis, I
came to understand Krissy's action as a performative response rather than "off-task" behavior.

The children's discussion of Goldilock's missing front teeth during the readaloud of Galdone's (1985) version of The Three Bears on 11/17/95 has already been introduced. Pointing to Galdone's illustration of the broadly smiling Goldilocks, Joey blurted out,

Maybe right here she got punched in the face! [pause, about 2 seconds]
Maybe Kenny punched her! [dissolving into giggles]

(Galdone's The Three Bears, 11/17/95)

The class was delighted by this response, and a moment of chaos ensued as several children (mostly boys) began to throw fake punches at each other. Joey's remark was very knowing, sly, and ironic, because Kenny was notorious for getting into fights. There was an additional level of irony (possibly lost on everyone but Ms. Bigler and me), in that Joey himself had a rather pugnacious reputation. In this case, Joey deliberately (and cleverly) played with the fiction/reality distinction in a subversive way. His response was performative because he intended that his audience react—he even timed his "punchline"--, and he was not disappointed.

Terry was an inveterate punster, and often made performative plays on words. His star performance occurred during the reading of Black and White (Macaulay, 1990), a winner of the Caldecott Medal which contains many images of bovines, when he declared, "Hey, Miss Bigler, it won the Cow-decott Medal!" This essentially playful approach to the language of the text was also evident in the reading of Ira Sleeps Over, Bernard Waber's (1972) classic story of a child who sleeps over at his friend's house. The narrative principally concerns Ira's agonizing over whether to take along his teddy bear, Tah-Tah; Ira is afraid that his friend Reggie will consider this babyish. It turns out that Reggie also has a teddy bear with an even sillier name: Foo-Foo. Several children I could not identify played (somewhat subversively) with these names:

190
? : Foo-Foo and Tah Tah, sittin’ in a tree!

?: Foo-Foo! Fee-Fee!

?: Foo-Foo! Doo-doo! (Ira Sleeps Over, 3/4/96)

These performances were not all one-liners, however. An excerpt from the transcript of the small group readaloud of Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991) on 3/22/96 was introduced earlier in this chapter to provide examples of all the categories for the children’s talk. The following exchange occurred immediately after that part of the transcript in which Sally made the insightful quasi-thematic statement that "Grace put her mind to it, I guess, and she got chosen":

100 Gordon: You’re Peter Pan [to me] because you’re wearing green! I’m Peter Blue! [He is wearing blue]

101 Julie: I’m Peter White! [She is wearing white]

102 Terry: [gets up and starts turning around, doing ballet movements]

103 Julie: Terry, sit down! [laughing]

104 Sally: [gets up, too, and turns around] I’m just stretching! [looking at me mischievously]

105 Larry: OK, wait! [laughing]

106 Terry: Now I’m a helicopter!

107 Larry: OK, wait, Julie, nobody’s listening.

108 Julie: Right here, [showing tenth opening] this is the back [showing back cover]

109 Larry: Yes, I believe you’re right. Good observation.

110 Terry: [speaking softly to me] Sometimes I do it in the house, it’s fun, I like it.
[Sally, Julie, Gordon, and Terry all get up and start twirling around]

Larry: This story is causing people to want to get up and fly, I can tell! This story is a moving story, isn't it?

(Amazing Grace, Group 1, 3/22/96)

This vignette demonstrates how exhilarating performative responses could become for the children. At 100, Gordon begins the performance by making a connection between the illustration depicting Grace in a green costume and the green stripes in my shirt. This gives him the idea to name himself as "Peter Blue." Julie (at 101) gets into the act as well, calling herself "Peter White." Even Sally, who (as will be shown) usually approached stories very seriously, and had just responded to the theme of the story, is caught up in the carnival (104). Grace’s pretend-flying as Peter Pan inspires Terry (who has told me that he likes to play at ballet) to fly, first as a ballet dancer (102) and then as a helicopter (106). Julie attempts an analytical comment, pointing out that a part of an illustration in the body of the text recurs the back cover (108), but abandons her within-the-text Category 1 comment to become a ballet dancer/helicopter with everyone else.

There is a sense in which these more extreme performative responses interrupted or disrupted the serious meaning making which was the principal activity in which the children were engaged; performative response could represent a rupture (or even an eruption) of some kind. However, another way of looking at these responses is to conceptualize them as expressively aesthetic acts on a high level. They represent a type of literary understanding which sees the text as "a vessel of associations helplessly open to the mastery of [our] response" (Grudin, 1992). The findings of this study indicate that the children were literary critics, displaying various types of literary understanding; the children’s performative responses display their abilities as specifically deconstructive literary critics.
Other Relational Patterns

In this section, several patterns in the data which were not highlighted or fully treated in the exposition of the conceptual categories are discussed. The three parts of this section deal with findings related to (1) intertextual connections and what these connections enabled the children to do; (2) the types of predictive and explanatory hypotheses generated by the children; and (3) their fascination with illustrations and their use of illustrations in meaning making.

The Role of Intertextual Connections

Intertextual connections proved to be a crucial conceptual pivot which afforded the children the opportunity of moving in many interpretive directions. That children made frequent intertextual connections was interesting, but even more important was what the connections allowed the children to do. There were at least eight ways in which intertextual connections were utilized by the children.

1. The children *interpreted personal experiences* (which had been shared by the children as they personalized a story) in the light of intertextual connections. During the reading of *Ira Sleeps Over* (Waber, 1972), as the children were discussing Ira’s pillow fight with his friend Reggie, Kristin made a personal link which Joey connected to another text:

   Kristin: One time, um, I was jumping on my bed when my mom was getting pajamas for me, and I fell off and I broke my head on the windowsill, right on the corner, and I had to go to the hospital and get stitches.

   Joey: Like *Five Little Monkeys* jumpin’ on the bed!

   Teacher: That’s what I was thinking, Joey [laughing] No more monkeys jumping on the bed!

   Don: [chanting] No more Kristin jumping on the bed!  

   (*Ira Sleeps Over*, 3/4/96)
Thus, the pattern of response was: text---personal connection----intertextual connection.

2. The children used intertextual connections to make symbolic interpretations of elements of the text. For example, Trudy made a particularly striking symbolic interpretation during the small group readaloud of Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991). This book, a piece of realistic fiction, tells the story of a homeless little boy whose mother has died and who lives with his father in an airport. The boy (who narrates the story) notices a bird which has been trapped in the airport, and tries unsuccessfully to escape. Finally, the bird manages to fly out through a door which is momentarily open. Most adults would probably take the view that the bird functions in the story as a metaphor for the plight of the boy and his father: they, too, are trying to escape from the necessity of living in the airport. An illustration of the bird also appears on the back cover, and the following exchange occurred as I was probing Jim's statement that "it looks like he [the bird] was important to him [the boy]:"

Larry: Do you think the bird might be special to the boy, maybe?

Trudy: The bird could be watching over the boy, maybe it's his mother, turned into a bird.

Larry: I love it. I never thought of it before. It's kind of like the bird is, the bird is his mother's spirit, maybe, and she's watching over him?

Jim: Yeah, it's like he wants his mother.

Larry: And when the bird gets out of the airport:

Trudy: Maybe she goes to watch over the dad. I knew it might be his mother because on "Married With Children," Bud turns into another dog. 'Cause he has been bad.

Jim: It looks like the bird is flying to heaven [showing seventh opening, with illustration of the bird in the distant sky]

(Fly Away Home, Group 2, 3/11/96)
The late-night television show, " Married With Children," is an unlikely intertextual connection to enable such a beautiful idea, but fortunately we do not have to make any inferences about the source for Trudy's symbolic interpretation; she tells us herself that it was inspired by a transformation of one of the characters in the show.3 In this vignette, the intertextual connection also seems to function as an enabler of Jim's extension of Trudy's idea, as he adds a confirmation of Trudy's hypothesis about the symbolic identity of the bird: it seems to be "flying to heaven."

3. One of the most common patterns associated with intertextual connections was their function in assisting children to predict what might happen in the narrative. During the reading of one of the opening pages of The Whales' Song (Sheldon, 1990), a piece of magical realism about a young girl who is fascinated with whales and who hears them "calling her name," the children made various predictions about what gift a whale might give:

Teacher: [reading] "But why did they swim to you, Grandma?" asked Lilly. "How did they know you were there?" Lilly's grandmother smiled. "Oh, you had to bring them something special. A perfect shell. Or a beautiful stone. And if they liked you, the whales would take your gift and give you something in return."

Krissy: I wonder what a whale might give you.

Teacher: What do you think a whale might give you, Krissy?

Krissy: A shell.

. . .

Bill: Give you a shell back. Because in "Free Willie," when this one guy dropped his balloon, um, Willie dived in after it, and he put it in his mouth, and he swimmmed back up, and he opened it up, and he took his hand, and put it in and pulled it out.

(The Whales' Song, 3/21/96)
Bill’s prediction that a whale might "give you a shell back" is informed by his connection to the movie "Free Willie," and is another instance of the power of popular culture in the children’s thinking.

By the fourth opening of The Rough-Face Girl (Martin, 1992), Mickey used his intertextual knowledge to predict the end of the story:

Teacher: [reading] One day these two older sisters went to their father and said, "Father, give us some necklaces. Give us some new buckskin dresses. Give us some pretty beaded moccasins. We're going to marry the Invisible Being."

Mickey: But the Rough-Face Girl is going to marry him. I think it's going to turn out like Cinderella.

(The Rough-Face Girl, 1/9/96)

Just a few pages into the story, Mickey was able to hazard a prediction that the Rough-Face girl would marry the Invisible Being, in spite of the older sisters’ statement in the text that they would marry him.

4. Closely related to the ability to predict was the function of intertextual connections in the children’s creation and modification of schemata for stories. Cognitive flexibility theory (Spiro, et al, 1994) suggests that we create schemata for understanding our reading (and presumably texts we listen to) by building up our knowledge across cases, and by linking this knowledge together. In cognitive flexibility theory, schemata are not rigid cognitive structures, but rather extremely fluid, continually changing as new information modifies the receptive cognitive structure. During the readaloud of The Rough-Face Girl (Martin, 1992), intertextual connections figured largely in the discussion of two general characteristics of fairy- and folktales: the opposition of good and evil and the frequent metamorphosis of characters. These two characteristics are presumably important elements in our schemata for these tales (Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1993). The children and the teacher first discussed the general observation that good always wins over evil in fairytales. Kenny commented that "That one [The Rough-Face Girl] was, that one
was happily ever after, and in Cinderella it was happily ever after, and in Snow White it was, too." Charles objected, pointing out that in The Swan Princess, one of the main characters dies. The teacher returned to Kenny’s comment:

Teacher: Do you think it’s fair to say, Kenny, that a lot of fairy tales end happily ever after? Not all of them.

Sean: Not all of ’em, but some of ’em.

?: Like "Batman Forever," it did, ’cause:

?: Batman never dies.

Teacher: Do you think Batman is a fairytale?

??: Yes! No! ### [great uproar]

Sean: But it has a happy ending.

Mickey: Lon Po Po isn’t a happy ending. ’Cause the wolf dies.

Teacher: It all depends on whose point of view you’re looking at, the wolf or the children’s, doesn’t it?

(The Rough-Face Girl, 1/9/96)

This lengthy discussion continued with observations by the children that the wolf in Red Riding Hood dies, but since he is obviously evil, this confirms the hypothesis that good always wins in fairytales. However, other children pointed out that in The Three Bears, Goldilocks is the bad character, and that she seems to get the better of the situation. No less than eight texts were used in this discussion, which tested and refined, and (for some children) seemed to change the portion of their schema for fairytales which required good invariably to triumph over evil.

The other common feature of fairytales which received attention in this discussion was the metamorphosis of characters. In The Rough-Face Girl, the face of the Invisible Being appears in one illustration as a pastiche of elements in the natural world: the Being’s eyes are birds, and a rainbow and clouds outline the rest of his
face. In another illustration, the Being also appears as an ordinary (though handsome) man. The children discussed these transformations by comparing them to the metamorphosis of characters in three other texts: "The Lion King" (in which Simba's father shows himself to Simba in the sky); The Frog Prince; and The Swan Princess. These intertextual references allowed them to reach the conclusion that the Invisible Being could assume many shapes, changing back and forth from one form to another.

These examples demonstrate that the children's knowledge of (and discussion about) the characteristics of literary genres like fairytales rested upon the bedrock of their intertextual connections. Moreover, the concept of genre assumes some cognitive structure—a schema—which allows us to classify and group stories as members of this or that genre. This schema was built up from knowledge of many individual cases (stories) which were linked together. The examples also show the children in the process of modifying and refining their fluid schemata.

5. Just as intertextual connections enabled the children to build up schemata for stories, connections between illustrations in different texts allowed them to construct and refine their ideas of illustration style. They could recognize the distinctive styles of particular artists: the scratchboard technique of Brian Pinckney, the collage of Eric Carle, the handling of watercolor by Jerry Pinckney, or the soft colors and rounded outlined shapes of Tomie dePaola. This recognition was made possible by their exposure to many texts illustrated by these people. During the small group reading of Eric Carle's (1995) The Very Lonely Firefly, for example, Krissy noticed that the illustration of a house was similar to an illustration in another book by Carle (1972), The Secret Birthday Message. She ran to get the book, and the children and I marveled at the similarity; the technique, design, and colors were virtually identical.

Their intertextual connections to the work of their classmates and their own artwork also helped the children to talk about illustrational style. During the small group readaloud of Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991), the endpages stimulated the following discussion:

Krissy: That's not chalk!

Kenny, Yeah, cause you like sketch with a, you can sketch it with, um:

Krissy: It looks like water paint. Because of the white spots, that's why.

Kenny: Yeah, but he coulda gone like this and like this [imitating sketching, making little dabs in the air] and then dip it in water.

Brad: Or maybe he can take a piece of chalk and put it in water:

Krissy: You scrape it!

Brad: Scrape it in water, and then, and then, and then, and then, dip the pages, sliding, sliding, and when it's done it looks like that [pointing to the endpage]

(Amazing Grace, Group 2, 3/21/96)

In this excerpt, the children's own cultural products and those of their classmates (like Mickey's book) enable them to talk about the possible ways in which the endpages were illustrated. Brad and Kenny described the technique (marbleizing, taught to them by Ms. Bigler) of scraping colored chalk in a pan of water and then carefully "sliding, sliding" a piece of paper through the water to pick up the chalk powder. This technique produces an effect which is indeed quite similar to the endpages in Amazing Grace, though it is probable that Krissy was correct about the use of watercolor.

The front cover of Christopher Coady's (1991) version of Red Riding Hood, read to the whole class on 12/12/95, provoked much speculation about the technique and artistic media which were used. Krissy thought that Coady had used watercolor, and Alice suggested tissue paper. Then Krissy noticed the short brush strokes in the thick paint Coady had utilized, and decided, "That makes it scratchboard. You scratch it, like Sally did, and like Jerry Pinckney [she meant Brian Pinckney]." Krissy made intertextual connections to Sally's experimentation with scratchboard, as well as to the work of a professional illustrator whose work she had seen.
6. Intertextual connections were utilized in order to *interpret story characters' feelings, motivations, or actions*. During the small group readaloud of *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991), Trudy used her intertextual knowledge to understand Grace’s motivation to be Peter Pan in the school play:

Trudy: Um, there *is* a girl who plays Peter Pan, 'cause I got a tape of it, I got both tapes.

(*Amazing Grace*, Group 2, 3/21/96)

Historically, in fact, most stage performances of *Peter Pan* have utilized a young woman to play the part of Peter. It is likely that Trudy had a copy of the filmed version of one of these performances (possibly the famous performance by Mary Martin); and she also had another tape (since she had "both tapes") which is possibly the Disney cartoon. Trudy’s intertextually-based reasoning is that it is in the realm of possibility that Grace could play Peter, because there is another text in which a female does just this.

In the same readaloud, Jim and Krissy suggested that Grace could play Wendy, another important character in Peter Pan. They made this suggestion based on their knowledge of other versions of the story; Krissy ran to look for the book (her own copy of the story by Disney) and showed an illustration of Wendy to prove her point.

7. Intertextual connections allowed the children to *position themselves above the dynamics of the narrative*: to stand outside and above it, as it were, in order to take on new perspectives in relation to the story.

Babette Cole’s (1987) *Prince Cinders* is a gender-reversed spoof of the traditional Cinderella story, in which the protagonist is a young prince who has to do all the housework while his older, bigger, and hairier brothers go to the Palace Disco with their girlfriends. A fairy promises to make him big and hairy like his brothers, so that he can go to the disco, too. However, she’s rather inept, and Prince Cinders is changed by mistake into a big, hairy gorilla. Outside the disco, he meets Princess
Lovelypenny, who is frightened by the gorilla; but just at this moment, the clock strikes midnight and Prince Cinders changes back into himself. The Princess thinks that he has saved her from the gorilla and falls into love with her rescuer, but Prince Cinders is too shy to talk to the Princess, and runs away so hastily that he loses his trousers in the rush. The trousers in this story function like the slipper in the European version of Cinderella, in that the Princess "decrees that she will marry whoever fits the trousers lost by the prince who saved her from being eaten by the Big Hair Monkey." At this point during the small group readaloud of the story, Krissy, Trudy, Jim, and Brad begin to connect Prince Cinders intertextually with three other texts: the traditional version of Cinderella (Galdone, 1978); Ugh (Yorincks, 1990), a Cinderella variant in which the role of the slipper is played by a newly invented bicycle; and Princess Smartypants, another book by Babette Cole (1986), in which a liberated princess is successful in not marrying a prince, by kissing him and turning him into a frog:

100  Krissy: Oh, it's like, um, Miss, what is it?

101  Jim: Cinderella?

102  Krissy: No.

103  Jim: [Princess] Smartypants?

104  Krissy: No, it's Ugh. Ugh. It reminds me of Ugh. Whoever, whoever, rides this bike, bicycle, they get to be king.

105  Brad: /It's just like Cinderella, too.

106  Trudy: It's like Princess Smartypants/ and Cinderella, too.

107  Larry: Why is it like Cinderella?

108  Trudy: Because she, uh, had the slipper, and had to try it on, and:

109  Krissy: And he had to put on the pants:

110  Jim: Trousers.
111 Brad: Let's hope she does not kiss his pants!

(Prince Cinders, Group 2, 1/11/96)

This four-way comparison led to Brad’s wry comment (111), "Let’s hope she does not kiss his pants!" Brad used the group’s intertextual connections (101-110) to position himself so that he could, as it were, speak above all the characters’ heads; to speak even above the narrator’s head: to survey them all from a superior position—a position of irony and humor. As well, the way his comment begins—"Let’s hope"—includes the other children and me in this knowing perspective.

8. Lastly, intertextual connections frequently begat other intertextual connections. It seemed that when a child (or the teacher) referred to the contextual matrix, this opened up a conceptual path on which other children might travel. In the example presented just above, as well as the previous vignette in number 5 which illustrates the formation and refinement of schemata, one intertextual link led to another. The process gathered momentum like a rolling snowball, until a critical mass was reached which enabled the children to achieve a higher level of interpretive understanding or predictive power.

In summary, then, the role of intertextual connections was foundational and pivotal for many interpretive moves. The children used intertextual connections to interpret personal experiences which had been brought forward during the readaloud; to make symbolic interpretations of elements of the text; to predict what might happen in the narrative; to create and modify their schemata for stories; to interpret story characters’ feelings, actions, or motivations; to position themselves outside and above the dynamics of the narrative; to build up and refine their concept of illustration style; and to make chains of other intertextual connections which raised the discussion to a higher cognitive level.

Chains of Speculative Hypotheses

The children’s speculations about characters’ thoughts, feelings, and actions or other events of the narrative were characterized by the persistent generation of
hypotheses. The discussion often formed a series of comments in which the hypotheses built on and refined each other. These hypotheses could sometimes be confirmed by the story; mostly, however, they represented gaps in the text and illustrations upon which the children could only speculate.

During the small group readaloud of Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995), the children generated a chain of descriptive hypotheses about the "slime" which covers more and more of the environment in the book. The illustrations in this clever and self-referential picturebook resemble those in a coloring book; they consist of black outlines printed on off-white paper. During the course of the book, the inhabitants of the frontier town of Riverbend are tormented by the appearance of what is described as "shiny, greasy slime" of various colors, which is printed over the black-and-white drawings. The ending of the book suggests that this slime is actually the scribbled crayon coloring done by Van Allsburg's little girl Sophia, to whom the book is dedicated. As the reading of the book progressed, the children generated no less than thirteen related hypotheses about the nature and effects of the slime; these hypotheses are extracted and listed here in the order of their appearance:

1 Krissy: I wonder why the author choosed to scribble. And I just see that he kind of went out of the lines. It looks like it has marker on it.

2 Kenny: They wanted to show you what it looks like if you scribble.

3 Brad: Um, maybe some, maybe like a wild [thing] attached to them or something.

4 Krissy: I think it could be like, if there was, it could be like, um, like those sticky, those sticky and slippery sticks, and they get sticky on your hands, and stuff. They're sort of like all kinds of colors, and then they get mixed up on people and stuff.

5 Jim: Maybe it's sticky slime, like, like it gets stuck on them.

6 Kenny: It's slime, I know it, because it said.
7 Krissy: Oh, I know what this could be! It could be like somebody, somebody, like attacked, the coach, and after that, maybe they attached [sic] it, they attached [sic] the horse, and tried to get the world destroyed.

8 Kenny: It's because maybe they fell on the sticky stuff on the ground, because it's on the ground.

9 Jim: Maybe it's the rainbow. It could have been the rainbow, kind of hit him, and then colors came out.

10 Kenny: Maybe the sunlight spits out the stuff, like it spits out, like spits, and then it gets on, gets on the person.

11 Trudy: Maybe it's water, and the water turns to colors.

12 Krissy: Maybe the sun got really sweaty, the sun got sweaty, really hot, and then maybe there was this, there was this rainbow that came, and had these strings, and after that, after that, um, maybe the sweaty stuff came down off the sun, and maybe it got mixed up with the stringy stuff, and turned into colors.

13 Kenny: Maybe the sun, like the rainbow was out, and then the sunlight hit it, the rainbow, and it, like the colors melted on them.

(Bad Day at Riverbend, Group 2, 2/26/96)

Krissy begins this chain of speculative reasoning (1) with her conjecture about the author’s "scribbling": perhaps it is "marker." Kenny (2) latches onto the authorial intention in Krissy's comment and refines it: maybe the author wanted to show what happens when you scribble. At (3), Brad ascribes this intention to a "wild [thing]." Krissy (4) then compares the appearance of the slime to "those sticky and slippery sticks," a reference unknown to me. At (5), Jim picks up on the sticky quality of the slime, and Kenny (6) comments that we know the stuff is "slime," because the text says so. At (7), Krissy reverts back to Brad's idea of attachment, and extends it by suggesting that the intention was to destroy the world. Kenny (8) notices that the slime is on the ground, and returns to the idea of stickiness: perhaps the people fell on it. At (9), Jim launches into a new theory, which will dominate the rest of the children's reasoning: maybe the rainbow hit the people. At (10) and (11), Kenny and Trudy talk about the influence of sunlight and water, which are both involved in
the production of rainbows, and Krissy (12) connects the ideas of the sun, water, and rainbow by speculating that the sun got sweaty. Kenny, at (13) refines this by suggesting that the colors from the rainbow melted on the people.

Here we see the children engaged quite intensely in constructing a chain of speculative reasoning which eventually grows to the point of articulating a scientific theory involving sunlight, water, and the rainbow. They engaged in the process of assimilation to and accommodation of each others’ theories. They readily abandoned this carefully erected edifice when they saw the last page of the book, with its illustration of a little girl and crayons. This was a case in which the information in the text provided at least a partial disconfirmation of their reasoning.

Another series of speculative hypotheses was provoked by Mickey, during the readaloud of *Cinderella* (Galdone, 1978), at the point in the story where the prince sends his courtiers to find the owner of the slipper that has been left behind by his beautiful dance partner. Mickey asked, "Why doesn’t the slipper disappear?" Why, indeed? Presumably the slipper was part of all the magically produced clothing and accoutrements which the fairy godmother had warned would disappear at midnight. Why shouldn’t the slipper disappear along with everything else? This question represents what Iser (1978) would call a gap or indeterminacy in a text: the text does not tell us, and the illustrations do not help us, either. On this occasion, the children tenaciously generated no less than ten hypotheses. Some children thought it had to do with the size of the slipper; maybe it was too small to be affected by the magic. Others suggested that the material—glass—had something to do with its permanence. One particularly intriguing hypothesis might be called the "Energizer Bunny" theory: maybe the fairy godmother’s magic wand ran out of power. Several children built on the idea that the fairy godmother’s intention had something to do with it, eventually arriving at the conclusion that the godmother had planned all along that Cinderella would marry the prince, and that therefore the slipper had to remain in order to provide a way of identifying her. These hypotheses could be neither confirmed nor disconfirmed by the text, but the speculation was considered meaningful in its own right.
Both these examples of hypothesis generation arose from questions formulated by the children. Both examples also indicate the impressive amount of interpretive energy the children were willing to expend in answering these questions.

**Making Meaning from the Visual Text**

The children used visual information extensively in making meaning. Although the words of the story were important to them, the children showed a disposition to consider all the features of the book as potentially meaningful. In this section, several aspects of this visual meaning making are considered. Each of these aspects demonstrates the children’s seemingly effortless integration of text and pictures.

**Peritextual semiosis.**

In traditional novels for adults, the text itself is the only important thing, and readers usually consider other physical aspects of the book--its size and shape, the cover, front matter, and title page, for example--as relatively unmeaningful necessities which can be skipped in order to get to the "real book": the author’s words. Genette (1980) and other critics have referred to all of these peripheral features of a book--everything other than the words of the text--as the "peritext." In picturebooks, the peritext has a great potential for meaning making (Higonnet, 1990). The use of "peritext" in this study refers to any part of a picture storybook other than the sequence of openings which contain the verbal text of the story and the accompanying illustrations. Any print or illustrations on the front and back covers; dust jacket, including the end-flaps; endpages; half-title and title pages; and dedication page are all included in this designation.

The children considered the peritext just as much of a source of potential meaning as the verbal text of the story. This may have been the result of the teachers’ actions in sharing a book: they never omitted giving the children the time and the opportunity of considering all of a book’s peritextual features. As a result, parts of a picturebook which might have been passed over by less astute adults were
scrutinized and interpreted very carefully by the children. In fact, 12% of the Category 1 conversational turns (or 8% of all the conversational turns) were devoted to discussion involving the peritext. During the reading of The Three Little Pigs (Marshall, 1989), for example, the teacher showed and read the front cover, which depicts the three pigs on a stage, flanked by brick-red curtains. She then opened the book and silently showed the endpages, which have no decoration other than their brick-red color. Brad commented,

Well, it's like a curtain, like on the front cover, the curtain's open, the curtain's red, and um, then the endpages, they're red, too, and it's like, like the curtain's closed, and you're gettin' ready for the play to start.

(The Three Little Pigs, 11/28/95)

Brad did not take these plain endpages for granted. He used his knowledge of what a theater looks like before a play begins, and linked this to the two visual experiences of the front cover and the endpages. In semiotic terms, he interpreted the endpages as a sign: as possessing the potential for meaning, in relation to other signs. Brad's interpretation was confirmed as a possibility after the reading of the book was completed and the teacher showed the class the back cover, which depicts the backs of the three pigs, onstage again.

Gordon was a child who was particularly intrigued with the semiotic significance of endpages. He assumed that there was always a reason for the choice of their color or design. During my one-to-one readaloud of Changes (Browne, 1990), with him, Gordon wondered about the endpages, which are painted a light tan with small darker brown spots.

Gordon: Hmm. I wonder if they chose different kind of endpages. I wonder why they did choose this. Wait, let's look through the book, we might notice something like this. [He pages through the book, coming to an illustration of a wall which is a similar color.] That's sort of the same texture here.

Larry: Yeah, it is, sort of.
Gordon: Maybe it is the same, but only. Maybe the walls are the same [turns back to the endpages].

Larry: So the endpages represent, maybe, the walls?

Gordon: Maybe. Dots on 'em. Probably you can't just see that stuff. All the little dots and scratches. All the little dots, rock, in the wall. Or the ground. It makes you feel you're on the ground, or something.

(Changes with Gordon, 3/27/96)

Discussion about the peritext also seemed to enable the understanding of structure and form in stories. After the reading of The Napping House (Wood, 1984, Kristin pointed out that, unlike most picturebooks, the front endpages were different from the back endpages. In fact, the front endpages of this book (a dark blue-gray) contrast markedly with the back endpages (which are azure blue). The following discussion ensued:

Sally: That makes sense, because it's dark when the story starts, so there's a darker endpage, and it's lighter when the story ends. So the endpage is lighter, back there.

Gordon: Yeah, that makes sense! Darker, then lighter. That's different, like most books, the endpages're the same on the front and the back.

Teacher: Yes, that's very interesting, it is one of the few books I've seen where the endpages are different at the beginning and the end, and it's certainly a good choice the illustrator made. Brad?

Brad: The flea is the alarm clock in this story!

??: Yeah, it is!

Teacher: What an interesting idea, Brad. Tell me more.

Brad: Well, the flea wakes 'em all up, they're all sleeping, and the flea's their alarm clock because he wakes 'em up.

?: Brrrriiiiing! [imitating alarm clock] Time to wake up, all you guys!

(The Napping House, 4/15/96)
In this excerpt, Sally and Gordon made structural comments about the story based on the information provided by the peritext. It may also be that Brad’s generalizing statement (that the flea acted as the alarm clock in the story) was triggered by this discussion. Structural information is information that lets children think about the story as a whole rather than specific parts. This may have sparked Brad’s thinking in general terms about the story as well, and stimulated his comment about the flea. Brad’s statement, in turn, seems to have stimulated the performative response that closes the excerpt. The excerpt as a whole is an example of the rich discussion and interpretation stimulated by the peritext.

Some picturebooks use the peritext to begin the narrative. In Steven Kellogg’s (1991) version of Jack and the Beanstalk, for example, the front endpages show the giant, having descended from his sky-castle in a tornado, stealing gold, the singing harp, and the hen that lays the golden eggs from a pirate ship. The title page continues the story, depicting the giant’s return to his castle via tornado; the sinking pirate ship; and our first sight of Jack, who is looking at a procession of a king and queen and their retainers on horseback. On the dedication page, Jack is shown offering a bunch of flowers to the daughter of the king and queen, the princess he will marry at the end of the story. Thus, the peritext of this book supplies a great deal of background information and preliminary narrative before the verbal text begins. All of these details were noted by the children. Robert noticed that "the story shows how the giant got the gold." Don said, "First the giant steals the gold from the pirates, and then, Jack steals the gold from the giant."

Also present on the endpages, title page, and dedication page of Kellogg’s Jack and the Beanstalk are images of a hot-air balloon with a bearded man in a star-studded robe. This man is also depicted on the first and second openings. On the first opening (the beginning of the verbal text), the man holds a book in which he is painting. The arrangement of golden blocks on this small book is identical with the arrangement of the large golden text blocks on the opened book we hold in our hands. The implication is that this wizard is writing the story. On the second opening, the wizard is depicted as the one who sells the magical beans to Jack. It was not until the
teacher had completed reading the story that Don discovered the meaning of this figure, and the part played by him in the story:

Hey, that guy is writing the book! This [pointing to the golden rectangular block on the left-hand page of the book the wizard is holding] is this [pointing to the rectangular block on the left-hand page of the book itself]. And this [pointing to the square block on the right-hand page of the book the wizard is holding] is this [pointing to the square block on the right-hand page of the book itself]. He’s probably an artist, maybe a magician, too!

*(Jack and the Beanstalk, 12/5/95)*

Don then turned to the end of the book, pointing out that the wizard was also depicted on the back endpages:

He’s here again at the end. And the book says "finished." [The small book the wizard is holding has the word "fins"] He made the book. He’s the magician, the guy who made the whole entire book!

*(Jack and the Beanstalk, 12/5/96)*

Then he made another discovery. Excitedly turning to the second opening, Don pointed out the wizard again, commenting, "Hey, he’s also the guy who sold the beans to Jack!" Don’s series of discoveries demonstrates the potential of the peritext in refining and extending the children’s understanding about the narrative. It also demonstrates the way in which illustrations alone can carry the story line, and children’s understanding of this concept.

Other peritexual features of picturebooks include moveable parts (through tabs, pull-outs, and "pop-ups"), lights, or sound. The latter two features are accomplished through the use of computer chips. In Eric Carle’s (1995) *The Very Lonely Firefly*, the solitary firefly finds a group of friends at the end of the story. As the reader turns to the last page, a microchip is activated, and the fireflies’ many yellow lights literally begin to flash. During one of the small group readalouds of the book, the children were delighted by this surprise:
Trudy: It’s like they’re playing music. It’s like music you can see.

Kenny: A musical firefly chorus!

(The Very Lonely Firefly, Group 2, 3/26/96)

Although there was no audible music, Trudy perceived the flashing lights as "like music you can see," interpreting one sign system in terms of another. Kenny’s comment, "A musical firefly chorus!" also interprets the visual experience of the many fireflies in terms of a musical group: the fireflies flash their lights together, just as a group of people might produce the sound of music with each other.

Conventions for portraying movement.

Since illustrations are static, illustrators have had to evolve certain conventions for portraying movement. For example, the same figure can be shown in several successive poses in what Schwartz (1975) calls "continuous narration." If the illustrator is trying to suggest quick movement, part of the figure may be depicted as blurred. In The Tunnel, one of the books selected for one-to-one readalouds, Anthony Browne (1989) chooses to depict movement with both of these conventions. The seventh opening of this book contains four illustrations in a horizontal sequence which depict a little girl crawling through a tunnel. The first three illustrations (viewing from left to right) show the girl in various crawling positions, and the fourth shows only her legs on the right side of the illustration. In my one-to-one readaloud of The Tunnel with Kenny, he commented, "She’s going, like, she’s that far [pointing to the first picture] and she gets closer [pointing to the second picture] and closer [pointing to the third and four pictures]," indicating that he realized that the sequence of illustration was depicting movement. He also used this knowledge to extend and amplify the text for this page:

Larry: [reading] The tunnel was dark, and damp, and slimy, and scary.

Kenny. And long.

(The Tunnel with Kenny, 1/17/96)
This excerpt shows the way a child used the visual information in the illustrations—the horizontal sequence of pictures stretching across both pages of the double spread—to supplement the verbal text with the observation that the tunnel looked long. In other words, Kenny made meaning from the illustrational sequence on the page and integrated it with the information provided by the words.

Another common way illustrators portray movement is to blur a figure or some part of that figure. In The Tunnel, the little girl becomes frightened and begins to run. The illustration for this episode of the story depicts the girl on the far right side of the page, with one leg stretched forward. The back of her red coat and her white stockings are horizontally smudged or blurred. This page is wordless; the illustration covers the entire page. Part of the text of the previous text reads, "But now she was very frightened and she began to run, faster and faster..." During my one-to-one readaloud of The Tunnel with Julie, I read this text and then turned the page, showing the illustration of the girl. Julie commented, "She’s starting to run faster and faster." When I asked, "How can you tell?" Julie replied, "Because, the red is kind of getting off her dress." In this case, Julie used her knowledge of one convention for depicting movement to confirm the information in the text.

The children sometimes referred to the blurring which indicated movement as a "shadow." In my readaloud of The Tunnel with Terry, he attempted to explain why the viewer might interpret such a blurring or shadow as movement. Adults would probably be hard-pressed to provide such an explanation, and Terry struggled valiantly:

Terry: I wonder sometimes why, when they run so fast that it becomes like you can’t see it too good. Well, when they run so fast, I think, well there’s two reasons I want to say, one is probably, um:

Larry: There’s two reasons why it looks like this [pointing to the blurry part] when they’re running?

Terry: [nods] One is that they’re right here [pointing to the blurry part], and they’re running faster, like where they’re going [pointing to the right side of the girl, which is not blurry], and also, I think—I can think about it but I just
can’t say it! . . . they’re running so fast that they’re probably showing their shadow, like, um, here [places had on left part of page and moves it to the right] they are, and they’re running so fast from there, and then you can see a little bit of them. . . a little bit of them are showing right over here [pointing to the blurry part], and then, it would go away.

(The Tunnel with Terry, 1/17/96)

Terry clearly knows that blurring in an illustration can indicate fast movement, but he wrestles with the clumsiness of words to express this understanding: "I can think about it but I just can’t say it!" In the section of this chapter which concerns the scaffolding provided by adults and expert peers, it will be shown that one method of scaffolding was to provide words—terminology—which assisted children in saying what they knew, and also allowed them to understand more by providing tools for thought.

The portrayal of the illusion of space.

One of the most serious challenges faced by illustrators is the depiction of three-dimensional space on a flat two-dimensional surface. This is not only a matter of perspective (the technical rules which enable the illusion of three-dimensions) but also of point of view. Point of view refers to the illustrator’s manipulation of where the viewer seems to be located in relation to the scene being portrayed. Thus, an important part of the children’s meaning-making with illustrations was an awareness of these aspects of the portrayal of the illusion of space.

During the readaloud of Owl Moon (Yolen, 1987), there were two illustrations that called forth a discussion of illustrational point of view. One illustration (on the twelfth opening of Owl Moon) shows an owl sitting on a tree branch. The figure of the owl takes up most of the illustrational space. The children and the teacher considered how to interpret this portrayal:

?: It looks like he’s really close!

?: But that’s not how close he is, because he’s above them.
Teacher: Yes, he was further away, maybe something like this [holds the book over her head, showing the illustration, in imitation of the owl’s position]

?: I can stare like that, real hard.

Teacher: Probably he was further away, maybe even higher, up like this [stands on her chair, holding the book over the children’s heads].

(Owl Moon, 2/27/96)

In this excerpt, the children notice that the owl looks very close, but also point out that the owl is actually far away because it is positioned above the viewer. The teacher makes this clear by physically positioning the book above the children’s heads.

The other discussion during the readaloud of Owl Moon which tried to make sense of illustrational point of view occurred as the children were looking at the fifteenth opening, which is a side view of a little girl and her father walking up a slight incline. They are depicted rather far away from the viewer, because the figures are small. In back of the figures is the dark green of an evergreen forest. In the foreground is snow, so approximately the bottom third of the illustration is taken up with white snow. Gordon commented that "the snow seems to get bigger and bigger," moving his finger from left to right. The teacher asked the children, "Do you remember what it feels like to walk in snow this deep? What does it feel like? Show me what it looks like when you walk in deep snow." The following discussion suggested that the children were grappling with the difference between a true side view (in which case the strip of white in the bottom third of the illustration would be interpreted as the depth of the snow) and a side view which also included the depiction of a great deal of foreground:

Don: It feels like you’re sinking.

Teacher: Show me.

Julie: Like in quicksand.
Don: [gets up and moves feet up and down very slowly]

Teacher: [speaking while Don is walking] And you walk, and it feels so tiring, it takes so much work to walk in the snow, doesn’t it?

Sean: Snow makes you feel heavy.

Teacher: I think that’s kind of how Jane Yolen wanted you to feel. She wanted you to feel like you were walking in snow when you read this page. I think that’s why she made so much white at the bottom.

Peggy: But that’s not how deep the snow is.

Teacher: No, it’s not that deep, is it, Peggy?

Peggy: It’s just like you’re seeing it from here.  

(Owl Moon, 2/27/96)

Here, with the teacher’s help, the children talked about the effect that such a large amount of foregrounding may have on the viewer: it calls to mind the difficulty of walking in deep snow. Peggy reminded the group, however, that the bottom third of the illustration shouldn’t be interpreted as the depth of the snow. Immediately after the discussion in this excerpt, Terry suggested that the reason "the snow’s bigger on that page" was that "’Cause if the snow wasn’t that big, probably it, probably you wouldn’t be able to see the words on the snow. There wouldn’t be any room for the words." In other words, Terry was commenting on the practical reason for the depiction of a large amount of foreground: the necessity for illustrations that cover a page to include parts that are light enough to provide a space for the printed text.

The semiotic significance of color.

Color is used by illustrators in various ways, including the suggestion of mood or emotion. This semiotic significance of color was explored by the children during the reading of Christopher Coady’s (1991) version of Red Riding Hood. Coady follows Charles Perrault’s version of Red Riding Hood, which ends abruptly and shockingly with the death of Red Riding Hood; in this version, no woodsman comes
to save either the little girl or her grandmother. Coady’s illustrations are correspondingly dark and foreboding. The title page of this book contains an oval illustration of a bare tree, with a full moon behind it. The tree branches and the lower border of the illustration are tinged with red. The following is a portion of the discussion about this page:

100 Sean: At first, there’s some red strokes over the moon [pointing to the title page vignette]

101 Teacher: Some red strokes over the moon.

102 Sean: And down here, too [pointing to the bottom curve of the vignette]

103 Teacher: Yes, red strokes over the moon, and over the picture here, red strokes of paint. Nicole?

104 Nicole: Because it’s Red Riding Hood.

105 Mickey: Because when, um, the hunter cuts him open, there’s blood in the story.

106 Teacher: Do you think that might be something we call foreshadowing, to let you know? Foreshadowing is what allows you to predict what might happen. Because when the illustrator and the author give you little clues to foreshadow what will happen next, and to let you know what will happen next. Julie?

107 Julie: It is October because the leaves are not on the tree.

108 Teacher: And look at that moon: a full moon.

109 Charles: It’s a warning of blood from the wolf that’s going to eat the grandma.

(Coady’s Red Riding Hood, 12/12/95)

At 100, Sean notices the red strokes over the moon and along the border of the illustration. At 104, Nicole suggests that red is appropriate for Red Riding Hood. At 105, Mickey connects the red to the blood in the story, and the teacher (106) takes advantage of these observations to explain the concept of foreshadowing. At 107,
Julie remarks that it must be the fall of the year, and the teacher (108) adds a reference to the moon. Then, at 109, Charles sums it all up: "It's a warning of blood...." The discussion shows that the children are learning how to "read" the visual metaphors in illustration: the visual text. Red can suggest excitement and joy; but it can also be a sign (in the semiotic sense) for danger, warning, or blood.

The association of red with blood in Coady’s version of Red Riding Hood continued throughout the book. The children were building this association, as they commented that there’s "more and more red" in the illustrations as the story progressed. By the end of the story, the association was so strong that their response to the last illustration, showing the empty, rumpled bed with a red bedspread, was one of horror: "Look at the bed! It’s full of blood!"

Another measure of the effect of these illustrations was the lack of "audience participation" during the dramatic series of conversational exchanges between Red Riding Hood and the disguised wolf in most versions of the story, which usually begin, "Oh grandmother, what big eyes you have." During the readalouds of several other (cheerier) versions of the story, the children invariably chimed in at this point, gleefully saying the words along with the teacher. This was not the case during the reading of the Coady version of Red Riding Hood; the teacher read alone, with total silence from the children. Afterwards, the children discussed the other ways in which the illustrator had achieved the effect of "scariness." They pointed out that the illustrations are dark, and seem to get darker as the story progresses. The teacher pointed out the odd perspectives Coady had chosen to use, and suggested that these strange points of view reminded her of a "fun house, a scary fun house." Don compared the illustrations to "The Twilight Zone."

Charles made a spontaneous association of the color red with the emotion of fear during the rereading of 3 Billy Goats Gruff (Dewan, 1994) to his small group on 1/31/96. The illustration on the left-hand page of the seventh opening of this book depicts a frightened little billy goat, with the black shadow of the troll behind. The background of the illustration is dark red. Charles asked a question and then
answered it himself: "Why is it red back here? Oh, I know why, because he got so frightened."

One of the most complex discussions about the semiotic significance of color took place during the readaloud of *The Whales’ Song* (Sheldon, 1990). Trudy mentioned that the illustrations were "dark," and the teacher asked why the illustrator might have chosen to use dark colors:

Julie: Because the whales are blue.

Teacher: Umm. What else?

Kenny: 'Cause it’s really slow, and it’s dark illustrations.

Mickey: Because it’s a relaxed book, and it’s slow, like the ocean.

Kenny: The, um, the darker the color is, the slower the words are. *(The Whales’ Song, 3/21/96)*

The teacher then asked Kenny to point out a specific page where this was so, and he asked her to turn to the opening where the whales are calling Lilly’s name. When the teacher showed the illustration, Kenny said:

Kenny: Can you read it over again? And in, can you read it in a slow voice? 'Cause it’s slow, and it seems like it, like the colors are slow, and the words are slow, too.

Teacher: So with the colors being slow, and the words being read slowly, how does it make you feel?

Kenny: Relaxed. *(The Whales’ Song, 3/21/96)*

The teacher then read the text for that page in two ways: quite slowly and dreamily, and in a fast, clipped manner. Peggy volunteered to read the passage for the third time with her interpretation, and also read slowly and deliberately. The children unanimously agreed that the slow reading matched the mood of the story best.
The illustration which was the focus of this discussion is painted almost monochromatically, with various shades of blue. In this excerpt, we see the children making a rather sophisticated association of dark colors (and particularly blue) with slowness and relaxation. In Coady’s Red Riding Hood, the dark colors suggested fear or unease to the children; but they were also able to perceive another semiotic dimension to dark colors. These examples demonstrate that the children were using the illustrations to interpret the text, and the text to interpret the illustrations. They used the illustrations to interpret the text when they suggested that the teacher read it slowly and calmly; and they used the text to interpret the illustrations when they interpreted the colors as indications of slowness rather than of fear or unease.

Response Styles of Individual Children

The data provide evidence that at least some of the children had response styles that could be differentiated from those of the other children to the extent that there was an identifiable "signature" to their responses. In this section, the individual response styles of four children are described. These children--Sally, Charles, Krissy, and Jim--were four of the ten participants in the small group readalouds, and also participated in the one-to-one readalouds. Thus, these children’s responses were included in all three readaloud contexts. The brief portraits which begin the discussion of each child’s response style were constructed from my own observations and cross-checked with Ms. Bigler in order to ensure accuracy.

Sally’s response style.

Sally was a first-grader, a child with Native American heritage. She was an excellent reader, able to read independently and understand most picture storybooks and longer "chapter books." Her demeanor was usually thoughtful and purposive; she was not tolerant of nonsense in others or herself. Her artwork was sensitive and meticulous; she took great pains to get things "just right" in a painting, a chart, or a book. She was able to sustain herself through projects which took days or even weeks. Sally was respected by everyone, even the most aggressive boys; she could
deal with them efficiently without being drawn into their name-calling and bickering. Of all the girls, she demonstrated the most freedom from limiting gender stereotypes, while retaining an element of gentleness. She was an affectionate child, frequently embracing Ms. Bigler. If she hurt another child’s feelings, she was apt to sensitively seek a reconciliation. Fairness and justice were important concerns to Sally.

Sally’s skill in reading enabled her to respond to details of print. During the reading of *Chicken Little* (Kellogg, 1985), she was able to read the word "poultry" on the side of Foxy Loxy’s truck. Later in the story, Foxy Loxy disguises his truck, changing the last three letters in "poultry" so that it reads "pouline." Foxy Loxy also disguises himself as a policeman, in order to fool the unsuspecting fowl. Sally was able to see the humor in this change because of her reading ability.

Logical reasoning and close analysis were Sally’s specialties. In *Piggybook* (Browne, 1986), there is an illustration of a pink flying pig near the bottom left-hand corner of the title page. The same vignette appears twice on the dedication page, near the bottom left-hand corner and near the top right-hand corner. Julie pointed out that it seemed as if the pig were moving from one page to another. Sally responded with a critique:

> But if it was one pig and it was showing movement, then, like where the pig is up real high, or where it’s down low, it’d be showing like the *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, where the goat is running towards the troll, and he shows, like, shadows. I think that he should’ve done that, the author should’ve done that. *(Piggybook, Group 1, 2/12/96)*

Sally’s point was that if the author-illustrator wanted to indicate movement, he should have used the technique of blurring the figures of the pigs (which the children often referred to as "shadows"). Her intertextual reference to the *3 Billy Goats Gruff* (Dewan, 1994) was used to back up her reasoning, because the multiple figures of the goat moving toward the troll are blurred in *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, conveying the impression of speed and movement. Indeed, she frequently made intertextual connections to bolster her arguments.
The Victorians’ feeling that life is real and life is earnest would have resonated with Sally. Although she was by no means a dour child and appreciated a joke or the humor in a situation, there was nevertheless a serious cast to her responses. During the rereading of *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, there was a hilarious discussion provoked by the illustration of a toilet among the troll’s belongings. In the illustration, the toilet is crammed with junk; this prompted Julie’s comment that "It’s probably his toy box!" This opened the way for several children to tell toilet stories. Terry remembered that he once thought toilets were places "put your umbrellas in." Others chimed in as well:

Charles: One of my friends, one of my friends told me when he was five or four, he put his head in the toilet!

??: [laughter]

Julie: My brother, he almost put his head in the dog dish!

Larry: Well, I know that dogs take drinks out of toilets.

?: I know! I know!

Sally: That’s why we had to give up my favorite puppy. . . My stepmom cried because we had to give him up. He drank out of the toilet too much.

(Rereading of *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, Group 1, 1/31/96)

Although she rarely made performative responses herself, Sally appreciated the performative responses of others—to a point. *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* (Scieszka, 1992) plays with the conventions of the picturebook and the conventions of traditional stories. "Title page" is printed on the title page in huge letters; endpages are inserted before the end of the story; the table of contents falls on all the characters; and the stories--like "The Princess and the Bowling Ball," "The Really Ugly Duckling," and "Little Red Running Shorts"-- have bizarre twists of plot. Even the endflaps are out of control, and seemed to provoke the performances in the following excerpt:
100 Larry: [reading end flap] Only 16.99! 56 action-packed pages. 75% more than those old 32-page "Brand-X" books. 10 complete stories! 25 lavish paintings! New! Improved! Funny! Good! Buy! Now!

101 Terry: Why?

102 Julie: It got a medal, too!


104 Larry: What? OK, "why"?


106 Larry: [laughing] OK. New! Improved! Funny! Good! Buy! Now!

107 Terry: I don't wanna go "bye" now. I don't wanna go bye-bye now!

108 Gordon: Me neither!

109 All: Bye-bye! Bye-bye!

110 Terry: I don't want to go to the bathroom and be the stinky cheese man!

111 ??: [uproarious laughter]

112 Sally: [laughing] Enough of this goofiness!

(The Stinky Cheese Man, Group 1, 2/6/96)

At 101, Terry interrogated the text: why should we buy the book, just because it tells us to? Julie tried to keep us on track with her comment at 102, but the other children were having none of it. At 103 and 105, Gordon set up an imitative display of the language of the book: "How come? Because. Where? When? Who?" which I fed into by rereading part of the text (106). At 107 and 110, Terry made moves that the deconstructive critic Geoffrey Hartman would be proud of, punning and using the text as a springboard for his own transgressive text-to-life connection. At 112, Sally brought us back to earth.
Sally's comments through the readaloud of *The Stinky Cheese Man* demonstrated her astute critical eye and her amused incredulity that anyone could have actually written and published such a crazy book. At one point she declared, "I don't believe you're really reading this!"—she thought that I was making it up. About "The Boy Who Cried 'Cow Patty'," she commented, "This should be 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf'." When I read "The Princess and the Pea," she asked, "How could he lift one hundred mattresses?" After "The Really Ugly Duckling" (the shortest story in the book), she said, "That was a short one. It needs to be longer." At one point, the Little Red Hen asks, "Where is that lazy illustrator? Where is that lazy author?" Sally answered the Little Red Hen's question: "The illustrator and the author are probably making another stupid book." She was laughing as she said this, indicating that she was enjoying the odd qualities of the book but also maintaining a critical distance.

One of the common patterns in Sally's responses was a concern with identifying the relationships between fictional stories and reality. During the reading of *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, she stated "There is no such thing as a troll" at two points in the story. In *Chicken Little*, she observed that "the sky can't fall," and that a parachute was much too small for the large hippo who had bailed out of his helicopter. This concern, however, did not seem to interfere with her appreciation of stories. Rather, it seemed to be one of her ways of exploring the intricacies of the fiction/truth connection.

Sally was proud of her Native American heritage, and identified herself as a Native American during readalouds. In *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991), Grace likes to engage in make-believe play, and one illustration depicts her dressed as a Native American. Sally commented, "I'm an Indian already." Gordon challenged this, saying, "You didn't come from the Indian places;" but Sally was able to counter this with her statement that "Just because, um, you're an Indian doesn't mean you have to come from an Indian place. They live anywhere." Gordon then apologized. When there were images of Native Americans in storybooks, Sally identified herself with them.
A keen sensitivity to the feelings of story characters was another aspect of Sally's response style. During the reading of *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991), she worried about the old woman who was ejected from the airport, and wondered how the little boy could manage alone on the weekends when his father went to find work. This book ends ambiguously; the boy and his father still live in the airport, and the boy is hoping that some day they will have enough money to live in an apartment. Sally commented, "I hope they make a part two of that story, that story's interesting." By wishing for a "part two," she sought a happy ending for the boy and his father.

Sally's responses demonstrated a concern with justice, fairness, and gender equity. In *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, the troll posts a sign which reads, "Stop. Pay troll. Then go away." Sally's comment after I read the sign was, "That's not fair." *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991), with its message that to be African American and female should not hinder a person from accomplishing what she wants to do, struck a responsive chord in Sally. Part of the text reads, "Raj said, 'You can't be Peter--that's a boy's name.'" Sally immediately said, "So?", indicating that she didn't see any problem. After a child says that Grace can't be Peter Pan because Grace is black, Sally commented, "I hope Grace is Peter Pan." During the reading of *Piggybook* (Browne, 1986), she was incensed that the father and two sons lay about the house while the mother, Mrs. Piggott, had to do all the work: "They eat like pigs. They act like pigs." When I asked, "If you were Mrs. Piggott, how would you feel about Mr. Piggott and Simon and Patrick?" Sally's reaction was, "I wouldn't leave, I'd tell 'em to get out right now!" In the story, Mrs. Piggott leaves the house for a few days to teach the father and sons a lesson. Sally thought that Mrs. Piggott should have been the one to stay, and that the father and sons should have been ordered out; in other words, she saw a more active and assertive role for Mrs. Piggott in the story.

In summary, Sally's response style was characterized by a precision of interpretation and the use of logical reasoning; astuteness in critical judgement; empathy for the feelings of story characters; an avoidance of performative responses and a tendency to "put on the brakes" when she felt the discussion was getting out of
hand; a sense of her Native American identity; a concern for identifying the
relationships between fiction and reality; and a sensitivity to issues of justice and
fairness.

Charles’s response style.

Charles was an African American child who was in second grade at the time
of the study. He was a great lover of stories; his favorites were books about Anansi
the Spider, an African folktale character. One of the leaders of the boys and one of
the tallest children in the class, he had a tempestuous and active nature which made
some children wary of his moods and the physical way in which he sometimes dealt
with his anger. He participated in the free lunch program at the school and lived with
his mother, brothers and sisters, and an aunt (who also was a single parent) and her
children. He was quick to express his likes and dislikes—of stories, of the teacher’s
directions, or of other children’s behavior. In his best moments, Charles charmed us
all with his handsome and expressive face, affectionate nature, beatific smile, and
winning ways. He was a wonderfully exuberant responder to literature, becoming
caught up in the story and interpreting in a sophisticated manner which bespoke a rich
background of hearing many stories read aloud, even before he was exposed to the
rich use of literature in Ms. Bigler’s classroom.

Along with one other child, Charles displayed the greatest number of
performative responses in the class. One of the most representative of his often brief
but hilariously funny performative responses occurred during the reading of Chicken
Little (Kellogg, 1985), which begins with a wanted poster for Foxy Loxy:

Larry: [reading] Wanted, Foxy Loxy, for kidnapping poultry and
committing other dreadful crimes. Warning: Foxy Loxy is shrewd, rude,
mean, and dangerous. If you see him, call the police immediately.

Charles: [laughing] 1-800, dial 9-1-1!  

(Chicken Little, Group 1, 12/14/95)
Charles’s performative responses were occasionally musical in nature, and he was the only child who responded in this way during storybook readalouds. During the reading of *Chicken Little*, he responded to a portion of the text which described Foxy Loxy (dressed as a policeman) talking about taking Chicken Little and her friends to "headquarters":

Charles: Headquarters mean police.

Larry: Do you think headquarters might mean the police, Charles?

Charles: Or cops.

Gordon: Or it might mean, um:

Charles: [singing] Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do when they come for you?  

*Chicken Little*, Group 1, 12/14/96)

After the readaloud, I asked him about the source of this song, and Charles told me that it was the theme song of a television program called "Cops." This response was an intertextual connection used in a performative manner. Another singing response occurred after I read the title of the book *Bad Day At Riverbend* (Van Allsburg, 1995), when he broke into a chorus of "Down by the Riverside."

Charles commonly took on the role of characters in the story by speaking for them, giving them his own distinctive voice. During the small group readaloud of *Piggybook* (Browne, 1986), for example, he responded to the description of Mrs. Piggott’s daily chores with another incisive intertextual connection which had performative intent:

Larry: [reading] As soon as they had eaten, Mrs. Piggott washed the dishes, washed the clothes, did the ironing, and then cooked some more.

Charles: Cinderella, Cinderella! Get your butt down here!  

*Piggybook*, Group 1, 2/12/96)
We can be fairly certain that Charles had never heard a version of Cinderella in which the stepsisters speak to Cinderella in quite so colloquial a manner. Charles's response was his own signifying invention.

A wry sense of humor and an appreciation for the absurd characterized many of Charles's responses. For example, during the reading of Coady's Red Riding Hood, when the teacher commented that children were supposed to learn a lesson from the story, Charles had the last interpretive word:

Teacher: Remember, we talked about how children were supposed to learn something from the story?

Gordon: Yeah, like don't talk to strangers.

Teacher: Yes, this tells us what we're supposed to learn. [reading] From that day until this, the sad story of Red Riding Hood has been a lesson to all children. This cautionary tale is meant to make them frightened of creatures like wolves, who can be pleasant and charming when other people are nearby. But these creatures can be very dangerous indeed, as Red Riding Hood unfortunately found out.

Charles: She didn't learn nothin'-- she was dead!

(Coady's Red Riding Hood, 12/12/96)

Charles's most consistent stance was that of the predictor, and he took great pleasure in confirming his predictions. After predicting that Foxy Loxy would catch and eat Chicken Little and her friends during the reading of Chicken Little (Kellogg, 1985), Charles was glad to hear the wicked fox imagine how "that little featherhead will make a tasty chicken-salad sandwich," and shouted, "Oh I seen that comin'!"

There was a total of six predictions during his small group's readaloud of Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995), and Charles made all six predictions. Nor was he satisfied with making one prediction at a time; he was apt to make several. During my one-to-one readaloud of The Tunnel (Browne, 1989) with him, Charles began predicting from his first sight of the front cover, which depicts a girl crawling into a
tunnel. A book lies at the entrance to the tunnel, and Charles used this detail in his predictions:

Charles: Girl's goin' in the tunnel, and probably ### in the book.

Larry: Probably what?

Charles: She probably gets sent in that book [pointing to the book at the entrance of the tunnel] or the witch, um, sends her, or she's runnin' from something.

(The Tunnel with Charles, 1/17/96)

Here, Charles makes three predictions: (1) the girl will enter the story world of the open book lying beside the tunnel; (2) the witch (in the tiny illustration in the open book) will magically send the girl; or (3) she may be running away from something. The first prediction, in fact, was uncannily prescient, because the girl does enter a bizarre fairytale world when she crawls through the tunnel in search of her brother.

Another characteristic of Charles's predictions was that they were not simply about what might happen next in the story, but often took the longer view of predicting large chunks of the narrative or the end of the story. During the reading of An Angel for Solomon Singer (Rylant, 1992) on 11/22/95, he predicted what would happen to the impoverished main character, who lives alone in a fleabag hotel: "He's gonna find a car and a dog and get a house and have some nice clothes to wear and shoes to wear."

In summary, Charles's response style was characterized by a preference for exuberant performative responses, which included music; speaking in the role of story characters and giving them his own distinctive voice; a wry sense of humor and appreciation for the absurd; and a tendency to make many (and multiple) predictions.

**Krissy's response style.**

Krissy was in first grade at the time of the study. A beautiful child with large dark eyes and honey-colored skin, she gave the appearance of being African
American. Her mother, however, was European-American, and it was likely that she had biracial heritage. Krissy was an artistic child; she loved to paint, draw, and to involve herself in art projects and plays, much preferring these activities to reading or writing. She also was an enthusiastic appreciator of the creative efforts of others. She always wore a dress and showed concern about her appearance. (She was thrilled when the children said that she looked like Lilly in The Whales’ Song.) She was frequently late to school, which seemed to make it difficult for her to join in group activities. Creative flights of fancy were common with Krissy; she loved the housekeeping corner with its potential for dress-up.

The strongest element in Krissy’s response style was her tendency to suggest creative activities that she and the other children could do as a result of hearing the story. "We could make a story about that" or "we could make a play about that" are responses of hers which occur over and over again in the transcripts and field notes. After hearing the teacher read The Iguana Brothers (Johnson, 1995) on 11/20/95, she thought that it would make a "good story," and suggested that "we could paint an iguana. Everybody could make an iguana and hang it on the walls and we could bring Icarus out so he could look at our pictures." Icarus was the iguana in the classroom, and Krissy envisioned making some playmates for him. On 11/21/95, she was greatly enthused by Somebody and the Three Blairs (Tollhurst, 1990): "This would make a great puppet show!" On 12/5/95 during the reading of Jack and the Beanstalk (Kellogg, 1991), she commented, "I made a book of this myself." For Krissy, then, a story seemed to spark her own imaginative process, as she thought about ways in which she could make the story her own, through drama, art, or writing. She also appreciated the ways in which other children had made the story their own; during a rereading of Strega Nona (dePaola, 1975) on 11/22/95, she thought of the song that Robert had invented called ‘Here Comes Pasta’: "Remember the song that Robert made, ‘Here Comes Pasta’? That was really a great song."

Another aspect of Krissy’s creativity was her fondness for inventing possible alternatives to the plot of a story. During the same reading of Strega Nona, she wondered, "What if she [Strega Nona] put a magic spell on the pot and made it fly
with her?" During the reading of Little Red Riding Hood (Hyman, 1983) on 1/23/96, Krissy suggested that the wolf could have simply eaten Red Riding Hood when he first met her and "took off her clothes, and put it on him" before going to grandmother's house.

Many of Krissy's responses during readalouds began with the phrase "I wonder why." Particularly common were questions about the author or illustrator's intentions. On 11/22/95, when the teacher showed the front cover of An Angel for Solomon Singer (Rylant, 1992) with its blind-stamped images of a cup, a moon, and buildings, Krissy asked, "I wonder why the author did that?" These speculations were valuable for the other children because they provided intriguing questions which could be discussed. During the reading of the Hyman (1983) version of Little Red Riding Hood, she wondered "why the author didn't show the blood" in the illustration accompanying the huntsman's killing of the wolf; this question was the catalyst for a discussion about what illustrators show and do not choose to show in their illustrations.

Krissy was sensitive to various artistic styles, and especially curious about the medium or media illustrators had employed. Upon seeing the front cover of Night in the Country (Rylant, 1991) on 2/12/96, she remarked that "On the cover, I like the way that the author made the grass, 'cause I see some, like orange strokes, and a little bit of red." She continued by remembering "when Sally did her painting for Rapunzel, for her grass, I like the way the author did that." In this response, she was comparing the technique utilized for suggesting grass in the book to the way Sally had painted grass in an art project. Krissy's debate with the teacher and other children about the art medium used in Christopher Coady's (1991) version of Red Riding Hood, as well as her speculations about the way the endpages of Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991) were produced have already been discussed. It was Krissy's questions about the dappled watercolor technique of the illustrator Jerry Pinckney that induced a general interest in Impressionist painting, and led the class to an examination of pointillism. Krissy also provided advice for illustrators; for example,
she suggested that the illustrator of The Stinky Cheese Man (Scieszka, 1992) could produce a scratch-and-sniff version!

Of all the girls in the class, Krissy displayed the most performative responses. The dedication in Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995), "To Sophia, my little buckaroo," inspired Krissy’s performative response, "My little Bucky Beaver teeth!" After Jim’s identification of the Wild Things’ dance in Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963) as the "oogie boogie dance," Krissy volunteered to demonstrate this dance to the class. The front cover of Piggybook (Browne, 1986), which depicts a woman giving a piggyback ride to a man and two boys, prompted her to launch spontaneously into a little story about it:

"Give me a piggy ride," said the big brother. "Give me a piggy ride," said the little one. "And me a piggy ride," said the, the dad. "Give me a piggy ride," said everybody. And mom carried dad and mom carried the brothers, I mean the little, the two childs.

(Piggybook, Group 2, 2/15/96)

In summary, Krissy’s response style was characterized by frequent suggestions for ways in which she and her friends could make the story their own through drama, art, or writing; an appreciation for the creative efforts of others; suggestions for alternatives to the plot of stories; speculative wondering about the intentions of illustrators and authors; sensitivity to artistic styles and media; and performative responses.

Jim’s response style.

Jim, a European-American child, was a first-grader at the time of the study, and the only one of these four children who lived in an intact family. A sturdily-built child, he was nevertheless gentle and mild-mannered. Neither the teacher nor I ever saw him angry or out of sorts. Jim was eager to please the teacher and to conform to all the rules of the school and the classroom. He was liked by all the children, who seemed to appreciate his good nature and his steady, unflappable personality. His
reading ability developed at a rapid pace during the year, and he was tirelessly interested in the visual features of print. Jim involved himself in lengthy and complex projects (for example, he designed and made a board game and wrote the rules for playing it), and was able to sustain his interest in these projects over time. He was an independent worker, who could socialize and still get his tasks accomplished through perseverance.

Jim rarely spoke during large group readalouds. Over the course of the small group readalouds, he became more involved and willing to join the conversation, though he was more verbally responsive even in the first small group readaloud than in the large group. His comments often seemed the result of a reflective, ruminative stance; they conveyed the impression that Jim had listened very carefully to what had been said, and had put together many details of the narrative. For example, he generated more thematic and quasi-thematic statements than anyone else in the class. During a discussion concerning the choice of the author-illustrator of Ira Sleeps Over (Waber, 1972) to show a teddy bear in color (brown) on an otherwise black and white page, several children offered possible reasons, but only Jim’s was related to the storyline as a whole:

Gordon: 'Cause it’s brown.

Joey: 'Cause probably the author did it, probably.

Teacher: Yeah, the author-illustrator did that:

Gordon: 'Cause it’s brown, it’s supposed to be brown.

Joey: Because it’s dark.

Teacher: Jim, what do you think?

Jim: 'Cause everyone’s talking about it and that’s like what everything’s about.

Teacher: Ah, did you guys all hear that? Jim, would you say that really loud, again?

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Jim: Everybody was talking about it, and the story's about it, the whole story's about the teddy bear.

*(Ira Sleeps Over, 3/4/96)*

It was characteristic of Jim that his response had to be encouraged by the teacher during this whole group readaloud; it was also characteristic that it indicated that he had thought about the whole story.

This generalizing tendency or predilection to take a broad perspective was a constant pattern in Jim's responses. His feeling, in the small group readaloud of *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991) that an illustration of the bird was repeated on the back cover because "it was important to the boy" represents this tendency to put together details in the story so as to see their general significance. The reading of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963), the whole group readaloud during which he made the most responses, included a discussion of the increasing size of the illustrations as Max's fantasy grows in the first half of the book, and the decreasing size of the illustrations as Max returns home from his adventure with the Wild Things. The discussion proceeded as follows:

[teacher shows the illustration sequence quickly, paging through the book]

Kenny: Bigger and bigger.

Krissy: And then it's going to fill up the whole page [during the Wild Rumpus episode]

Gordon: 'Cause the trees are gettin' bigger and bigger and bigger.

Teacher: Why do you think it's so small here, with all the white around [showing first opening] and here [showing sixth opening] is when Maurice Sendak chooses for the illustration to fill the whole page? What happens on this page? Bill?

Bill: Because most of it gets really small, and then, bigger and bigger, and that's because the trees are getting bigger.

Jim: Um, because some jungles are that big, and um, that's what the whole thing's about, 'cause it's where the wild things are, and, and that place is
important, 'cause that's where the wild things are, and he wanted to get it bigger, so you could see more.

(Where the Wild Things Are, 3/11/96)

This comment was typical, in that Jim was concerned with "what the whole thing's about;" rather than being caught up in the details, he attempted to put these details together.

The details in Changes, one of Anthony Browne's (1990) most surreal picturebooks, are quite seductive. However, although Jim enjoyed all the transformations of furniture and other objects into animals, he did not lose sight of the main point of the book, which concerns the even greater changes which will be experienced by the main character of the story when his mother and father bring his new baby sister home from the hospital. Of the ten children to whom I read this book, Jim was the only one to make a voluntary unsolicited quasi-thematic statement about it: "Mom gets pregnant, that's why things are going to change, 'cause he ain't gonna be the only kid now, in that house."

Summarizing statements were a specialty of Jim's. In Steven Kellogg's (1985) Chicken Little, Foxy Loxy dreams of all the wonderful meals he will have when he catches the feckless fowl. Foxy Loxy does not realize any of his culinary fantasies, however; he is caught and put in jail, and his diet is "green bean gruel and weed juice," which we see him pouring out of his cell window on the back cover of the book. Jim's incisive comment about the whole story was this: "All the things, he like really wished in his head, they didn't happen. And all the things he didn't wish, they happened" (12/14/96).

Jim was concerned with doing things correctly himself, and so it was perhaps natural that he would be concerned about how illustrators and authors accomplished their tasks. During the reading of Where the Wild Things Are, Jim had an answer for Krissy's question, "I wonder why the author did not put a picture on the last page":

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I know something for Krissy’s question. Because, maybe some books need time, and maybe he had wrote the words, and he was about to do the pictures, but maybe, maybe he was out of time, and he had to get the book in to the publisher. Maybe some books have time to get it done, maybe he, like needed a lot of time because he, like, tried to do it neat, but when he was finished the last page, when he wrote the words, it looks like the publisher said it’s all the time he had, and he had to return it now, and he didn’t have time to finish it. (Where the Wild Things Are, 3/11/96)

Here, Jim’s own concerns about his school work (to be neat and efficiently finished) seemed to be transferred to Maurice Sendak’s publishing deadline. (And who is to say that Jim wasn’t right?)

In summary, Jim’s response style was characterized by a reflective and ruminative approach which used active listening to draw together many threads of the story and the discussion, as shown in his tendency to generalize and to make thematic or quasi-thematic statements. He often made summarizing statements which encapsulated much of the plot. He demonstrated an interest in how authors and illustrators accomplished the task of publishing books.

The findings presented in this section demonstrate that although the whole class had constructed a view of literary understanding, there were nevertheless discernible differences and unique perspectives in at least some children’s individual constructions. Other children in the class had similar "signature" responses which may have been part of their special response style. Kenny’s inventive tendency to use the story as a stimulus for his own stories; Terry’s analytical tendency to want to prove his statements by reference to the text; Gordon’s interest in the arrangement of illustrations on the page (Ms. Bigler and I called him "Mr. Double-page Spread"); Trudy’s acute interpretation of symbols; --these special interests and perspectives argue an individual quality to these children’s responses, as well. The next section, which deals with the social construction of meaning, takes up this conceptual thread again.

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Expert Others as Scaffolders and Enablers of Literary Understanding

The focus of this section is the findings related to the second research question for the study:

How do "expert others" (adults and more knowledgeable peers) scaffold the children’s developing literary understanding during picture storybook readalouds?

In this section, the five conceptual categories of adults’ talk which emerged from the analysis of the readaloud data are discussed, and examples are provided for each category. Following this, the ways in which each category assisted in scaffolding the children’s developing literary understanding are dealt with in turn. After the discussion of adults as scaffolders and enablers of literary understanding, there is a discussion devoted to children’s enabling of the literary understanding of their peers. The section ends with a presentation of findings related to the social construction of meaning.

Conceptual Categories for Adults’ Talk

There were five broad conceptual categories for the conversation that the adults (both Ms. Bigler and I) contributed during the readalouds.

In Category 1, adults functioned as Readers of the text. They read the words of the verbal text of the story, including the publishing information, book jacket flaps, and other information. They commented directly about the visual aspects of the text, pointing out various words ("yes, that word is ‘changes’"). They essentially acted as tour guides for the book, pointing out various parts of the books ("here are the endpages"). This category comprised approximately 28% of the adult conversational turns for all the coded readalouds.

In Category 2, adults acted as both Managers and Encouragers. They managed the discussion by calling on children, asking children to wait, by dealing with disturbances, or by directing the children’s attention to an item in the story or to another child’s comment. They encouraged children with praise or with remarks or utterances which tended to continue the children’s responses. This category
comprised approximately 36% of the adult conversational turns for all the coded readalouds.

In Category 3, the adults reacted to children’s responses by acting as Clarifiers or Probers. They connected a child’s remark to another remark by pointing out how it supported, extended, amplified, or contradicted what had been previously said. They asked for more information or explanation from the children. They asked questions to which they probably already knew the answer, or they asked general questions such as, "Do you have any predictions about what might happen?" They directed children’s attention to an element of text or illustration in order to make a link to it later on, or they pointed out previous linkages which had been made. This category comprised approximately 28% of the adult conversational turns for all the coded readalouds.

In Category 4, adults acted as Fellow Wonderers or Speculators. They questioned and wondered along with the children, putting themselves in the position of fellow seekers after sensible interpretations. They also acted as fellow players or performers, playfully contributing to the creative flight of the children’s imaginations. This category comprised approximately 3% of the adult conversational turns for all the coded readalouds.

In Category 5, the adults acted as Extenders or Refiners of children’s responses. They took advantage of "teachable moments," moments in the discussion at which new concepts or new interpretations could be introduced. They continued or amplified a child’s thought. They summarized groups of responses so as to achieve closure in the discussion. They reminded children of what they already knew in order to make a generalization. This category comprised approximately 5% of the adult conversational turns for all the coded readalouds.

The frequencies and percentages of the five categories of the adults’ talk during all the coded readalouds are summarized in the following chart (Figure 4.2). (Frequencies and percentages of the categories of adult talk for each readaloud in the large group, small group, and one-to-one situations appear in charts in Appendix K.)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1 Reader</th>
<th>Category 2 Manager/Encourager</th>
<th>Category 3 Clarifier/Prober</th>
<th>Category 4 Wonderer/Speculator</th>
<th>Category 5 Extender/Refiner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1037</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2. Frequencies and Percentages of Coding Categories for Adult Talk During All Coded Readalouds.

Examples of the Categories of Adults’ Talk

The following excerpt from the transcript of the whole group readaloud discussion of *Where the Wild Things Are* (Sendak, 1963) provides examples of each of the five categories for adult talk. The excerpt is from the middle part of the readaloud, and deals with some of the Wild Rumpus scene, in which the Wild Things cavort, with Max as their leader. The excerpt also includes the discussion about the double page spread immediately after the Wild Rumpus scene, where Max is beginning to think about going home. The text of the book (which Ms. Bigler read) is in **bold** font, the numbers of the categories are in brackets, and the conversational turns are numbered, beginning with 100. The term "opening" (in brackets) indicates that a page has been turned, and includes a description of the illustrations for that double spread.

[13th opening; a wordless page, showing Max and four Wild Things hanging from several trees by their hands. The background is light blue.]

100 [3] Teacher: What would you make up for this part, Joey?

101 Joey: "They swing like monkeys."

102 ??: EE, EE, EE, EE! [monkey sounds]

103 Julie: It looks like monkey bars.

104 [2] Teacher: Oh, the trees look like monkey bars?
[14th opening; another wordless page, showing Max and five Wild Things, walking or dancing in a line. Max sits astride the back of one of the Wild Things. The background is dark green and black.]


106 Kenny: You could tell your own story!

107 [5] Teacher: You could tell your own story even if there were words on the page.

108 Joey: You could say it in your head.

109 Krissy: Your brain can't talk.

110 Terry: You could think in your head with words.

[15th opening; shows Max sitting on a three-legged stool in a striped tent, looking bored or pensive. Three Wild Things doze beside him. The eyes of the Wild Thing on the extreme left are half-open.]

111 [1] Teacher: "Now stop!" Max said and sent the wild things off to bed without their supper. And Max the king of all wild things was lonely and wanted to be where someone loved him best of all. Then all around from far away across the world he smelled good things to eat so he gave up being king of where the wild things are. [The children read along with this.]

112 Joey: Miss Bigler, it looks like, on that one, he should be asleep, but his eyes are open.

113 Gordon: His nose is big, he looks like he's fat!


115 Krissy: Or maybe he looks like he's old, like he's bored.

(Where the Wild Things Are, 3/11/96)

This excerpt was chosen because it provides examples of each of the five categories for adult talk within a small number of conversational turns. At 111, the teacher acts as the reader of the text; this conversational turn represents the simplest example of Category 1, the teacher as Reader.
At 104, the teacher responds to Julie's remark that Max and the Wild Things look like they are swinging from monkey bars. The teacher's comment, "Oh the trees look like monkey bars?" acts to acknowledge and praise Julie, and possibly to encourage her to continue to say more (although Julie did not, in fact, say anything else). The comment also acts as a managing device, in that it controls the discussion. This comment is therefore an example of Category 2, the teacher as Manager and Encourager.

At 100, the teacher asks a specific question to a specific child: "What would you make up for this part, Joey?" The opening she has just shown is wordless, so she is inviting Joey to make up his own words to go with the illustration. In other words, she is trying to elicit an interpretive response to the illustration. In 105, after she has shown another wordless double page spread, the teacher clarifies the meaning of the illustration by providing a gloss; since the background of the illustration is dark, the teacher interprets this as an indication that the Wild Rumpus has continued into the night. These two conversational turns are examples of Category 3, the teacher as Clarifier or Prober.

At 114, the teacher adds her own speculative interpretive response to other speculations that Joey and Gordon have made concerning the Wild Thing on the extreme left of the double page spread. Joey thinks that the Wild Thing "should be asleep, but his eyes are open." Gordon comments that the Wild Thing's nose is big and that "he looks like he's fat!" The teacher's comment indicates that she has joined this conversation as another participant who may add her own opinion. Her stance here as Fellow Wonderer or Speculator is an example of Category 4.

At 107, there is a brief and very subtle "teachable moment." Kenny says, "You could tell your own story," because there are no words on the page. This is true, but the teacher takes advantage of this moment to comment that it is also possible to "tell your own story" when there are words on the page. She is acting as an Extender and Refiner of Kenny's response (Category 5).

It is clear that the teacher could move across the categories with great fluidity and flexibility; in this excerpt, she moved across all five categories in the short space
of 16 conversational turns, 6 of which were her own. How were these various conversational turns on the part of adults related to the children’s responses? In other words, what did the adults’ moves help the children to do, and how was the children’s understanding scaffolded? The following is an analysis of the same excerpt which, instead of simply instantiating the categories, seeks to answer these questions.

When adults probed for a response (as at 100), they almost invariably got one. In this instance (as my field notes for this readaloud show) Ms. Bigler utilized this type of probing question to engage the attention of Joey, who was prone to off-task behavior which irritated the other children. Her question, however, not only re-engaged Joey; indirectly, it enabled the responses at 102 and 103, in which several children used Joey’s speculation to make their own interpretive comments. The teacher’s encouragement of Julie at 104, though it did not in this case result in further response from Julie, often did have this effect. It was also a simple way of giving the children the message that their responses were valuable. When Kenny remarked that "you could tell your own story" from the illustrations, the teacher made one of the implications of his comment clear: in this passing moment, she taught the children something extremely important. The message was that the children did not need to be bound to the words on the page. They could use their imaginations to tell their own story. This was a message of empowerment, ownership, and control for the children. Three children then amplified on the concept that Kenny and the teacher had developed together. Joey (now totally engaged) thought of one way "you could tell your own story": you could say it in your head. Joey’s comment (108) shows that he had gotten the point of the teacher’s "teachable moment." Krissy’s response (109) questioned the validity of Joey’s comment, but Terry (110) supported Joey by rewording Joey’s remark to make it clearer.

At 111, the teacher returned to being the reader of the story. Her own expressive reading constituted an interpretation of the story, so it was really the teacher’s performance of the story (rather than the story itself) which the children were experiencing and to which they were responding. The adult reader was the lens through which the children saw the story. The teacher was quite willing to share the
role of reader with the children, as shown by the way they read along with her. She knew that they were quite familiar with this story, and that it gave them pleasure to show their mastery of the story in this manner.

The teacher's last conversational turn (at 114) shows the way she was able to join the children's discussion without directing it. The fact that Krissy added her own speculation after the teacher's response demonstrates that the teacher's comment was taken as one in a series of equally probable speculations, rather than being the final word.

This excerpt is drawn from a readaloud in which Ms. Bigler was the principal "expert other." There was, of course, another adult who conducted readalouds; I was the reader for the small group and one-to-one situations. However, the categories which are being discussed arose from a comprehensive analysis of all the data, and the patterns discussed below—the ways in which the adult's comments related to and scaffolded the children's responses—were discernible whether the reader was Ms. Bigler or I. The next group of sections, then, seeks to lay out the various aspects of assistance represented by the five types of adult talk: if the children were indeed constructing their own view of literary understanding, how did adults provide the framework or scaffold for such a construction? Other children, of course, also functioned as scaffolders and enablers of their peers' response and understanding; findings related to the topic of children as expert others are reserved for discussion after the presentation of the findings related to the adults' function in the scaffolding process.

Aspects of the Scaffolding Provided by Category 1 of Adult Talk: Reader

A little more than a quarter of all the adult conversational turns (28%) were devoted to reading the picture storybook. The most basic scaffolding function fulfilled by adults when they read was to make the verbal text of the story available to the children, many of whom would not have been able to read it for themselves. The adults, in other words, mediated the story for the children by presenting it to them in an (oral) format which was accessible to them. On this view, storybook readalouds
represented an accommodation to the children's zones of proximal development. Beyond this basic scaffolding function of reading aloud, however, there was evidence of other aspects of the scaffolding function displayed by the adults when they were acting as readers.

As readers of the story, the adults were tour guides or docents. A tour guide is a knowledgeable person who organizes the experience of those who are less knowledgeable about a particular place, so that they can get the most out of their experience. A docent in a museum has a similar function, pointing out aspects of the museum's collection which deserve special scrutiny. Tour guides and docents are therefore scaffolders of the experience of those they accompany. Ms. Bigler and I, in our role as readers, also scaffolded the children's experience of the story by pointing out particular features of it. The simplest way we did this was to point out the parts of the book: "Here are the endpages;" "Here's the title page;" "This is the dedication page." By focusing attention on a particular part of the book, we conveyed the message that it was significant in some way. During the reading of The Stinky Cheese Man (Scieszka, 1992), for example, I pointed out the "endflaps" to the children and read them. In a later reading of The Very Lonely Firefly (Carle, 1995), Krissy pointed out that the back endflap duplicated the illustration which it covered. Ms. Bigler's repeated use of the word "endpages" in her readalouds drew the children's attention to this particular feature of picturebooks. Because Brad's attention had been drawn to the endpages, he was able to consider them as potentially meaningful, as shown by his comparison of endpages to the stage curtains for a play during the reading of The Three Little Pigs (Marshall, 1989) on 11/28/95.

As readers, Ms. Bigler and I interpreted and enacted the story. In mediating the text for the children, we added sound and expressive emotion to the silent words on the page. That the children were sensitive to this expressive reading is shown by their evaluation of Ms. Bigler's reading of a page of The Whales' Song (Sheldon, 1990). After Kenny's comment that "the colors are slow, and the words are slow, too," Ms. Bigler read the last page of the book in two ways: in a fast, clipped manner and a slow and dreamy manner. Mickey's reaction to the fast reading was,
"It sounds yucky. 'Cause it doesn't sound like the book's supposed to be. You're reading it so fast that it sounds like you don't have any periods or commas in it."

Our expressive reading was thus part of the scaffolding which enabled the children to respond with their own interpretation.

The ways in which Ms. Bigler and I divided the story into segments by our reading also scaffolded the children's experience. It was not often that we read even one complete page without children wanting to respond. During the reading of Owl Moon (Yolen, 1987), for example, the second opening of the book was handled in this way:

Teacher: [reading] I could hear it [the train] through the woolen cap Pa had pulled down over my ears. A farm dog answered the train, and then a second dog joined in. They sang out, trains and dogs, for a real long time.

Gordon: How, how can they talk? How'd they understand?

Teacher: How'd they understand one another?

Gordon; Yeah, but how could they know?

Teacher: How the train would whistle, and the dog would holler back at the whistle. And the train would whistle again, and the dog would holler back.

Gordon: Oh.

Teacher: [reading] They sang out, trains and dogs, for a real long time. And when their voices faded away it was as quiet as a dream. We walked on toward the woods, Pa and I.

(Owl Moon, 2/27/96)

In this excerpt, the teacher read about half of the page before Gordon interjected a question. After the exchange with Gordon, the teacher reread the last sentence she had read before. This reading of short segments combined with rereading is a very common occurrence in the data; it represents the adult's desire to assist the children in following the story while also stopping whenever the children wished to make a
comment. Resuming the reading automatically directed the children’s attention back to the story.

**Aspects of the Scaffolding Provided by Category 2 of Adult Talk: Manager and Encourager**

A little over a third (approximately 36%) of the adult conversational turns during the storybook readalouds were devoted to the functions of managing and encouraging the children’s talk. In managing, both Ms. Bigler and I tended to interpret on-task behavior very broadly, as shown by our tolerance for performative responses, extended personal connections, and other discussion which would probably be considered tangential to the narrative of the story by most adults. Indeed, we encouraged these conversational detours in various ways because we believed that *they did not constitute detours for the children*, but were rather part of the literary understanding that they were constructing. Examples (already mentioned) of this tolerance are the children’s performative response as twirling ballet dancers and helicopters during the reading of *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991) and Ms. Bigler’s encouragement of Kenny’s extended story about fleas during the reading of *The Napping House* (Wood, 1984). This broad interpretation of on-task behavior scaffolded the children’s understanding by giving them the freedom to explore pathways which would almost certainly never have occurred to the adults. If this exploration threatened to obliterate the narrative entirely, we would redirect their attention to the text; however, the children, more often than not, did this themselves: a child would be sure to say, "Can we get on with the story?" if the discussion went on too long.

"There’s starting to be some messing about" was Ms. Bigler’s usual management statement when some children were clearly not paying attention. Management also included the sorting out of whose turn it was to speak, because the children were eager and aggressive responders. I found that, in a small group of five, the children were, if anything, more eager. The scaffolding function of these types of
management was to reinforce the conventions of the readaloud situation and to encourage the children to listen to each other as well as to the teacher.

Ms. Bigler and I encouraged the children more directly, as well. The simplest type of encouragement was an acknowledgement: "Um hmm" and "Uh huh" occur quite frequently in the data. For example, during the ten one-to-one readalouds of The Tunnel (Browne, 1989), the shortest set of transcripts, I used this type conversational encourager an average of 7 times for each readaloud. Restating or repeating a child’s utterance was another common way of encouraging a child to amplify on what she had said:

Krissy: I like the pictures.

Teacher: Krissy, you like the pictures?

Krissy: Yeah, ### it looks like watercolors.

(Coady’s Red Riding Hood, 12/12/95)

Agreeing with and praising children’s comments were also frequent methods of encouragement:

Larry: And the sign says Stop! Pay troll. Then go away.

Kenny: That’s not fair!

Larry: That’s not fair, is it?

(Rereading of 3 Billy Goats Gruff, Group 2, 1/30/96)

Trudy: The bird could be watching over the boy, maybe it’s his mother, turned into a bird.

Larry: Oh, that’s a lovely idea. That’s a beautiful idea.

(Fly Away Home, Group 2, 3/11/96)

The effect of my saying, "You guys are coming up with some interesting theories" during the reading of Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995) was to encourage
the generation of even more hypotheses about the nature of the slime which threatened
the inhabitants of Riverbend.

These encouraging remarks by the adults helped to create an atmosphere of
"warmth and responsiveness" that maximized "children's engagement with a task and
willingness to challenge themselves," and which are an important aspect of
scaffolding (Berk & Winsor, 1995, p. 29). Children are much more likely to become
risk-takers in situations characterized by acceptance and encouragement. When the
teacher read that The Napping House (Wood, 1984), was published in "San Diego,
New York, or London," Kenny spontaneously began to sing "London bridge is falling
down," and Mickey wanted to sing it in German. The teacher allowed this--"Go
ahead"--not because she felt that it had much to do with the story, but because she
valued response in many forms. In fact, Kenny's song was an intertextual
connection--to the publishing information, rather than to part of the story, and would,
at the very least, encourage him to make more intertextual connections in the future.

A final way in which these types of comments scaffolded the children's
response and developing understanding was to model the way people have a
conversation in which everyone is respectful of the ideas and feelings of others, and
in which everyone gets a chance to contribute if he or she wishes. Some of the
children began to adopt the types of praise and encouragement offered by adults:

Jim: Kenny gets a good point. He [the boy in the story] might get caught, too.

Trudy: Yeah, I think you're right.

Kenny: Maybe, maybe the kid gets the bird, and the bird, like, goes outside
and gets free.

Larry: The kid gets what?

Kenny: Maybe the kid gets the bird, and walks out, out the door, to the
outside, and, like lets the bird free.

Larry: Oh, and sets the bird free.
Jim: Kenny gots a good point, he might get caught, 'cause he might either get caught, or he'll miss the airport.

(Fly Away Home, Group 2, 3/11/96)

Here, Jim and Trudy used praise and agreement in the discussion about what would happen to the trapped bird and the homeless boy in *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991).

**Aspects of the Scaffolding Provided by Category 3 of Adult Talk:**

**Clarifier/Prober**

A little more than a quarter of all the adult conversational turns during the storybook readalouds (28%) were concerned with clarifying and probing the children’s responses. Here the scaffolding provided by the adults took a more active and directive form. Adults initiated lines of inquiry through questions, encouraged particular types of response, and attempted to clarify and probe children’s responses so as to draw out verbalizations which better expressed the children’s thought. These attempts at clarification and probing not only allowed the children to better express what they were thinking, but also had the effect of helping the children develop their thought and to raise their literary understanding to higher levels.

It was not common for adults to initiate questions which were not the result of previous comments, but when they did so, the questions were almost always open-ended in nature. For example, after the reading of John Howe’s (1989) version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, the teacher asked a question about Jack’s behavior: "Do you think that Jack made appropriate choices?" Children had differing opinions on Jack’s character, and compared it to the character of the giant. Some children pointed out that Jack stole things, and the giant did not. Others pointed out that, according to Steven Kellogg’s (1991) version of the tale, the giant had taken the gold, the magic hen, and the singing harp from some pirates; so the giant had stolen, as well. Sean thought the giant was greedy, whereas Jack and his mother were poor and needed the money. The discussion continued:
Kenny: The pirates shouldn’t have stole it either.

Charles: It should go where it was at the beginning [before the pirates took it]

Teacher: The gold should go to where it was originally? That’s kind of how I feel, too, Charles, that maybe he should have made another choice instead of taking it. But, then again, it is just a story.

Joey: He [Jack] should have thought before he made that choice.

Sally: He should have asked.  

(Howe’s Jack and the Beanstalk, 12/13/95)

The point of the teacher’s question was to provoke discussion and speculation, not to hit upon a correct answer. Children were allowed to reach their own conclusions.

After the teacher read the title of John Steptoe’s (1987) Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters, Joey asked, "Is this a Cinderella story?"

Teacher: What makes you ask that question, Joey?

Joey: ’Cause we’ve been reading Cinderella stories for a long time.

Teacher: I’ll let you be the judge of that, OK? So when you think it is or isn’t, you raise your hand and let me know, OK?

(Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters, 1/10/96)

A common stem of many questions aimed at clarifying or probing was "Why do you suppose. . .?" During the reading of the Coady (1991) version of Red Riding Hood, after she showed the illustration of Red Riding Hood approaching the disguised wolf, the teacher asked, "Why do you suppose you can’t see her face?" This question elicited a number of responses:

Julie: Because she’s so far away from the bed.

Gordon: Maybe she’s just lookin’ at the stars.

Brad: Maybe she’s backwards.

249
Robert: Maybe she’s turned around.  
(Coady’s Red Riding Hood, 12/12/95)

This excerpt shows that the open-ended form of the question was successful in provoking multiple responses.

Some probing questions were designed to elicit a specific type of response. The following was part of the discussion of James Marshall’s (1987) version of Red Riding Hood, in response to the teacher’s question, “What do you think the wolf might be thinking right now?”

Charles: Yummy, yummy!
Trudy: Yummy, yummy, here comes my dinner!
Don: There’s my food floating in the air!
Teacher: What else? Julie?
Julie: I’m gonna jump out and eat her!
Trent: {whistles—a real “wolf” whistle}
Teacher: He’s thinking, whewie, there’s a pretty girl, huh?
Trent: A pretty girl—and also delicious!
(Marshall’s Red Riding Hood, 12/11/95)

Here the teacher’s probe was intended to encourage performative responses, and the children obliged with some wonderfully inventive performances.

All of these questions show the various ways in which the teacher elicited responses. Questions (especially open ended ones) were an important part of adult scaffolding, because they gave children the opportunity to examine aspects of the story which may not have otherwise been explored. The questions were heuristic in nature, focusing children’s attention on particular points and structuring the situation so that their responses were enabled.
Another important form of clarifying and probing was what might be called "talking children through" a line of reasoning; this was the type of scaffolding in which the adult supplied the "hard bits," leaving the children to reason for themselves where possible. The following example is drawn from the readaloud of The Napping House (Wood, 1984), when the discussion turned to the changing point of view in the illustrational sequence. In this book, the viewer seems to look at the bed (present in each illustration) from an ever-increasing height. The children were struggling with this idea of changing point of view, as well as with the idea that objects seem smaller as we distance ourselves from them. The teacher reminded them of Night in the Country (Rylant, 1991), when they had also discussed this issue:

100 Teacher: Do you remember the perspective of the book [Night in the Country] the way you were looking, how you felt you were looking from, in that book?

101 ?: From far away.

102 Teacher: And how did you know you were supposed to be looking from far away in Night in the Country?

103 ?: 'Cause it showed a lot of background.

104 Teacher: A lot of background [nodding] And what else? How were the animals? Could you see the light in their eyes?

105 Sean: When you were close up, they were big, and when you were far away, they were small.

106 Teacher: Yes. When an illustrator wants to show that something's far away, then the object looks smaller. In this case, though, it looks like you are looking from above, and does it look like you're fairly close?

107 ??: Yeah.

108 Teacher: Yes, so not only are you, it looks like you are going from the side, looking up high, you also seem to be looking closer as you do that.

109 Charles: If you had mice way over there in the corner, they'd look eensy weensy, but when they come up, they'd get bigger.
110 Terry: It's like you're standing on the floor, and then you kind of walk up the wall backwards.

111 Teacher: Why would you do that?

112 Terry: Because, first you are looking straight at it, and then you're starting to go up and you're looking down a lot.

113 Teacher: Yes. Terry, you captured that perfectly. Thanks. (The Napping House, 4/15/96)

Here the teacher is scaffolding by encouraging, clarifying, and probing (with one instance of category 5, extending and refining, at 106). After reminding the children of Night in the Country at 100, the teacher probes their understanding of that discussion at 102: how did the children know they were supposed to be looking from far away? An unidentified child (103) remembers that there was a great deal of background in some of the illustrations, and the teacher (104) probes further, to elicit Sean's comment (105) about the relationship of distance and size. At 106, the teacher extends and refines his comment by defining it as a general principle of the conventions used by illustrators. At 108, the teacher returns to the discussion of the illustrations in The Napping House, and says that two things are going on in the illustrations: we seem to be moving higher as we look at the illustration sequence, and we also seem to be a bit closer. At 109, Charles shows that he understands the distance--size principle by providing his own example. At 110, Terry has visualized the changing point of view in the illustration sequence to the extent of being able to articulate an accurate metaphorical description of the process. Still not satisfied, the teacher (111) probes further, and Terry (112) articulates his understanding in more abstract terms.

In this excerpt, the teacher's scaffolding questions and statements enabled the children to reach higher levels of understanding as well as to articulate what they already knew.
Aspects of the Scaffolding Provided by Category 4 of Adult Talk:
Fellow Wonderer/Speculator

Approximately 3% of the adult conversational turns during the storybook readalouds placed the adult in the role of a fellow wonderer or speculator in the discussion, making it the least frequent of the categories. The type of scaffolding represented by this category is the adults’ stepping back and allowing the children to function more independently. The adults wonder along with the children about the whys and hows of the story.

During the readaloud of *Owl Moon* (Yolen, 1987), the children initiated a series of predictions about the point of view which the illustration on the next page might take. Gordon felt that "it’s probably gonna show the front of the owl, probably." Julie predicted that the back of the owl would be shown. The teacher joined the children in making a prediction:

Teacher:  My prediction is that they’re going to show the owl lifting off the branch and moving.

?:  No.

Teacher:  No? I might be wrong. I’m just going to make a guess.

[Twelfth opening; shows a front view of the owl, sitting on a branch]
Teacher:  Oh. You were right, I was wrong.

Gordon:  I guess I was right!

Teacher:  I guess you were.

Julie:  Me and you are wrong.

Teacher:  Yeah, but that’s all right, because it’s kind of fun to play the game of what might happen.

*(Owl Moon, 2/27/96)*

In this excerpt, by taking on the role of a fellow speculator, the teacher takes a risk and finds that her prediction was wrong. By doing so, she encourages the children to
take similar risks, which is one of the features of good scaffolding. As well, the teacher has modeled the best way of acknowledging that she was incorrect in her prediction: simply acknowledge it without becoming upset, and treat it as a game in which you lose a turn. Julie joins the teacher in shrugging it off.

The teacher’s wondering stance was also useful in tossing the conversational ball back to the children, so as to encourage them to voice an opinion. In Piggybook (Browne, 1986), Mrs. Piggott leaves home for a few days because her husband and sons do not help with any of the work. The surreal illustrations show many objects in the household taking on a porcine appearance. The children were enchanted with these transformations:

Trudy: There’s flowers, and they turned into pigs. Back here [turning to the previous page] they weren’t. And there’s a pig on the door knob, here, too [pointing to doorknob on the seventh opening]

Kenny: Oh, this is, too! [pointing to light switch on seventh opening]

Trudy: And pig wallpaper, too [turning to the eighth opening]

Krissy: How does it do that?

Larry: Why, I wonder?

Krissy: She said that they’re pigs. So now they’re turning into pigs!

(Piggybook, Group 2, 2/15/96)

Here, my wondering stance gave Krissy a chance to speculate further on why all these transformations were happening.

Ms. Bigler and I were continually finding out new things about books from the children. One of their specialties was noticing details in illustrations which we, for all our experiences with the books, had never seen. During his one-to-one readaloud of The Tunnel (Browne, 1989), Terry noticed an image of a bird in one of the tree trunks. My simple acknowledgement, "You know, I never saw that bird before, Terry," assisted Terry in making a positive evaluation of himself as a responder to
books. I did not have to feign my surprise, for despite studying the book and reading it to six children previously, I had not noticed Terry’s discovery.

A more substantive example of the children’s interpretive use of details (and the adults’ wondering stance stemming from learning new things about the story) occurred during the readaloud of David Delamare’s (1993) lavishly illustrated version of Cinderella, which seems to be set in eighteenth century Venice. After Joey called the hairstyles of the women at the ball "funky," Alice noticed that Cinderella’s hairstyle is much more like contemporary hairstyles than those of the stepsisters and the other women, which are elaborately high and powdered, in the eighteenth century manner. The teacher commented, "She doesn’t do her hair like that, does she?" Mickey responded, "Because she’s not mean." It’s quite probable that the illustrator wants the viewer to sympathize with Cinderella, so he portrays her with a hairstyle which is less ludicrous--less "funky," to use Joey’s word--to us as twentieth-century readers. True authenticity would have Cinderella appear in the same hairstyle as everyone else at the ball; but even on the formal occasion of the ball, her hair looks more "normal" to us than the hair of any of the other women there, and may therefore be a subtle hint from the illustrator that we should laugh at the stepsisters and sympathize with Cinderella. Neither the teacher nor I had ever noticed this choice on the part of the illustrator.

Another positive effect of the teachers’ wondering stance was the children’s adoption of the same stance. Krissy was particularly prone to begin her responses with "I wonder why..." and these wonderings provided opportunities for the children to speculate freely, as the examples in the section on Krissy’s individual response style indicate.

Aspects of the Scaffolding Provided by Category 5 of Adult Talk: Extender/Refiner

For about 5% of the adult conversational turns during the storybook readalouds, the adults acted as extenders and refiners of the children’s literary understanding. Although this was a small category in terms of frequency, it was of
great importance to the children's developing literary understanding. It was in this
category that the "teachable moments" described by Eeds and Wells (1989) were
prevalent. The power of these teachable moments stemmed from the fact that they
were stimulated by the children's comments and questions. In this sense, they were
not plannable, because we could not predict what the children's responses might be.
However, teachable moments were plannable in the sense that if we studied the book
carefully before the readaloud and refined our own responses to it, we were more
likely to see the potential in the children's comments because our own knowledge of
the book was rich and extensive.

Each teachable moment added a new item of knowledge to what Ms. Bigler
and I came to call the children's "literary tool kit": the many types of literary
knowledge which the children could then utilize in their construction of meaning and
interpretation. Because new knowledge must be linked to what is already familiar to
be of any use, the best way to add new items to the literary tool kit was to fasten on
something the children had said and extend or refine it.

An example of this process is the development of the children's idea of
foreshadowing in a narrative. In the field notes and transcripts of readalouds, the first
statement which can be construed as an understanding of the concept of
foreshadowing occurred on 11/22/95, during the readaloud of An Angel for Solomon
Singer (Rylant, 1989). The teacher had just removed the dust jacket of the book,
with its color illustration, and showed the children the plain maroon front cover, with
its blind stamped image of a coffee cup, the moon, and some buildings. Krissy
wondered "why the author put that there?" Joey remarked, "It gives you a clue about
what it's going to be about, maybe." At this point, the teacher did not choose to talk
about foreshadowing. (It is quite possible that talk about "clues" had occurred before;
but this is the first example in the data set.)

The next instance of talk about foreshadowing took place during the reading of
Christopher Coady's (1991) dark version of Red Riding Hood on 12/12/95. This
excerpt has already been discussed in the section dealing with the semiotic
significance of color. The oval vignette on the title page of this book depicts a bare
tree and a full moon, tinged with red; red also suffuses the bottom curve of the oval. After Sean pointed out the "red strokes" over the moon and on the lower border of the vignette, Nicole connected the red with Red Riding Hood, and Mickey connected it with the blood in the story. The teacher extended and refined the children's responses with a teachable moment:

Teacher: Do you think that might be something we call foreshadowing, to let you know...Foreshadowing is what allows you to predict what might happen. Because when the illustrator and the author gives you little clues to foreshadow what will happen next, and to let you know what will happen next.

(Coady's Red Riding Hood, 12/12/95)

Charles summarized the idea: "It's a warning of blood from the wolf that's going to eat the grandma." This was the first time the teacher used the word "foreshadowing," but the concept had been built up gradually before this.

The next instance of the idea of foreshadowing in the readaloud data occurred on 12/18/95, during the reading of Delamare's (1993) Cinderella. Included in the illustration of Cinderella running away when the clock strikes midnight is an image of an owl hovering overhead. Bill commented that "The owl is her fairy godmother," and went to explain that maybe the fairy godmother turned into an owl to watch over Cinderella when she went to the ball. Bill's interesting idea seemed to be confirmed when, after the story was finished, the teacher returned to the vignette before the title page, which depicts the faces of Cinderella and three other figures, one of which is an owl:

Teacher: I wanted to show you something that I thought about after Bill made his comment. Up here beside Cinderella, whose face does this look like?

?: The owl's.

Teacher: The owl's. So it's from the very beginning.

...
Larry: You know, often when an artist presents a little picture like that, even before the story begins, it has a lot to do with what the story’s going to be about. I think Bill’s comment is really interesting, because that explains the owl.

(Delamare’s Cinderella, 12/18/95)

Here, Ms. Bigler remembered Bill’s suggestion that the fairy godmother transformed herself into an owl, and pointed out the presence of the owl in the vignette: "So it’s from the very beginning." Although I spoke very rarely during readalouds with the whole group, I did, in this case, expand on Ms. Bigler’s comment by talking about illustrators using beginning vignettes to foreshadow what is going to happen.

That the children had internalized this concept is shown by the following excerpt from the small group readaloud of Piggybook (Browne, 1986) on 2/15/96. The children had been discussing the fascinating changes of objects into pigs. Brad, showed the fourth opening, in which Mr. Piggott’s shadow has the appearance of a pig:

Brad: This lets us know that they’re gonna turn into pigs.

Larry: Do you think that’s our first clue, Brad?

Trudy: No.

???: Yeah.

Larry: I’m inclined to think that.

Trudy: No, because, [turning to second opening] look at the cereal.

(Piggybook, Group 2, 2/15/96)

In this excerpt, Brad used the same language that Ms. Bigler and I had used: "this lets us know." Trudy added her speculation about foreshadowing by pointing out an even earlier instance of the appearance of pigs in the book: on the cereal boxes on the breakfast table in the second opening.
This sequence of four vignettes from four different readalouds traces the development of the concept of foreshadowing until children demonstrate that it is a part of their literary tool kit. The adults have scaffolded this element of literary understanding to the point where the concept can now be used independently as an interpretive tool in making meaning from a story.

**Children's Enabling of Their Peers' Response and Understanding**

According to Vygotsky (1978), the role of "expert other" can be played by an adult or a more knowledgeable peer. In this section, the children's enabling and scaffolding of each others' literary understanding is discussed, and evidence for the social construction of meaning is presented.

One of the simplest ways in which the children scaffolded each other's literary understanding was to assist in explaining things in the verbal text or illustrations which were unclear to another child. For example, during one of the readalouds of *3 Billy Goats Gruff* (Dewan, 1994), the children talked about the background of the last illustration, which depicts the troll sitting on a planet in space:


Krissy: And maybe this is the stars. I wonder why the author didn't go [traces a five-pointed star shape] like people usually go like that.

Larry: Oh, you mean why the author made the stars just like dots?

Krissy: Yeah, because it looks like:

Kenny: It's because stars, when you look up in, in the sky, there's nothing but dots. Maybe really close it looks like stars.

(Rereading of *3 Billy Goats Gruff*, Group 2, 1/30/96)

In this excerpt, Krissy's characteristic "I wonder why" response queries why the stars in the illustrations don't have five points, like the ones she is accustomed to making. Kenny's explanation references reality rather than the conventions of illustration: the stars are far away, and so they look like tiny dots of light. Kenny is unsure what
they would look like if the viewer were "really close;" and he diplomatically suggests that stars could look like their conventional representations from a nearby vantage point.

The children also assisted each other by refining each others' hypotheses. The long list of hypotheses about the nature and purpose of the "slime" in Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995) has already been presented. In that example, the chain of reasoning that this series of hypotheses represents was described as a chain which the children built with each other. They reacted to and built upon each others' hypotheses. For example, after Jim's speculation that the slime had something to do with the rainbow, Krissy, Kenny, and Trudy all used his idea to come up with a quasi-scientific theory involving sunlight, water, and color. During the same readaloud, in a similar fashion, they constructed a theory about the origin and production of the book, based on the fact that the back cover included a photograph of a man and a little girl with a cowboy hat that was similar in color and shape to the cowboy hat worn by the little girl in the last illustration:

Kenny: That's the girl that was coloring it, and she has the same cowboy hat on.

Krissy: Maybe she likes cowboys.

Jim: She's coloring there, too. She's scribbling there, too.

Larry: Um. Who do you think this might be here [pointing to the man in the photograph]

Krissy: Her dad.

Jim: The author.

Kenny: The sheriff.

Trudy: It's her dad, and he's the author. This right here [showing back cover with the photograph], she's drawing her own picture, and this [showing the fourteenth opening, with an illustration of the girl in the same cowboy hat] is of the same girl.
Larry: So you think this person here is the same as the one on the back cover?

Krissy: Except it looks like a cartoon, sort of. Maybe she’s dreaming about it, and after that, like, she made a book about it, and that’s and after that, one day, um, her dad helped her, and he did the words, and she colored it, and made the other stuff.

... 

Trudy: Her dad colored it, her dad drawed it, and she colored it.  
(Bad Day at Riverbend, Group 2, 2/26/96)

Here, the reasoning proceeded ever nearer to the identification of the man in the photograph as the author; the identification of the little girl in the photograph with the girl in the story; and the way the book came about. The children scaffolded each other’s reasoning to arrive at a conclusion which was quite possibly accurate.

The children also scaffolded each other’s thinking by their disagreements. The social construction of meaning does not always run smoothly; indeed, frictions and tensions may contribute to the most developed types of understanding. A good example of this process occurred during the readaloud of Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991). That a boy and his father actually live in an airport may seem improbable, but such unfortunate things do happen. The boy is the first-person narrator, and the story is not presented as a fantasy, either in the verbal text or the illustrations. Charles, however, had a hard time believing it, and his disbelief sparked a discussion about the nature of the relationship between stories and reality.

100 Charles: This ain’t true.

101 Sally: It could be.

102 Charles: Nuh uh.

103 Sally: Yes, it could.

104 Gordon: It is possible. It is possible.
Larry: Do you think there are people who might not have a house because they might not have enough money?

Charles: I don’t think so.

Gordon: Yeah, people in the desert, they don’t have no home, they:

Charles: But I saw this movie about the desert; they make home, outa branches, and stuff.

Gordon: But what if there is no branches? What if they didn’t find any bushes?

Larry: What if people right here in Columbus didn’t have any money?

Terry: They’d probably have to die.

Charles: But they let people that don’t got no money, or nothing, they stay in a hotel, for free.

Sally: My grandma, she met a woman who lived in the back of, of a gas station. And she gave that woman some money for something to eat.

Charles: I still don’t think it could be real. ’Cause it’s a cartoon.

... 

Charles: It couldn’t be by anybody. It would be by nobody.

Gordon: But it /could be by somebody.

Charles: If it was by the author// and the um, illustrator, it wouldn’t be right there, it would be just by whoever wrote the book, like right there, there would be no illustrator [pointing to the front cover, and the names of the author and illustrator]

Gordon: It could be by, it could be real, because they could’ve told the author about their adventure, or something, and then the author wrote about it, and written the story down, and then, it could be possible, Charles.

Terry: They told the story, and the author knew, and then he write it down. and then the illustrator, he probably knew, and then he drew the pictures. What he thought it would look like.

(Fly Away Home, Group 1, 3/12/96)
Charles states several reasons why the story can’t be real. First, he disagrees with me when I suggest (105) that insufficient money might make people homeless; he argues (112) that people who don’t have money get to "stay in a hotel, for free." Charles has a good point; in at least some cities, so-called "welfare hotels" house indigent people. Second, Charles (114) argues that "It’s a cartoon," by which he may mean that the illustrations are not photographs, which would indicate realism. At 115 and 117, Charles gives his third reason. His logic seems to be that the fact that there’s an author and illustrator listed on the front cover means that the story can’t be real. I believe that he is stumped by the fact that it’s the little boy who is narrating the story. Indeed, the little boy and his father (and perhaps all the characters in the book) are likely not real in the sense that these particular people exist and live in airports; it is more likely that Eve Bunting, the author, has produced a fictional story, and that the characters are composites constructed from her research on homeless people. So, in one sense, Charles is right: the story isn’t real, though it presents the truth. Sally, Gordon, and Terry all try to counter Charles’ arguments. Gordon (107; 109) disputes the fact that all people have homes by pointing out that nomads in the desert are homeless. Sally (113) knows that her grandmother met a homeless woman who lived in the back of a gas station. At 118 and 119, Gordon and Terry speculate on how the book was actually written and produced: perhaps the people who had the "adventure" told their story to the author, and the author wrote it down. Then the illustrator studied the story and drew the pictures, not the way it actually was, but the way "he thought it would look like."

Charles’s recalcitrance thus provided the impetus for the children to do some very hard thinking about the ways in which "realistic fiction" is both real and fictional. This excerpt, a good candidate for the most sophisticated discussion in the data set, was constructed with only minimal input from the adult.

The children challenged and changed each others’ perceptions of reality through discussion during the readalouds. It has already been mentioned that, during the readaloud of Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991) to Group 1 on 3/22/96, Sally made a sturdy declaration of her Native American heritage. At that time, Gordon
demonstrated a stereotypical understanding of Native Americans: he reasoned that Sally couldn’t be an Indian because "you didn’t come from the Indian places," perhaps the Southwest. When Sally retorted that "Just because you’re an Indian doesn’t mean you have to come from an Indian place," Gordon saw the force of Sally’s argument and apologized. During the readaloud of Amazing Grace to Group 2 on 3/21/96, Krissy displayed her impatience with white people calling African Americans "black." I had just read the text which stated that some of the children in the story told Grace that she couldn’t be Peter Pan because she was black. Krissy declared, "She’s [Grace] not black, she’s brown. White people, white people call brown people black people. And we’re not black, we’re brown. And I’m mixed up with white." (It is likely that Krissy was biracial.)

In the section on children’s individual response styles, evidence was presented to show that at least some children had an identifiable set of "signature" responses. This individuality would appear to be of great significance in the social construction of meaning. When multiple viewpoints or perspectives were introduced into readaloud discussions, this multiplicity often resulted in a more full and rich discussion: clearly, the children’s literary understanding was enriched by Jim’s thoughtful generalizations, Sally’s analytical abilities, Krissy’s wondering stance and fascination with art media, and Charles’s performative responses. Because various cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds were represented in the classroom, this diversity also resulted in more stimulating conversations about books. The preceding paragraph demonstrates ways in which Krissy and Sally enriched discussion with their unique perspectives.

**Textual Influences on Response and Literary Understanding**

The third research question for the study was:

How does the type of text (in terms of genre, narrative complexity, or the relative "openness" of the text to varying interpretations) appear to affect the nature of the discussion and response during storybook readalouds?
This question represents a shift of focus, in that it deals with textual features and their possible influence on talk during readalouds.

There were three literary genres represented in the data for the study: (1) fairy tales and folk tales (part of what is often called "traditional literature"); (2) contemporary realistic fiction; and (3) contemporary fantasy or magical realism. In the coded data, fairy- and folk tales were represented by readalouds of Red Riding Hood (Marshall, 1987), Red Riding Hood (Coady, 1991), Little Red Riding Hood (Hyman, 1983), Chicken Little (Kellogg, 1985), and 3 Billy Goats Gruff (Dewan, 1994).

Contemporary realistic fiction was represented by readalouds of Night in the Country (Rylant, 1986), Owl Moon (Yolen, 1987), Ira Sleeps Over (Waber, 1972), Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991), and Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991).

Contemporary fantasy and magical realism were represented by readalouds of Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963), The Whales’ Song (Sheldon, 1990), The Napping House (Wood, 1984), Piggybook (Browne, 1986), Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allsburg, 1995), The Tunnel (Browne, 1989), and Changes (Browne, 1990).

Discussion of the possible influences of textual features on the children’s responses must necessarily be guarded and tentative. Readalouds of fairy- and folk tales occurred during the first half of the school year, while readalouds of the two other genres occurred during the last half of the year. Because the children can be assumed to have developed and refined their responses during the year, developmental factors may explain differences in response to the genres. As well, the readalouds took place in three different contexts: large group, small group, and one-to-one. Both of the one-to-one readalouds (The Tunnel and Changes) were of books which would be classified as contemporary fantasy. These contextual factors may have also played a role in whatever differences existed across genres. With these qualifications in mind, it is nevertheless possible to identify some associations between the nature of the texts and the responses to those texts.
Contemporary Realistic Fiction and Personal Response

In this study, the four books with the highest percentages of personalizing responses (Category 3 of children's talk) were all examples of the genre of contemporary realistic fiction. These books were *Ira Sleeps Over* (32%); *Amazing Grace* (22%); *Owl Moon* (20%); and *Fly Away Home* (18%). The average percentage for all the coded data in Category 3 was 10%. The other books with higher than average percentages of Category 3 included *Where the Wild Things Are* (16%), *The Napping House* (15%), *3 Billy Goats Gruff* (15%), and *Changes* (11%).

During the readaloud of *Ira Sleeps Over*, almost one third (32%) of the children’s conversational turns were classified in Category 3. Qualitatively, these conversational turns were associated with the children’s recounting of experiences which happened while they were sleeping at a friend’s house or getting ready for bed. The children had many personal experiences to associate with the story. They could relate to the experience of sleeping with a stuffed animal as a solution to nighttime anxieties. Since most of them had "insider" knowledge of these experiences, the distance between their world and the story world was not great, and they could easily make connections to their own lives at every turn in the story. Upon finding out that Ira, the first-person child narrator, had never slept without his teddy bear before, Sean declared in a digusted tone, "I don’t need no teddy bear!" Gordon said, "I’d be embarrassed." Other children spoke of sleeping with a stuffed animal: Joey with his stuffed frog, Alice with her rabbit, Charles with his toy gremlin, Sally with her panda. Other children slept with brothers or sisters, cats or dogs. May commented that "At night, my dog, sometimes my dog gets out of his cage and he, um, comes into my mom and dad’s bedroom and sleeps with them." Kenny, our storyteller, declared that he *used* to sleep with a live pet snake. After all this discussion, Sean grudgingly admitted that he had a "parrot, and I let it just hang down beside the bed."

Upon hearing that Ira and his friend Reggie were planning to tell ghost stories, the children voiced personal associations with that experience. Charles told about how "you can get a flashlight" to make it scarier. Gordon related that "My mom told me not, when I was goin’ to bed, my mom told me not to talk, but I did talk, and..."
someone spent the night." Kenny revealed that his older brother was afraid of the dark.

All of these personal associations (and more) occurred during the reading of the story. When the story was finished, the children told longer, more substantial tales:

Kristin: One time, um, I was jumping on my bed when my mom was getting pajamas for me, and I fell off and I broke my head on the windowsill, right on the corner, and I had to go to the hospital and get stitches.

Sean: When I had my bunk bed, over at my grandma's, I just had ### and my cousins came over, my one baby cousin, he climbed up the ladder, and he started jumpin' on it, and then when he came down, [girl's name], she got up there, and she got on ###, and she was scared to come down. And then [another girl's name], she tried to make her come down, so I, um, I didn't climb up the ladder, just jumped up there, and then I carried her down.

Peggy: One time, when me and my cousin were jumping on the bunk bed, she hit her head on the ceiling. She was on her knees, and she hit her head. (Ira Sleeps Over, 3/4/96)

The children's personal associations with Ira Sleeps Over were thus deep and rich, continuing throughout the story and constituting most of the discussion after the story was read. In this study, the impulse to draw the story to oneself in this way was associated most clearly with a book whose main topic was a common experience of childhood.

Discussion of Social Issues and Problems

The books in the study which elicited the discussion of social issues and problems were Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991), Piggybook (Browne, 1986), and Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991). Fly Away Home provoked a serious discussion of homelessness and how people who do not have much money can get along. During the readaloud of this book to Group 1, Sally reacted with concern to the description in the text of an old woman being moved out of the airport:
Larry: [reading] Once we saw a woman pushing a metal cart full of stuff. She wore a long, dirty coat and she lay down across a row of seats in front of Continental Gate 6. The cart, the dirty coat, the lying down were all noticeable. Security moved her out real fast.

Sally: [very softly] But she’s old. She probably doesn’t have anywhere to live, either.

(Fly Away Home, Group 1, 3/12/96)

In Group 2, Krissy’s reaction to this episode was similar but more spirited: "I think those kind of polices are dumb!"

Charles’s argument that Fly Away Home could not be a "real" story has already been mentioned. In that discussion, to prove her point that the story could be real, Sally told of her grandmother giving money to a woman "who lived in the back of a gas station." The children discussed their puzzlement that a person who had a job could not afford to have a home:

Terry: He probably doesn’t have enough money to buy a house.

Sally: But if he’s poor, and he has to live in the airport, and he goes to work, so he must have some money.

Larry: It says that he only goes on the weekends to work.

Sally: But my pop-pop only goes on the weekends to work for a janitor at a high school.

Julie: You know what? My mom, she could’ve got free food at a hotel, but she didn’t want to.

Sally: My mommy works at [local restaurant], so every day when we go to school, we get free breakfasts.

Terry: Like I said, he probably had money, but he didn’t have enough to buy a house. Like $87,000.

Larry: So you could be making money, but not enough to buy a house.
Terry: Yeah, you need a really lot. (Fly Away Home, Group 1, 3/12/96)

Piggybook (Browne, 1986) also stimulated discussion of another social issue: that of gender equity. The first opening of this story depicts a man and two boys standing in front of a house:

Larry: [reading] Ms. Piggott lived with his two sons, Simon and Patrick:

Krissy: And grandma came and gave 'em a piggy ride [the front cover shows Mrs. Piggott giving a piggyback ride to Mr. Piggott, Simon, and Patrick]:

Larry: In a nice house with a nice garden, and a nice car in the nice garage. Inside the house was his wife.

Brad: [sounding tired] Doing the chores.

Larry: Do you think?

Brad: Moms always do's the chores.

Krissy: Moms are everything. (Piggybook, Group 2, 2/15/96)

Brad's socially constructed view of what women do--while men stand around outside--was breathtaking in its immediacy. He had not heard this story before (I checked), and yet he was predicting the main conflict of the whole narrative: Mrs. Piggott must do all the work while her husband and sons do nothing. Krissy's perspective on this situation--that "moms are everything"--describes the comprehensive responsibilities assumed by many women. (It is tempting to speculate that Krissy spoke from the experience of her own mother, a working single parent with several children who may have been indeed "everything" in her household.)

In Group 1, at the end of the discussion of Piggybook, I asked, "If you were Mrs. Piggott, how would you feel about Mr. Piggott and Simon and Patrick?"
Julie: I'd be so mad.

Gordon: I'd// be yellin' and screamin'.

Charles: I'd knock their head off.

Sally: I wouldn't leave, I'd tell 'em to GET OUT RIGHT NOW!

Gordon: I would cut their head off!  

(Piggybook, Group 1, 2/12/96)

Here, the gender lines seem to be clearly drawn. The solution of the boys is "yellin'," "screamin'," and violence. Julie merely voices her anger, but Sally takes a proactive approach: she wouldn't leave (as Mrs. Piggott did); she'd tell the lazy males to "get out right now!"

The only discussions in the data set which concerned race and ethnicity occurred during the read aloud of Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991). In a previous section, Sally's assertion that Native Americans don't necessarily come from "the Indian places" has already been discussed, as well as Krissy's impatience with white people calling African American people "black" when they are actually various shades of brown. In the other books used in this study, race is "erased," present only by its absence. In Amazing Grace, race is foregrounded as an issue: Grace is told that she can't be Peter Pan in the school play because she is black. It is perhaps significant that it was Krissy, a child of probable biracial heritage, who raised the issue.

Qualities of Narrative and Associated Responses

Texts amenable to open-ended interpretations were associated with multiple speculations on the part of the children. In Bad Day at Riverbend (Van Allisburg, 1995), for example, the main point of the story seems to be to provoke speculation about the nature and purpose of the "slime" that threatens to cover the town. The narrative is structured so that clues about the slime accumulate slowly during the story, but the clues do not point (individually or collectively) to one definitive explanation. Like an O'Henry short story, it is not until the last pages of the
narrative that enough information is provided for the reader to fasten on a satisfactory explanation; and even then, much inference is necessary. The long list of speculative hypotheses generated by the children about the nature of the slime in this story has already been described; the story clearly teased the children into formulating multiple theories. Thus this textual feature of openness was associated with a proliferation of possibilities generated by the children.

Books with out-of-the-ordinary or surreal themes, as well as books engaged in postmodern hijinks, elicited many performative responses. I have already mentioned Gordon’s performative response to the frenetic book flap of The Stinky Cheese Man (Scieszka, 1992). This book also managed to elicit a performative response from Sally, who was usually quite serious in her approach to books:

Larry: [reading] Where is that lazy narrator? Where is that lazy illustrator? Where is that lazy author?"

Sally: The illustrator and the author are probably making another stupid book. (The Stinky Cheese Man, Group 1, 2/6/96)

Anthony Browne’s (1990) Changes tells the story of a young boy who is left alone while his father goes to pick up his mother. As the father leaves, he tells Joseph that there will be a lot of changes. When Joseph is alone, the furniture and other objects in the house begin bizarre metamorphoses: the cat changes into a kettle, the couch into an alligator, an armchair into a gorilla. When Joseph goes outside the house for some relief, equally disturbing transformations take place. Finally, he goes into his room and turns off the light to escape. The last pages of the book show that the father and mother have brought a new baby sister home from the hospital; "this is what his father had meant." My one-to-one reading of Changes with Terry elicited by far the highest percentage of performative responses of any of the readalouds in any of the contexts. Fully 44% of Terry’s conversational turns during this readaloud were performative, whereas the average for all the coded readalouds was 5%. The
fourth opening of *Changes* depicts a bathroom sink seemingly changing into a person. On the left-hand page, the sink has developed a nose and the drain has become a mouth; on the right-hand page, eyes have appeared on the tops of the faucets, and the sink’s porcelain pedestal has become a grey flannel-clad leg with a shoe. Terry took these images as an invitation to play. He pretended to turn on one of the faucets:

Terry: You want some water to drink? Poooshhhh! Oh! No! Ouch! Ouch! Oh no! It’s *hot* water! [high-pitched voice, ending with a strangled sound; clutches hand to his throat, sticks out his tongue, with an agonized expression on his face]

Larry: [laughing, playing along] He wants some water to drink:

Terry: [giggling] And he got some *hot* water. Oucha, oucha, oucha, ouch! Ouch! I want some soda!

*Changes* with Terry, 3/27/96

In this astonishing excerpt, Terry plays three roles: the tormenter of the sink; the sink itself; and the narrator. He also throws in sound effects for good measure. The tormenter asks the sink, "You want some water to drink?" "Poooshhhh!" is the sound of the water being turned on. Then Terry becomes the sink, its drain now a sensitive mouth: "Oh! No! Ouch! Ouch! Oh no! It’s hot water!" Terry then provides some narratorial commentary: "And he got some *hot* water." Finally, he again becomes the poor sink: "Oucha, oucha, oucha, ouch! Ouch! I want some soda!"

Terry gave a voice to virtually every transformation in the story. When he saw the elephant’s trunk protruding from the wall in the eleventh opening, he held his nose shut with his thumb and forefinger and said, "The elephant’s like, ‘"OOOOO! I can’t talk this way! I can’t get through!’" On the fourteenth opening, the closeup illustration of the newborn, crying with its mouth wide open, provoked this interpretation:

Terry: Hey, that [the baby’s tongue] looks kinda like he swallowed a sucker. That, like the wrong way!
Larry: [laughing] Like the baby swallowed a lollipop the wrong way?

Terry: The wrong way! He put the stick in first! "Oooh, gulp! I swallowed a sucker!" [hold throat and makes choking noises]

(Changes with Terry, 3/27/96)

Terry thus used the entire text as a platform for his own carnivalesque romp. The sheer strangeness and wildness of this book seemed to release, in Terry, an exhilarating torrent of performances.

The Role of Textual Variants in Building up Knowledge across Cases

The extensive thematic study of fairy tales and folk tales afforded Ms. Bigler an opportunity to expose the children to many variants of the same tale. For example, the children did not hear just one version of Cinderella, but many. They heard Charles Perrault’s (1954) classic version (illustrated by Marcia Brown) and Paul Galdone’s (1978) equally traditional version; Barbara Karlin’s (1989) lighthearted version, illustrated by James Marshall; David Delamare’s (1993) elaborate and lushly beautiful version set in Venice; Princess Furball (Huck, 1989), a British variant; Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters (Steptoe, 1987), an African variant; Yeh Shen (Louie, 1982), a Chinese variant; and The Rough-Face Girl (Martin, 1992), a Native American variant. They also heard modern variants which played with the Cinderella theme: Ugh (Yorinks, 1990), set in "caveman" times; and Prince Cinders, Babette Cole’s (1987) gender-reversed spoof. Most of the children were also familiar with the Disney version of Cinderella through the video or books illustrated with stills from the movie.

With this immersion in so many variants of the Cinderella tale (and in multiple variants of several other tales, as well), what children were responding to was not solely the textual features of the book at hand, but the great number of instantiations to which they had already responded. Text became intertext. They did not experience one text of Cinderella in isolation; rather, Cinderella became for them a palimpsest of multiple texts. The primary evidence for this is the great number of

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intertextual connections that they spontaneously made and the intertextual analyses in which they engaged, which have been presented in a previous section on intertextual connections. The children's predictions about what would happen in fairytales and folktales were solidly based on their knowledge of other traditional tales. Only a few pages in Yeh Shen (Louie, 1982), the children were drawing parallels between this Chinese variant and the European versions with which they were familiar:

Alice: It sounds like Cinderella.

Teacher: How?

Krissy: Because she needs some, she needs clothes to go to the festival:

Trent: Yeah, she needs clothes to go to the banquet.

Charles: And the fish, the fish is like the fairy godmother, like the fish bones are like the fairy godmother because they give her stuff.  

(Yeh-Shen, 1/16/96)

Charles is referring to the magic fish bones in the story, which grant wishes to Yeh-Shen, just as the fairy godmother in Cinderella grants Cinderella's wish to go to the ball. At the climactic moment when the king asks Yeh-Shen to try on the golden slippers (parallel to Cinderella trying on the glass slipper), an unidentified child shouted, "the king is the fish!"

Alice: Yeah, the fish is probably the king.

?: They have a fish on the front page.

Teacher: The fish is probably the king? What story does that remind you of, Alice? Where something, the animal's really the king?

Alice: In /the snake story

Charles: Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters!
Teacher: Yes, Alice and Charles reminded us of, in the snake story, the snake that was Nioka's in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, and turns into the king. So Alice said that the fish is probably the king. But remember that the king was at the door.

Charles: Yeah, but he turned into a lot of stuff. In *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, he turned, he turned into the snake, the boy, the girl, the man without the head.

(Yeh-Shen, 1/16/96)

The children reasoned that the fish (whose bones help Yeh-Shen) was actually the king, and based their reasoning on another *Cinderella* variant, *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters*, in which the prince assumes various shapes throughout the book, including a snake. The children were seeing Yeh-Shen through the lens created by all the Cinderella tales they had previously experienced.

Another effect of this immersion in fairy tales and folk tales was that the children were able to discuss one of the basic themes of this genre: the triumph of good over evil. During the reading of *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters* (Steptoe, 1987), there was an extended discussion in which the children marshalled a great deal of knowledge which they had gained by noticing the common textual features of the stories they had been hearing and reading:

100 Terry: Nice always wins over mean in stories, and good always wins over evil.

101 Teacher: Yes, nice always wins over mean in fairytales... just like good always wins over evil. Yeah, that’s something that we really know to be important about fairytales and folktales, isn’t it?

102 Krissy: But when, um, on some, they’re sad.

103 Teacher: Let’s see. Have we heard of a bad person in a story winning over a good person?

104 Krissy: Yeah.
Teacher: And like Mickey said yesterday, it's all from whose perspective you're looking from. Because, to the wolf, in *The Three Little Pigs*, is that a happy ending, or in *Little Red Riding Hood*?

Teacher: So it's all from whose point of view you look from, whether it's a happy ending or not. Go ahead.

Mickey: In that book, *The Beanstalk Incident*, one of the stories shows what the giant is thinking.

Teacher: That's right. I like that book, that it shows both points of view. . . . You have to look at both sides of a story. You said that you knew a story where evil has won out over good. What story do you know that you're read?

?: *Little Red Riding Hood?*

?: *The Three Little Pigs?*

. . .

Mickey; But in *Little Red Riding Hood*, in the original version, they don't, um, in the original version they don't ever get 'em out, so the wolf wins.

. . .

Trudy: In *The Swan Princess*, evil wins out over good.

*(Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters, 1/10/96)*

In this excerpt, the children debate the proposition that good always wins over evil in fairy tales, using their experience of at least six different texts: *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters* (which provoked Terry’s observation at 100 that "nice always wins"); *The Three Little Pigs*; at least two versions of *Red Riding Hood* (the version in which the wolf is killed by the huntsman and the version in which the story ends with the deaths of Red Riding Hood and her grandmother); a version of *Jack and the Beanstalk* story called *The Beanstalk Incident* (told from the giant’s point of view); and *The Swan Princess*. Implicitly, there are references to traditional versions of *Jack and the*
Beanstalk, because to say that The Beanstalk Incident (Paulsen, 1990) is about "what the giant is thinking" implies a knowledge of the other versions that are told from Jack’s point of view. After the teacher (101) summarizes Terry’s proposal, Krissy objects (102): some fairytales are sad. The teacher (105) remembers a conversation from the day before, in which the children pointed out that a tale’s sadness depends on whose point of view we consider. This reminds Mickey (108) of The Beanstalk Incident, which, by telling the story from the giant’s point of view, causes the tale to end unhappily. At 110 and 111, children mention that Red Riding Hood and The Three Little Pigs end unhappily (at least for some of the characters); and at 112, Mickey remembers that in "the original version" (the Perrault version, which the children had heard with illustrations by Christopher Coady), evil clearly wins, because Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are dead. Trudy (113) supports this with a reference to The Swan Princess. It would seem, then, that the ability to make high-level generalizations and to debate their truth rested, in this case, on the children’s building up a knowledge of the textual features of traditional tales until this knowledge grew to a type of intellectual "critical mass" which enabled the generalizations.

The findings presented in this chapter were organized around the three research questions for the study. The first (and primary) question dealt with the children’s responses during storybook readalouds as indicators of their literary understanding. These responses represented five broad conceptual categories, each of which revealed a different aspect of the children’s literary understanding. The second research question dealt with both the role of adults and the role of peers in scaffolding and enabling this developing understanding. Adult talk was found to cluster in five categories, each of which revealed an aspect of the scaffolding provided to the children. The ways in which the children enabled literary understanding for each other were also presented. The third research question shifted the focus from students and teachers to texts, and dealt with the ways in which textual features seemed to
relate to and evoke the children's responses. A detailed summary of all the findings presented in this chapter is included in the first section of chapter 5.
Endnotes for Chapter 4

1. This phrase was constructed by Ms. Bigler and me over the course of the study, and built upon her metaphor of a "learning tool box," which she had applied to the process of all learning by the children.

2. It should be clear from this brief description that this category is quite different from Douglas Barnes' use of the word "performance." For Barnes (1976), teachers who function with a "transmission" model of teaching believe that knowledge exists "in the form of public disciplines which include content and criteria of performance" (p. 144), and conceive of "the learner as an uninformed acolyte for whom access to knowledge will be difficult since he must qualify himself through tests of appropriate performance" (p. 145). Such teachers value "final draft" talk over "exploratory talk" because final draft talk can be evaluated as a performance (pp. 108, 113). Teachers functioning with a transmission model of learning value written work as "primary a performance, a display of well-organized knowledge in a form ready for assessment" (p. 145), so that writing as a way of exploring and clarifying one's own meaning is largely ignored. The use of the word "performance" in Category V is therefore almost the opposite of Barnes' usage. "Performance" here presupposes a situation in which exploratory talk is valued, and a teacher who functions on the "transaction" model of learning. Teachers with a transmission view would very likely consider responses in Category V to be transgressive or "off-task."

It should be equally clear that this category is also quite different from Gordon Wells' (1987, 1990) use of the word "performative." For Wells, the performative is the first level of a four-level taxonomy of literacy: "When the user of a text focuses on the code--on the encoding/decoding relationship between meaning and its physical representation, and the conventions that govern it--I shall talk about this as engaging with the text in the performative mode" (Wells, 1990, p. 372). Wells lists as examples of the performative mode the process of proofreading of something we have written, or skimming through the telephone directory for a particular entry.

3. This unlikely juxtaposition of one of the most vulgar shows on television with such a delicately lovely interpretation demonstrates that children can find popular cultural texts just as powerful a source of ideas as the higher grade of texts in classrooms. In this intertextual link, Trudy has performed Rumpelstiltskin's trick of turning straw into gold.

4. The Swan Princess was a book which was unknown to both the teacher and me.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION:
THE LITERARY UNDERSTANDING OF YOUNG CHILDREN

This chapter consists of four sections. In the first section, the findings of the study are summarized; the significance of the findings is discussed; and the study is placed within the context of current research relating to literary understanding. In the second section, a grounded theory of literary understanding that arose from the data is presented. This theory is related to other theoretical perspectives on literary understanding. The third section discusses the pedagogical implications of the study; and the fourth section raises questions for further research that are suggested by the study.

Summary of Findings, Relation to Current Research, and Significance

The findings summarized here are the result of a descriptive, naturalistic study of the literary understanding of first- and second-grade children, as suggested by their verbal responses before, during, and after readalouds of picture storybooks. The study was conducted in a literature-rich classroom with a family grouping of 27 first and second grade children, in a public elementary school with a philosophy of informal instruction and a long history of using children's literature to teach reading. The classroom teacher was in her sixth year of teaching, was knowledgeable about children's literature, and had a philosophy of informal education that valued children's talk and active learning. The length of the study was seven months (November to May) during the 1995-96 school year. The children's responses were gathered in three contexts: large group readalouds done by the teacher with the whole class;
small group readalouds done by the researcher with two selected groups of five children each; and one-to-one readalouds done by the researcher with each of the ten children in the two small groups. Readalouds were audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. Other data included observational field notes and interviews with the teacher. Data (observational field notes and selective transcriptions or complete transcriptions) were collected on a total of 83 readalouds: 35 whole group readalouds, 28 small group readalouds, and 20 one-to-one readalouds. From this data set, 45 transcripts (of 9 whole group readalouds, 16 small group readalouds, and all 20 one-to-one readalouds) were chosen for coding and in-depth analysis. The other data were used in a supplementary fashion.

There were three research questions for the study. This summary of findings is organized in reference to these three research questions, which were:

1. What are the verbal indications that children are developing literary understanding of picturebooks during storybook readalouds? What is the nature of this literary understanding, and how does it proceed for selected children?

2. How do "expert others" (adults and more knowledgeable peers) scaffold the children’s developing literary understanding during picture storybook readalouds?

3. How does the type of text (in terms of genre, narrative complexity, or the relative "openness" of the text to varying interpretations) appear to affect the nature of the discussion and response during storybook readalouds?

Findings Related to Research Question 1: Children’s Literary Understanding

Five broad conceptual categories emerged from qualitative data analysis. These conceptual categories represented various aspects or facets of the children’s literary understanding: what they and the teacher had co-constructed as literary competence. These categories were (A) The Analytical; (B) The Intertextual; (C) The Personal; (D) The Transparent; and (E) The Performative.
A: Findings Related to the Analytical Category

By far the largest number of the children’s conversational turns (73%) were classified in the first conceptual category, The Analytical. In Category 1, the children focused their attention within the text, by engaging in a close reading of the text and by treating it as a made cultural product. This category was found to have five subcategories: (1) the book as a cultural product produced by authors, illustrators, and publishers; (2) focus on the language of the story; (3) analysis of illustrations; (4) making narrative meaning; and (5) the relationship between fiction and reality.

Discussion of the book as a cultural product.

In the first subcategory (comprising 8% of Category 1 and 5% of all the coded data), the children discussed the book as a cultural product. They discussed the author and/or illustrator as the makers of the book, questioning their decisions and choices. The children also discussed the medals or awards the book had won. Talk about publishing information (date of publishing, versions of the book in hard cover binding or paperback, and the mechanics of editing and publishing) was also included in this subcategory. The aspect of literary understanding represented by this subcategory is the knowledge about how books are made and the people who make them, as well as the public recognition that has been accorded a book. The significance of this finding is that this type of knowledge is rarely included in traditional definitions of literary understanding. Literary understanding is often limited to knowledge of narrative structures or elements, such as plot, setting, characters, and theme. There is a sense, of course, in which this type of knowledge is external to the narrative of the text itself; but in another sense, the text does not exist apart from the physical cultural product that incarnates it. Children’s knowledge of the publishing process; the ways in which authors, illustrators, and editors interact; the decisions that authors and illustrators must make; and the way in which the text has been critically received are all part of knowing the text as a cultural product.
There is virtually no empirical research about this type of literary knowledge on the part of young children.

**Discussion of the language of the story.**

In the second subcategory (comprising 6% of Category 1 and 4% of all the coded data), children showed an interest in the language of the story. One of the ways in which they expressed this interest was in pointing out visual features of the printed text. As emergent readers, they were naturally interested in the "way print works," and occasionally attempted to read words or phrases with the teacher or before the teacher read them. Also included in this subcategory were responses of imitating the language of the story by repeating it, usually savoring the wording. The children also questioned the meaning of words or phrases in the story, provided suggestions for alternative wording, described or evaluated the language of the story, or attempted to prove a point they were making by referring to the specific language of the text. The type of literary understanding represented by this subcategory is the understanding that the specific language an author chooses is worth close examination, and that the richest understanding of a text is partly dependent on knowing what the language of the text means in some detail, as well as appreciating the specific choices that the author has made in terms of wording and phrasing. The significance of this finding lies in its confirmation of research that suggests that children are active meaning makers; and specifically, that children ask questions about meaning that enable their own understanding. This finding also adds to the already voluminous research on children's knowledge of the visual features of print. As well, since repeating story language is one of the ways children "speak their pleasure" about a book, this finding provides a small beginning for the theorization of young children's pleasure in literature, a topic which has received scant attention.

**Analysis of illustrations.**

As a third focus of attention within the analytical category (comprising 31% of the analytical category and 23% of all the coded data), the children demonstrated an
analytic approach to illustration. Since they were responding to picturebooks, in which the illustrations and other nontextual matter have equal importance with the verbal text, the children adopted an analytical approach to this important feature of picturebooks, just as they adopted an analytical approach to the words of the story. They discussed the artistic medium or media that may have been used to produce illustrations; described the arrangement of the illustrations or the illustration sequence; speculated on the semiotic significance of various illustration conventions and codes (codes of color, conventions for portraying movement, and the portrayal of illusional space through perspective and point of view); compared illustrations with each other; and described the details or general background of illustrations. For the children, then, an important part of the literary understanding of picturebooks was their comprehension of the form and content of illustrations, as well as the ways in which the illustrations had been arranged by the designer or illustrator within the physical constraints and potentialities of the picturebook. Illustrations may be "read" just as written text may be read, and the children were learning to perform this visual semiosis, which is important for a full understanding of a picturebook. In almost one quarter of the conversational turns, the children were talking directly about illustrations. This finding is significant in adding to the scant amount of research that has been conducted on children's understanding and interpretation of illustrations in picturebooks. Aside from the work of Hickman (1981) and Kiefer (1982), there is surprisingly little that has been done in this area, even though it is clear that a great deal of meaning making is involved in the analysis of illustrations.

Theorizing the children's responses to illustrations in semiotic terms (that is, as indications of their understanding of the many systems of visual signs in picturebooks) proved to be powerfully heuristic. Within this semiotic frame, the children's awareness and use of several illustrational "codes" or systems of signs became clear. Although Nodelman (1988), Moebius (1986) and others have analyzed picturebooks in this manner, there is very little research on children's responses to picturebooks which tests these semiotically based theories empirically. Indeed, Nodelman, Moebius, and other theorists concerned with picturebooks rarely refer to
children, focusing rather on the understanding which adults can develop. The findings in this study about the children's use of several aspects of sign systems therefore contribute to our knowledge about this important feature of the potentialities for meaning making in picturebooks. Specifically, the findings demonstrate (a) the extensive use made by the children of the primarily visual information in the peritext of picturebooks; (b) their reading of the conventions for portraying movement; (c) their understanding of the use of perspective and point of view; and (d) their understanding of the semiotic significance of color. These findings are discussed in the following four paragraphs.

The peritext (Genette, 1982; Higonnet, 1990) of a picturebook consists of any part of the book other than the written text of the story and its accompanying illustrations. The front and back covers, dust jacket, endflaps, endpages, title and half-title pages, and dedication page are all part of the peritext. The children considered the peritext just as much of a source of potential meaning as the verbal text of the story. Approximately 12% of the analytical category (or 8% of the coded data) represented discussion about peritext. The children's predisposition to regard all parts of the picturebook as potentially meaningful was related to the teachers' talk about specific features of picturebooks (for example, endpages) and the allowance of time during the readaloud to talk about these features. Even such features as plain colored endpages were scrutinized for possible meanings, a clear indication of the children's search for semiotic significance.

Since a picturebook is a static object, illustrators have developed various ways of indicating motion. The findings indicate that the children had learned at least two conventional ways illustrators portray movement in picturebooks. Portraying the same characters in a series of small illustrations, called "continuous narration" (Schwarz, 1982), gives the impression of movement in time. As well, illustrators may blur parts of a story character's body or clothing, to show quick movement. The children could articulate the methods used, as well as the semiotic significance of these methods.
The portrayal of the illusion of space is another challenge for illustrators. The findings indicate that the children were learning the ways in which illustrators meet this challenge. In such books as *The Napping House* (Wood, 1984), the point of view (from which we as readers and viewers are looking at the scene presented in the illustration) changes from illustration to illustration. The children were able to interpret these changes and relate them to other books in which the point of view also changes. The interpretation of the portrayal of objects that are close up or far away, as well as the concepts of "foreground" and "background" were all present in the data.

The findings indicate that the children were aware of the semiotic significance of color, and could use it in their meaning making. The data include discussion of the possibilities of color for expressing mood or emotion. Moreover, the various potentialities of the same color (or group of colors) in various contexts were discussed. For example, the children discussed the "scary" quality that dark colors could bring to texts, as well as the calming and relaxing effect of dark colors in other texts.

In a good picturebook, the illustrations contain potential information which is not present in the verbal text; and the verbal text contains potential information which is not present in the illustrations. During picture storybook readalouds, the children were engaged in a meaning making process in which both visual and verbal information were integrated in a seemingly effortless manner. For example, descriptions of the physical or emotional qualities of characters in the verbal text of the story were augmented by the illustrations in which the characters were depicted. The children were able to use both the visual and verbal information to understand how characters appeared and to make inferences about their mood or emotional state.

The type of literary understanding represented by all these findings related to the children's use of illustration in meaning making is a literary understanding that is unique to picturebooks. In other words, the literary understanding of picturebooks necessarily involves making use of the extensive visual information, since this visual information—in the illustrational sequence and all the features of the peritext—is one of
the special "affordances" (Gibson, 1950; 1971; 1979) of the picturebook. Nevertheless, none of the four specific aspects of the analysis of illustrations mentioned above has received much attention from researchers. Kiefer's (1982) work stands virtually alone in this regard. An important difference between this study and Kiefer's research is that Kiefer was examining the responses of upper-middle class children in one of the most affluent suburbs of the large midwestern city in which her study was conducted. The children could thus fairly be described as children of privilege. The informants for this study were decidedly not children of privilege. They represented a slightly more broad ethnic and cultural mix, as well. This study was conducted with a very different population, and the findings of the study may therefore have greater relevance for children from unadvantaged backgrounds.

The making of narrative meaning from within the text.

During the picture storybook readalouds, the children invested a great deal of time and energy in making narrative meaning. About 55% of the analytical category (or 40% of all the coded conversational turns) were concerned with this process. Part of the reason for this large investment may be that two-thirds of the discussion took place during the reading of the story, when the children were naturally concerned to follow the storyline as it unfolded. (About one-third of the conversational turns took place after the reading of the story.) The children described, evaluated, speculated, or made inferences about the story characters' actions or other plot events. They made frequent use of prediction and then confirmed or disconfirmed their predictions. They made comments about the structure of the story which involved several incidents or episodes, and they also made thematic or quasi-thematic statements about the story. They speculated about the story characters' feelings, thoughts, personalities, or capabilities. The children also employed their own background knowledge for the purposes of interpretation; tried to interpret events or objects symbolically; and made evaluative comments about the story.

A finding of particular interest was the children's tenacity in generating long chains of speculative hypotheses about some gap in the text. For example, the
children speculated at length about why Cinderella's slipper did not disappear at midnight along with all the rest of her magically produced clothing. The children clearly scaffolded each others' reasoning, exploring various possibilities and arriving at intellectually sophisticated conclusions.

Another finding of special significance was the presence of thematic or quasi-thematic statements in the children's discussion. Lehr (1985, 1988, 1991) modified Applebee's (1978a) assertion that children of the age represented in this study (first- and second-graders) were not capable of understanding the concept of theme. Lehr showed that children of this age were capable of such abstract understanding. This study extends and refines Lehr's findings. Lehr's work is based on her work with individual children, as they responded to questions she asked. Thus, the peer scaffolding afforded by a group of children talking together was absent in her study. As well, what the children said in response to Lehr's questions may have been different from what they might have said during the give-and-take of discussion. Thus, although Lehr took great pains to ensure that her child informants were comfortable, there was nevertheless a clinical aspect to her study. The study reported here is truly naturalistic in that it reports on the conversations which occurred in the storybook readaloud situation in the setting of a classroom. The findings in this study also modify the conclusions reached by Galda (1990), who followed Applebee (1978a) in suggesting that children in the primary grades may not be capable of making abstract generalizations about stories. The findings of this study indicate that first- and second-graders can generalize about story structure and theme, arriving at such concepts as the triumph of good over evil in most fairy tales. This ability was strongly associated with the exposure to multiple variants of the same tale, and with exposure to many types of fairy tales and folk tales.

It is significant that such a large part of the children's discussion was related to the making of narrative meaning by these various analytical processes. Some of the research based on reader-response theories seems at times to indicate that analysis or "text-based" talk is somehow less worthy than personal or "reader-based" talk. McGinley, Kamberellis, and Mahoney (in press), in particular, draw a sharp
distinction between these two types of talk, valorizing reader-based talk over text-based talk: "It may be that literature instruction that focuses primarily on the analysis and interpretation of literary texts denies students access to significant personal, social, and political possibilities and consequences that might be afforded by adopting different and perhaps more life-informing perspectives concerning the functions of literature." Rosenblatt (1978) also tends to privilege what she calls the "lived-through experience" of the aesthetic stance in opposition to the efferent stance, despite her insistence that the efferent and the aesthetic constitute a continuum rather than a dichotomy. She argues that "our primary responsibility is to encourage the aesthetic stance" (1982, p. 275). Rosenblatt includes analytic talk as one indication of the efferent stance.1 This study shows how intrigued children can be by the analysis of texts when that analysis is generated by them (rather than primarily by the teacher) in a supportive environment, and in the context of storybook readalouds. The findings of the study suggest that analysis is compatible with reader-based talk. Far from destroying their pleasure, analysis heightened the children's experience of literature, constituting a large portion of their talk. For the children in this classroom, literary understanding necessarily included the various types of analytic explorations listed above.

The relationship between fiction and reality.

The children discussed the ways in which stories were related to the real world. The fiction/reality relationship is complex, and the children were interested in exploring this complexity. They were groping towards the realization that "realistic fiction" is both real and fictional. It is real because it is based on real-life situations and recounts plots which could actually happen; but it is fictional because the characters and plots are almost never simply lifted from reality and inserted into a story. Storymaking involves art, and art necessarily involves artifice. This interest on the part of the children is perhaps not best described as an instance of an "efferent stance." For Rosenblatt (1978), evidence of the efferent stance includes such observations as "there is no such thing as a troll." In the research on reader stance,
Rosenblatt's work is thus applied to young children's responses in such a way as to possibly distort (or even devalue) such responses. However, Rosenblatt's theories neither arose out of experience with young children nor were intended for young children. In this study, the children's concern with teasing out the intricacies of the fiction/reality relationship deserves a less dismissive and less simplistic explanation than simply labeling this concern "effe rent." It is much more likely that this type of discussion is a matter of the shifting and protean nature of the way in which young children perceive reality; perhaps the world of story and the world of reality are, for them, not as easily distinguishable as they are for adults (Applebee, 1978b; Landry, Kelly, & Gardner, 1982).

B: Findings Related to the Intertextual Category

The second conceptual category for the children's talk, The Intertextual, comprised approximately 10% of their conversational turns. The children's responses included linking the text being read aloud to various other cultural products: other books, television shows, videos, advertisements, and the writing or art of other classmates. Three levels of intertextual connections were identified. The first level of connections, associative links, was characterized by an unelaborated statement of likeness between the text being read aloud and another cultural product. The second level, analytical links, was characterized by a statement of likeness followed by a explanation of why the two texts were alike or different. The third level of connections, synthesizing links, was characterized by using multiple intertextual links to make generalizations and draw conclusions about sets of stories.

These intertextual connections were made with hermeneutic intent: they were intended to assist in interpretation in various ways. Indeed, there were eight ways in which the children used intertextual links to make interpretive moves:

(1) The children interpreted personal experiences that had been shared as they personalized a story in the light of intertextual connections. In other words, the text evoked a personal connection, which in turn evoked an intertextual connection.
(2) Intertextual connections were used to make symbolic interpretations of elements of the text.

(3) Children used intertextual connections to make predictions about what might happen in a story.

(4) Intertextual connections were useful in the children's creation and modification of schemata for stories.

(5) The children utilized intertextual connections to construct and refine their ideas of illustration style.

(6) Intertextual connections were used in order to interpret story characters' feelings, motivations, or actions.

(7) Intertextual connections allowed the children to position themselves above the dynamics of the narrative, in order to take on new perspectives in relation to the story.

(8) The linking of texts frequently led to more intertextual connections, until a 'critical mass' was reached that raised the discussion to a higher cognitive level.

The findings thus indicate that intertextual connections played a crucial and pivotal role in the children's developing literary understanding. From this perspective, literary understanding possesses a quantitative component, in that the more stories one knows, the more one is likely to be able to interpret any given story richly. This critical role of intertextual links has received scant attention in the research on young readers' response to literature, though Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) have recently presented evidence for the social construction of intertextuality by analyzing a fifteen-minute videotape of first graders discussing books.² Short (1992) and Rowe (1987) have also explored the role of intertextuality in social settings for literacy learning; but their studies have less to do with literary understanding than they do with the broader range of literacy abilities. Thus, their conceptualization of intertextuality is correspondingly broader: for them, intertextuality functions as a metaphor for the cognitive process of linking any items of knowledge together. This study takes a somewhat narrower view of intertextuality, limiting those items of knowledge to other cultural products.

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The study reported here supports the social construction of intertextuality by its finding that intertextual connections led to more intertextual connections, as the children shared their links with each other. As well, the social environment of the classroom was conducive to the formation of intertextual connections in several ways. The presence of a large number of readily available books; the thematic approach; the use of trade books to teach literature; the teacher’s modeling; and the socially constructed rules for storybook readalouds that included the freedom to find and show other books that related to the book being read aloud—all these were enabling factors in the social construction of intertextuality.

Cognitive flexibility theory (Spiro, et al, 1994), a refinement of schema theory, explains why intertextual links would be so crucial in developing capabilities in the "unstructured domain" of story knowledge. Cognitive flexibility theory suggests that building up knowledge across individual cases is one of the primary cognitive strategies. The making of intertextual links represents such a building up of knowledge across individual stories. Rowe (1987) also draws upon cognitive flexibility theory in discussing the role of intertextuality in the literacy learning of the preschoolers she studied.

C: Findings Related to the Personal Category

The third conceptual category for the children’s talk, The Personal, comprised approximately 10% of the children’s conversational turns. It represented a tendency to draw the story to oneself, and to personalize it in several ways. The findings of the study support Cochran-Smith’s (1984) identification of two types of personalizing: the use of some life experience to understand or personalize some feature of the story (life-to-text connections); and the use of the story (or some feature of it) to make sense of or interpret part of one’s own life (text-to-life connections). In this study, life-to-text connections were much more frequent than text-to-life connections.

There were, however, various other types of personalizing responses that were identified. Children gave themselves agency in stories, telling what they would do if they were a certain character. They questioned the story from their own personal
viewpoint: "I would have done X" or "That's not what I would do." There were some indications that children considered storybook characters as protean creatures whom they could personally control. Another feature of agency was to envision themselves as the tellers of the tale; they saw themselves as producing another version of the tale to stand alongside all the other variants they had heard. Children also used stories as occasions to tell their own stories that diverged from the text, a form of life-to-text connection in which the text was (for the moment) dwarfed and rendered insignificant by a well-developed, full-blown story drawn from the child's life (or the child's fantasy life). In these ways, the children saw stories as malleable, able to be shaped (by them) into other forms.

Another type of personalizing response was found to occur when the readaloud was a well-loved and well-known book, such as Where the Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963). In this case, the personalizing response consisted of connections to the book as a physical object, not to the story that the book contained. Children remembered with pleasure when they had purchased a copy of the book, or shared the various forms of the story (in video, miniature versions, etc.) they owned.

The significance of these findings lies in their extension of Cochran-Smith's (1984) description of text-to-life and life-to-text connections to include other forms of personalizing response, forms that have not been examined in any detail by empirical research.

The type of literary understanding represented by personalizing responses is the aspect which is privileged by reader-response criticism. This view of literary understanding focuses on the reader's awareness and articulation of the feelings and personal experiences that are evoked by the book.

D: Findings Related to the Transparent Category

The fourth conceptual category for the children's talk, The Transparent, comprised only 2% of the coded data. The word "transparent" is used to make the point that, for the moment, the children's world and the world of the story seemed to be transparent to each other. In other words, the children had entered the "secondary
world" (Benton, 1992a) of the story and were having a "lived-through experience" (Rosenblatt, 1978) of the story. Because they were, for the moment, caught up in the story, verbal responses were rare. Such verbalizations as were present were taken to be indications of this aesthetic experience, which was in essence an interior or private phenomenon. These responses seemed inadvertent, perhaps more a function of "inner speech" (Vygotsky, 1986) than of communicative intent. "Talking back to the text" in an immediate and spontaneous manner was taken to be an indication of this interior experience.

The type of literary understanding which responses in this category represent is the experience of being "lost in a book" (Nell, 1988), as one surrenders to the "power of the text" (Scholes, 1985). It is possible that, during storybook readalouds, the best indication of such an experience is not verbal response, but silence. Rosenblatt, for example, never speaks of aesthetic response, but of aesthetic stance. It may thus be problematic to identify any verbal response as aesthetic. Therefore, this study takes a cautious approach by including in the category of the Transparent only those responses that did not seem to have communicative intent, and that were spontaneous and immediate in nature. Other studies that are based on the efferent-aesthetic continuum (for example, Cox, 1994) take a much broader view of what constitutes verbal evidence of the aesthetic stance.

E: Findings Related to the Performative Category

The fifth conceptual category for the children’s talk, The Performative, comprised 5% of the coded data. Like the responses in the category of the Transparent, responses in this category were also taken to be aesthetic in nature. The difference between the two categories was that, whereas the responses in the Transparent category were receptive in nature, the responses in the Performative category were expressive in nature. Performative responses were characterized by utilizing the text as a "pretext" (O’Neill, 1995) or platform for the children’s own flights of creative fancy. Whereas the children surrendered to the power of the text and were (in a sense) manipulated by it in the Transparent category, the opposite was
the case in the Performative category: the text was manipulated by the children. As well, there was distinct communicative intent in Performative responses: they were clearly intended for audience consumption. This is the reason for the use of the term "performative;" the responses constituted a small performance within the context of the storybook readaloud. The responses represented a playful (and almost always humorous) use of the text, sometimes to the extent of threatening to transcend or deconstruct the story in moments of anarchic or Dionysian exhilaration. They were manifestations of what Bakhtin (1984) has referred to as the "carnivalesque." These responses might not be construed as responses at all in less tolerant classroom environments.

The type of literary understanding represented by such responses may be understood as that which flows from a literary stance described by postmodern and deconstructive critics. For such theorists as de Man (1983), Hartman (1975), Miller (1982) and Derrida (1977), the text is considered a collection of signifiers with infinite possibilities for meaning making and no fixed or stable referent.

The significance of this finding is that it seems to represent a new type of response (and literary understanding) that has not been previously explored by research on children's responses to literature. For the researcher, this category of children's response was wholly unexpected, and was not even recognized as a response until well into the study. Reader-response theories do not seem to be the most salient or heuristic for understanding or identifying this type of response; because most studies of children's response are solidly based on reader-response theory, this type of response may have been disregarded. As well, in this study, performative responses occurred only during the reading of the story, not afterwards. Research on literature discussion groups almost invariably involves the children's discussions after the story has been read, when this type of response may not be in evidence.
The Response Styles of Individual Children

The findings of the study suggest that at least some of the children had specific styles of response that could be distinguished from those of the other children. Their response styles consisted of a cluster of related "signature" responses. In chapter 4, the individual response styles of four children were reported in detail.

Sally’s style was characterized by the use of logical reasoning and a precision of interpretation; astuteness in critical judgment; expressions of empathy for story characters; an avoidance of performative responses and a tendency to suggest a different direction for the discussion when she felt it was veering too far away from logical analysis; a sense of her own Native American identity; a concern for identifying the relationship between fiction and reality; and a sensitivity to issues of justice and fairness.

Charles’s response style was characterized by a preference for exuberant performative responses, which included singing; speaking in the role of story characters and investing them with his own distinctive voice; a wry sense of humor and an appreciation for the absurd; and a tendency to make many predictions. Charles’s various performative responses seemed similar to the type of discourse that Gates (1988) and Lee (1995) call "signifying," "a form of discourse in the African American community [that] is full of irony, double entendre, satire, and metaphorical language" (Lee, 1995, p. 612).³

Krissy’s response style was characterized by frequent suggestions for ways in which she and her friends could retell the story being read aloud through drama, art, or other creative ways; an appreciation for the creativity of other children; suggestions for alternatives to the plots of stories; speculative wondering about the intentions and choices of illustrators and authors; an interest in artistic styles and media; and performative responses.

Jim’s response style was characterized by a ruminative and reflective approach that used active listening to draw together many threads of discussion and many elements of the story. This synthesizing process was demonstrated by his tendency to generalize and to make thematic and quasi-thematic statements. Jim often made
statements that had the effect of summarizing much of the structure of the story in a succinct sentence. His responses also showed an interest in how authors and illustrators accomplished the task of publishing books.

The possible individual response styles of several other children were also sketched briefly. It is conceivable that, with more analysis, each child might be found to have a distinguishable style of literary response. In any case, at least some children had discernible styles. This is a significant finding because there has been virtually no empirical research on the possible individual response styles of young children. Galda (1982) investigated the response styles of three fifth-grade girls; but there appear to be no empirical studies that examine the response styles of individual children below grade three. It is possible that children may develop an individual literary response style quite early in their experience with literature. If their experiences begin early in life, or if they have intense exposure to literature, young children may cultivate a particular style as literary critics. They may also specialize, showing intense interest in a few literary devices or styles. It may also be possible to understand their responses as manifestations of what Holland (1975) has called the "identity theme," an individual’s basic personality and worldview.

On the other hand, the fact that the study lasted only seven months makes it impossible to assert that these discernible styles were permanent features of the children’s responses. It may be that children "try out" certain styles and interests, only to discard them and adopt new approaches. If this were the case, it might be part of the process whereby children refine their literary taste and extend their literary understanding.

Findings Related to Question 2: Scaffolding by Adults and Peers

The findings suggested that there were five types of the adults’ talk during storybook readalouds, and that each type resulted in scaffolding the children’s responses and understanding in different ways.

In acting as Readers of the text, the adults read the story as well as the publishing information, book jacket flaps, and other printed text. They acted as tour
guides or docents for the book, pointing out certain features like the endpages or the dedication page. Approximately 28% of the adults’ conversational turns were classified in this category. There were several aspects of the scaffolding function present in this type of adult talk. By focusing attention on a particular part of the book, adults were conveying the message that it was significant in some way. As readers, adults interpreted and enacted the story by mediating the text for the children, investing the silent words on the page with sound and emotion. Adults also scaffolded the experience for children by dividing the story into segments as they read.

As Managers and Encouragers, adults controlled the discussion in the readaloud situation by calling on children, asking children to wait, dealing with disturbances, or directing children’s attention to an element of the story or to the comments made by another child. They encouraged the children with praise or with remarks that tended to continue the children’s responses. This category comprised about 36% of the adult conversational turns. The scaffolding function represented by this type of adult talk was two-fold. First, adults created, through their encouragement, an atmosphere of responsiveness and comfort that was supportive of the children’s risk-taking. Second, adults modeled the ways in which a discussion can proceed most fruitfully, with opportunities for everyone to talk and to listen to each other.

As Clarifiers and Probers, adults linked children’s remarks to each other and pointed out how a comment may have supported, amplified, extended, or contradicted what had been previously said. They asked for more information or explanation. They asked clarifying and probing questions, questions for which they probably already knew the answer, or general questions such as "What do you think might happen?" About 28% of the adult conversational turns were classified in this category. The scaffolding function of this type of adult talk was to supply the "hard bits"--the individual concepts and logical reasoning--that could not be supplied by the children. Through their probing questions, the adults enabled the children to
articulate their responses more fully and to reach higher levels of literary understanding than they may have been able to reach by themselves.

In acting as Fellow Wonderers or Speculators, adults wondered and questioned along with the children, situating themselves as fellow seekers and interpreters. They also playfully participated themselves in the children’s performative responses. This category comprised about 3% of the adult conversational turns. The scaffolding function represented by this category of adult talk is the stance of stepping back and allowing the children to function more independently.

Finally, the adults acted as Extenders and Refiners of the children’s responses. Adults listened carefully to what the children were saying and identified threads of the conversation that could lead to "teachable moments" (Eeds & Wells, 1989), when they could introduce new literary terms or take the children’s remarks to a higher level of generalization or abstraction. Adults also performed a synthesizing function in summarizing groups of responses so as to achieve closure. About 5% of the adult conversational turns were classified in this category. The aspect of the scaffolding function that is highlighted by this type of adult talk is the introduction of new literary information and concepts in a form and context that allow the children to assimilate it most easily. Over the course of the study, new elements (for example, the concept of foreshadowing) were added to the children’s "literary tool kit" in this manner.

Notably absent in the data were questions on the literal level, such as "What color was Grace’s Peter Pan costume?" or "Who told Grace that she couldn’t be Peter Pan because she was black?" The absence of these questions is significant because the adults’ questions were not aimed at testing the children’s comprehension of stories, but rather at assisting them in interpreting the story, relating it to their own lives, making connections between other texts, or encouraging speculation about various features of the illustrations or the verbal text.

The findings in this study about the various roles played by the teacher during storybook readalouds relate most directly to the work of McGee (McGee, Courtney,
& Lomax, 1994), who studied the role of teachers in literature discussions with first grade children. McGee found that teachers played several roles, including that of "facilitator" (by managing turn-taking, for example); "helper/nudger" (by summarizing, restating or asking for clarification); "responder" (by introducing, expanding, or elaborating topics); "literary curator" (by extending literary understandings during "teachable moments"); and "reader" (by reading the story). It is clear that these roles are quite similar to the findings in this study. McGee’s "facilitator" role is similar to the role of manager and encourager; her "reader" compares to the role of reader in this study; her "literary curator" role is similar to the extender/refiner role; and her "helper/nudger" and "responder" roles correspond to the clarifier/prober. The studies therefore support each other to a great extent on their interpretations of the roles that adults play in talking about literature with young children.

In this study, the adult teachers thus played a very active role in scaffolding and enabling the children’s developing literary understanding. The study therefore supports the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky (1978; 1986) and others (Berk & Winslor, 1995; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wood, 1989) who have asserted that teachers figure very largely in their students’ learning, as well as those who call for "active students and active teachers" (Calkins, 1986; Cazden, 1991, 1992; Clay, 1991). In other words, we cannot simply sit back and "kidwatch" (Goodman, 1985), observing the developing flowers unfold. This would seem to be as true of children’s literary understanding as it is of the other ways in which they become literate.

The growing research on children’s literature discussions without any adults present (McCormick, 1995; Scott, 1992; Wieneck & O’Flahavan, 1994) must therefore be qualified. It is one thing if literature discussions without adults are promoted as one feature of a literate environment that includes the active teaching of literary understanding; but to use this type of research to suggest that children can reach higher levels of literary understanding solely on their own (or that their literary understanding would necessarily be sullied or constrained by an adult’s presence) is
quite another. Rather than their presence or absence, it is what adults say (or refrain from saying) that is important, as the I.R.E. (Initiation-Response-Evaluation) research shows. This research (Bellek, et al, 1966; Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) clearly demonstrates that teachers can indeed have a stultifying effect on children’s learning by controlling classroom talk in overly rigid ways.

The study reported here suggests some of the ways in which teachers can be very active in talking about literature with children, while still locating themselves within the "interpretation" model of learning rather than within the "transmission" model of learning; and on the "understanding" side of the "understanding--judging" dichotomy (Barnes, 1976, p. 112). Adult talk in this study tended to encourage what Barnes (1976) calls "exploratory talk" rather than "final draft" talk on the part of the children.

Children’s Enabling of Their Peers’ Response and Understanding

The findings suggest that there were also various ways in which the children scaffolded each others’ responses and literary understanding. They explained features of the story that were unclear to other children, and answered other children’s questions. They refined each others’ hypotheses and predictions, and also scaffolded each others’ thinking by their disagreements and arguments. They challenged and changed each others’ perceptions of reality through discussion during and after the readalouds. They added their own unique perspectives that stemmed from their individual response styles and their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, thereby enriching the discussion.

Findings Related to Question 3: Textual Influences on Response

The findings associated with the third research question for the study concern the various ways in which texts were related to children’s responses. There were three literary genres represented in the picturebooks utilized for readalouds: (1) fairy tales and folk tales; (2) contemporary realistic fiction; and (3) contemporary fantasy or magical realism. In the study, the highest percentages of personalizing responses
on the part of the children were in books of contemporary realistic fiction. As well, discussion of social issues and problems (such as race and gender equity) occurred only during readalouds of contemporary realistic fiction. Texts that were amenable to open-ended interpretations tended to evoke the children’s generation of chains of speculative hypotheses. Postmodern texts that subverted the conventions of the picturebook or that contained bizarre images and twists of plot evoked (in some children) a high percentage of performative responses. These findings must be qualified with the caution that the study was not intended to be comparative. Nevertheless, these observed trends encourage our speculation about the ways in which various types of texts may have particular "affordances" (Gibson, 1950) or potentialities of evoking differing types of response, thereby enabling different types of literary understanding. Therefore, a wide representation of genres and a broad spectrum of other textual features may be the most useful in enriching literary understanding. There does not appear to be other empirical research that deals with this issue in a comprehensive way.

The children’s knowledge of textual variants of the same story (for example, the many variants of the Cinderella story across cultures and time periods) allowed them to interpret any one version of the story as a palimpsest of multiple texts, increasing their interpretive ability. Exposure to multiple variants also allowed the children to build up their knowledge across cases in order to reach higher levels of generalization and abstraction. For example, they were able to reach the generalization that good always triumphs over evil in fairy tales, and then to criticize this generalization by discussing books that did not conform to the general pattern.

Towards a Grounded Theory of the Literary Understanding of Young Children

In this section, the findings summarized in the previous section are utilized to sketch the outlines of a theory of the literary understanding of young children. This theory does not aspire to be applicable to all ages and all types of literature. Rather, my goal is to limn a possible theoretical orientation to the literary understanding of young children (children under eight years of age). It should also be clear that it is
the literary understanding of picture storybooks⁴ that is here described, because (1) the study utilized picture storybooks exclusively; and (2) the picture storybook is the principal format in which young children experience literature. Furthermore, the theory is based exclusively on verbal responses of children, which may limit its applicability. The theory is grounded in the sense that it arises from the data for this study, making use of the five conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of the children’s responses to storybook readalouds.

In presenting the theory, I first want to recapitulate these five conceptual categories in the form of a chart (Figure 5.1). This chart attempts to summarize the central features of each category, as well as to depict in a schematic manner the various ways in which the categories relate to each other. Following the discussion of this chart, I continue to describe the relationship among the categories, to the extent of "blurring" some of the distinctions among them, because the categories may be more porous to each other than the previous expositions have suggested. In describing the relationships or imbrications of the five categories, I then visualize them as the elements of three basic impulses or vectors, which constitute a threedimensional cognitive space. I name these three impulses or vectors the "hermeneutic impulse," the "aesthetic impulse," and the "personalizing impulse," and I theorize that all of these impulses are energized as children socially construct literary understanding. Literary understanding is then defined theoretically as the dynamic process whereby these three impulses are activated and interact with each other, in both individual children and groups. The three-dimensional cognitive space is presented in visual form (Figures 5.2 and 5.3); I then explain the components of the diagram and the dynamic and fluid process that it represents. In the course of the presentation of the theory, I also place it in relation to other theoretical perspectives on literary understanding.

Facets of Literary Understanding

Figure 5.1 presents a visual summary of five aspects or facets of the literary understanding of young children. It is based directly on the typology of children’s
responses during picture storybook readalouds that arose from this study. It is assumed that children’s verbal responses are indicative of several kinds of literary understanding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. STANCE</th>
<th>B. ACTION</th>
<th>C. FUNCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How children situate themselves in relation to texts</td>
<td>What children do with texts</td>
<td>How texts function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Within texts,</td>
<td>children analyze,</td>
<td>using texts as objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the text as an object or cultural product. Children stay within the text and make comments that reflect an analytical stance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Across texts,</td>
<td>children link or relate,</td>
<td>using texts as context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating the text being read to other cultural products. The text is re-viewed in relation to other texts, and functions as an element in the matrix of interrelated con-texts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. From or to texts,</td>
<td>children personalize,</td>
<td>using texts as stimuli.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting the text to one’s own life, moving either from life to the text or from the text to one’s life. The text acts as a stimulus for a personal connection.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Through texts,</td>
<td>children merge with texts,</td>
<td>using texts as their identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering the world of the story and becoming one with it. The story-world becomes (momentarily) identical with and transparent to the children’s world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. On texts,</td>
<td>children perform or &quot;signify,&quot;</td>
<td>using texts as platforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering the text-world and manipulating it for one’s own purposes. The text functions as a platform for children’s creativity, becoming a playground for a carnivalesque romp.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1. Five facets of literary understanding: A theoretical model.

The three headings at the top of the chart (Stance, Action, and Function) indicate that each of the five facets of literary understanding may be viewed as (A) stances assumed by children; or as (B) actions performed by children; or in terms of (C) the various functions served by texts. The chart may therefore be viewed
vertically, comparing and contrasting the five facets of literary understanding with each other, through a consideration of each of the three columns.

**Stance** refers to how children situate themselves in relation to the text. In the first aspect of literary understanding (1), children situate themselves *within* the text, in order to engage in interpretation through a "close reading." In the second aspect of literary understanding (2), children situate themselves *across* two or more texts, for the purpose of making interpretive intertextual links. In the third aspect of literary understanding (3), children are drawn *to* texts when they relate their own lives to the text; and they draw *from* texts when they relate the text to their own lives. In the fourth aspect of literary understanding (4), children situate themselves psychologically so that, for the moment, they live their lives *through* the story as it is being read. In the fifth aspect of literary understanding (5), children situate themselves *on* the text, as if the text were a platform, in order to express themselves creatively.

These are the various stances children may assume in relation to narrative literature.

**Action** refers to what children do with texts. They may (1) *analyze* a text from within, discussing and interpreting its structure, its characters, its plot or setting. They may also discuss the form and content of the illustrations, as well as the media used in producing them. Children may also relate the illustrations to the verbal text; "read" various illustrational conventions and codes; predict what may happen; or apply particular items of literary knowledge such as foreshadowing. Another way in which children may interpret is to (2) *link or relate* several texts to each other. If enough texts are linked together, this may result in the ability to understand high-level generalizations about groups of texts. Children may also (3) *personalize* texts, making them their own by relating them to their own lives; by using texts to understand or cope with some personal issue; by being challenged to alter their view of reality through their experience of the text; by seeing themselves as tellers of the same tale; or by telling what they would do if they were a storybook character. Children may also (4) *merge* with texts, becoming momentarily one with the story, so
that their "third area" (Winnicott, 1971) or inner imaginative functions integrate receptively with the story to the extent that the story-world and their third area are united. As well, children may (5) perform or "signify" (Gates, 1988; Lee, 1995) on texts, using texts as catalysts for their own flights of creative fancy.

These are the various actions children may take in relating to narrative literature.

**Function** refers to the various ways in which texts may be used. Texts may function as (1) discrete objects for children's analytic energies. Texts may also function (2) as elements in the larger context created by the connections among several texts. Another way that texts function is as (3) stimuli for personal self-knowledge, growth, or empathy. When (4) a child merges with a text intimately, the text and the child's third area become transparent to each other. In this way, a text may function as the momentary identity of the child. Finally, a text may function as a platform or playground for the child's expressive performative response.

These are the various functions served by texts of narrative literature.

The chart may also be read horizontally, joining together each phrase from the three columns so that a complete sentence is formed. Thus,

1. Within texts, children analyze, using texts as objects.
2. Across texts, children link or relate, using texts as context.
3. From or to texts, children personalize, using texts as stimuli.
4. Through texts, children merge with texts, using texts as their identity.
5. On texts, children perform or 'signify,' using texts as platforms.

By dealing with stance, action, and function, the sentences succinctly summarize each facet of literary understanding.

**Blurring the Categories**

Although the chart expresses the relationships among the various types of literary understanding by providing ways of comparing and contrasting them by the stance assumed by children, the actions performed by them, and by the various
functions performed by texts, there is, nevertheless, a static quality to this representation that does not accord well with the dynamic and fluid nature of children’s literary understanding. In this section, therefore, it is argued that the facets or aspects of literary understanding are not rigidly distinct categories, hermetically sealed off from each other, but are rather porous to each other.⁵

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate this porosity is through the use of several concrete examples of children’s talk that have already been discussed.

_Piggybook_ (Browne, 1986) is a contemporary fantasy that tells the story of a family named Piggott, in which Mrs. Piggott does all the work while her husband and two sons do nothing but order her around. During the readaloud of this story, Charles responded to the portion of the text that describes Mrs. Piggott’s labors:

Larry: [reading] *As soon as they had eaten, Mrs. Piggott washed the dishes, washed the clothes, did the ironing, and then cooked some more.*

Charles: Cinderella, Cinderella! Get your butt down here!  
(Piggybook, Group 1, 2/12/96)

In the discussion of Charles’s individual response style, this response was called an _intertextual_ connection with _performative_ intent. Thus, at least two facets of literary understanding (the second and fifth facets, respectively) were present in the response. Charles was clearly making a connection to another text or cluster of texts: the palimpsest of variants of the Cinderella story. It is equally clear that Charles was also using the story as a platform for an expressively playful performance; he was manipulating the story so as to insert this playfully humorous statement as he "signified" on the text.

The three other facets of literary understanding seem to be present, as well. Charles’s comment is evidence of interpretive close reading: quite incisively so, for it reveals, implicitly, his _analytical_ understanding of the relationships among the story characters, an understanding of such acuity that he is able to express these relationships in one pithy remark. Mr. Piggott and the two sons are indeed very
much like the stepmother and stepsisters in *Cinderella*, as Mrs. Piggott is like Cinderella. Thus there is a suggestion of the first facet of literary understanding. From this perspective, Charles’s remark is a complex metaphor.

As well, we know that it is highly unlikely that Charles has heard a variant of the Cinderella tale in which the stepsisters call to Cinderella with the words used by Charles. It seems that Charles is *personalizing* by utilizing his own distinct voice; perhaps he is even remembering occasions when he was spoken to (or spoke) in this way. In this way, the third facet of literary understanding may be present.

Finally, the immediacy with which Charles speaks and the incisive quality of his comment argue a participation in the world of the story and a momentary *merging* with the text (just prior to his comment) that is characteristic of the fourth aspect of literary understanding.

Thus, all five aspects of literary understanding may be present at this moment, though some may be more immediately evident than others. From the theoretical standpoint of the chart, Charles may be assuming multiple *stances* and performing multiple *actions*; and the text may have multiple *functions* for him as he makes this response.

Another example of the imbricated nature of at least some of the children’s responses is the series of comments made by the children in response to the teacher’s question about what the wolf might be thinking when he first saw Red Riding Hood:

Charles: Yummy, yummy!

Trudy: Yummy, yummy, here comes my dinner.

Don: There’s my food floating in the air!

Julie: I’m gonna jump out and eat her!

Trent: [whistles--a real "wolf whistle"]

Teacher: He’s thinking, whewie, there’s a pretty girl, huh?
Trent: A pretty girl, and also delicious!

(Marshall’s *Red Riding Hood*, 12/11/95)

This vignette was introduced in chapter 4 as an example of a question by the teacher which encouraged a specific type of response—in this case, a performative response. I would still classify these responses as primarily performative because the children are controlling, manipulating, and altering the text. However, these responses are more directly related to the plot of the story than other performative responses, which seem much more tangential to the story line. Although they are not using storybook language, the children do seem to staying within the story, and their comments are interpretive, even analytical, in nature because they are considering what a character might be thinking. Don’s comment, in particular, is probably the result of his analytical interpretation of the illustration on this page, which depicts no shadow under Red Riding Hood, so that it may look as if she is "floating in the air." Also, the children’s knowledge of other versions of *Red Riding Hood* may be brought into play, so there is an intertextual element to their responses. By inserting themselves in the story, they are personalizing the story for themselves; and by giving their comments the form of first-person narration, they may be verbalizing their aesthetic, "lived-through" experience of the story.

These two examples were chosen to demonstrate the intricate interrelationships among all five facets of literary understanding; other examples could be chosen to demonstrate possible overlaps between pairs of facets. The point is that the facets may overlap in some instances. It is therefore necessary to convey this quality of imbrication in the theoretical model. As well, the dynamic and fluid quality of the children’s responses—their ability to move so quickly and easily from one facet of literary understanding to another—must also be represented. The next two sections attempt to remedy these deficiencies.
The Three Basic Literary Impulses

In exploring the relationships among the five facets of literary understanding, I argued that both intertextual connections and within-text analysis seemed to have a primarily interpretive intent. Whether the children stayed within the text or related it to other texts, the principal focus of their talk was to understand the story. Interpretation can focus within the text itself, as children attempt to understand the text’s form and content. Interpretation can also focus on the context; in other words, the world of texts outside the text under consideration. In this case, interpretation is a matter of forging links between the text at hand and the world of texts outside, as the text is placed or perceived in relation to other texts. These two facets of literary understanding might therefore be conceptualized as the two components of a single impulse, which I name the hermeneutic impulse: the basic impulse to grasp the meaning of the narrative.

I have also argued that the conceptual category called the Transparent was receptive in nature, whereas the conceptual category of the Performative was expressive in nature; moreover, that they both were manifestations of an aesthetic stance. These two facets of literary understanding might therefore be conceptualized as the two components of a single impulse, which I name the aesthetic impulse. In its receptive form, the aesthetic impulse results in the "lived-through" experience of a work of literature, as we aesthetically surrender, for the moment, to the power of the text. Aesthetic reception, however, should not be conceived as passive, because it involves an active sensitivity and a reconstruction, as the world of the text, for the moment, merges with and becomes transparent to the children’s own psychic world or "third area" (Winnicott, 1971). The aesthetic impulse, however, may also result in expression, as the reader (or listener) utilizes the experience of the text as a platform or launching pad for his or her own creative action. The power of the text, rather than being something to which the reader surrenders, becomes instead the catalyst for creative expression. These are the two poles of the aesthetic impulse.

The tendency to want to personalize a story constitutes a third basic impulse. To draw the story to oneself in some way, and to use the story to inform (or even
transform) one's own life: this urge is also a foundational impulse, which I name the
personalizing impulse. This impulse is the impulse to forge links between the
counts, assumptions, narrative trajectory, and thematic meanings evoked or invited
by the text and the reader's (or listener's) own psychic world. On the one hand, we
bring our own life experiences to bear on a text. What else, indeed, do we have to
bring? These are life-to-text connections. On the other hand, the evoked concepts
and meanings are another form of experience (a "virtual experience" in S. Langer's
(1953) terminology), and may thus be heuristic in informing or transforming our
lives. The personalizing impulse therefore travels in two directions: "I am like it; it
is like me;" and it thus can inform or transform me. These are the dual
preoccupations of the personalizing impulse.

These three basic impulses may be visualized as three defining planes or
vectors of cognitive space, as in Figure 5.2:
Figure 5.2 A theoretical model of the three-dimensional cognitive space of literary understanding.⁶

Before describing the ways in which the three impulses dynamically relate to each other and the ways in which they rotate around the axis of their intersection, I want to discuss in more detail what constitutes the core of each basic impulse, and to relate each impulse to other theoretical perspectives.

At the core of the hermeneutic impulse is the desire to master the text. Children construct meaning through the process of assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 1985). Story grammars (Graesser, Golding, & Long, 1991) and schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984) describe this taking in of information and organizing it into pre-existing cognitive structures, which are in turn modified,
extended, and refined by this new information. The New Critics' concern with close reading, as well the concerns of structuralism (Todorov, 1977; Genette, 1980; Barthes, 1974) relate to the analytical (within-text) pole of this impulse. The interest of archetypal criticism (Frye, 1957) and Russian Formalism (Propp, 1958) in the ways texts display common patterns or express common universal themes relates to the intertextual pole of this impulse. Other theoretical perspectives which concern themselves with context in various ways are the so-called "New Historicism" (Veeser, 1989) and Marxist literary theory (Eagleton, 1976; Williams, 1977). The concern of New Historicists and Marxists is to place the text in the interpretive context of historical, socio-cultural, and economically-driven hegemonies. All of these theories have to do with mastering the text in one way or another.

At the core of the aesthetic impulse is desire to forget our own contingency and experience the freedom that art provides. Edmund White (1994), paraphrasing the German Romantic writer F. Schiller, writes that "Art educates us in freedom since it alone shows the human spirit untrammeled by compromising circumstance; art alone is pure play" (pp. 330-331). Not only does art show or embody this state; it also is the catalytic enabler for a state of untrammelled freedom in those who view it, read it, or otherwise experience it. There may be, contra White, other ways of reaching this state; it seems, for example, to be the goal of much philosophical and religious experience. Indeed, a philosophical distinction may help us here. The ancient Greeks distinguished between two types of time: chronos and kairos. Chronos represents time as an endless linear succession of instants; we locate ourselves along this line by talking of the past, the present, and the future. Kairos, on the other hand, is time without linearity. It is the eternal present, the meaningful and exhilarating moment when we feel that linear time is obliterated. In the workaday world, the cycles of sleeping and waking, and the myriad routines of everyday living, we experience chronos. Art allows us to free ourselves from our own state of human contingency. As we contemplate a painting or piece of sculpture or view dance and drama; as we read a novel or listen to a picturebook being read aloud, time ceases to be a dull and mechanical succession of instants. The aesthetic
impulse is precisely the desire to turn chronos into kairos. Winnicott (1971) might say that our "third area"—our inner, imaginative cognitive functions—was the psychological site for the activation of this desire.

Susan Sontag’s (1961) famous (not to say notorious) comment that "in place of a hermeneutics, we need an erotics of art" (p. 14) expresses the emphasis of the aesthetic impulse. Sontag is making the point that it is the pleasurable experience of literature (and of all art) that is important, rather than the interpretation of it. Benton’s (1992a) concept of the "secondary world;" and theories of pleasure (Barthes, 1976) focus on the dynamics of the receptive pole of the aesthetic impulse. Bakhtin’s (1984) concept of the "carnivalesque;" Gates’ (1988) concept of "signifying;" theories of drama (Cole, 1992; Wolf, 1994) and play (Garvey, 1977; Block & King, 1987) all concern themselves with the expressive pole of the aesthetic impulse.

At the core of the personalizing impulse is the desire to link or connect ourselves to texts. Some postmodern thinkers (Derrida, 1977) conceive of the human psyche as another text in the universe of texts; if we take this view, then the personalizing impulse collapses onto the hermeneutic impulse because connecting our lives to the text is a special form of intertextual connection. Unless we make the text our own, it remains distant and remote. Texts are dry bones and mere black specks (or strokes of color) on a page unless they are personalized. "A book exists only when a living mind recreates it and that recreation comes into being only through the full imaginative participation of a particular sensibility" (White, 1994, p. 376).

The range of reader response theories (Bleich, 1978; Holland, 1975; Iser, 1978) is most centrally focused on the dynamics of the personalizing impulse: the meaning the text possesses for each reader. Theorists and researchers who speak of the life-transforming power of literature (Booth, 1988; McGinley, Kamberelis, & Mahoney, in press) or the ways in which literature can change our view of reality and impel us to social justice (Davies, 1993; Harris, 1993), as well as those concerned with our abilities to resist or read against the text (Encisco, 1994) are also centrally concerned with the personalizing impulse.
Several theories seem to be equally concerned with all three impulses. Louise Rosenblatt’s transactive theory (1978, 1994) has a reader-based component, and is thus deeply concerned with the personalizing impulse: literary meaning is, first of all, personal meaning. My "aesthetic impulse" and "hermeneutic impulse" bear some similarities to her aesthetic and efferent stances, respectively. However, there are some differences. Rosenblatt’s aesthetic stance seems to partake equally of the receptive pole of my concept of the aesthetic impulse and of my personalizing impulse. For Rosenblatt, the "lived-through experience" of a work of literature (or any work of art) is private, interior, and personal: the "poem" is constructed inside the reader’s psyche. Rosenblatt does not deal with the expressive pole of the aesthetic impulse, which results in the public expression of the reader’s creativity. Rosenblatt’s efferent stance corresponds in a similar way to my idea of the hermeneutic impulse. One expression of the efferent stance is to read in order to take something away from the text, as when we read a recipe in order to cook. Another expression of the efferent stance is literary analysis. The first of these expressions of the efferent stance—reading in order to take something away—is not a part of my concept of the hermeneutic impulse, because the hermeneutic impulse is a literary impulse, and such a purpose is not a literary purpose at all. The second of these expressions of the efferent stance—literary analysis—is a part of my idea of the hermeneutic impulse. However, the hermeneutic impulse also consists of another pole, that of connecting the text to the wider world of cultural products and contexts. Rosenblatt seems to deal with this only glancingly.

Judith Langer’s (1990, 1995) model of envisionment attempts to describe four stances readers may take relative to texts. "Being out and stepping in," involving the reader’s mobilization of prior life experiences in order to understand a text, would seem to combine the personalizing and hermeneutic impulses. "Being in and moving through," referring to the reader’s immersion in the text, is similar to the receptive pole of the aesthetic impulse. "Being in and stepping out," concerned with comparing the lives of characters in the story with one’s own life, may be similar to the
personalizing impulse. "Stepping out and objectifying experience" may be most closely related to the hermeneutic impulse.

Deanne Bogdan's (1990) concept of the "kinetic response" (defined as the type of response we make when we judge a literary work by whether or not it packs an emotional whollop for us) relates to the personalizing impulse. Her "spectator response" (concerned with the analysis of the text as an object) is similar to the analytical pole of the hermeneutic impulse. Bogdan's "stock response" "interprets and values a text solely according to whether the work in question seems to reinforce or countervail the welter of ideas, values, and feelings that go to make up the reader's conscious or unconscious worldview" (p. 124). Stock response thus seems to be another aspect of the personalizing impulse. Bogdan writes of the "apprehension of total form" that results from the combination of these three types of responses. In terms of my theory, the richest literary understanding results from the activation and the interaction of all three impulses. This dynamic quality of literary understanding is discussed in the next section.

The Dynamics of Literary Understanding

By thus describing the three basic literary impulses, I have indicated more ways in which the five facets of literary understanding relate to each other. It now remains, as it were, to set the diagram in motion. For the reader's convenience, I reproduce it here, with the addition of several arrows to indicate movement (Figure 5.3):
Figure 5.3 The dynamics of literary understanding.

By adding the arrows, I mean to indicate that the planes or vectors of the three impulses rotate in the same way as the arms of a whirligig. Unlike the arms of a whirligig, however, the impulses move independently of each other, thus overlapping each other at points as they rotate around the same pivot. In other words, a child's response at any given moment may indicate that two (or even all three) of the impulses are being followed. It is these instances that indicate the "blurring" of the conceptual categories, as in the examples discussed above. There are also times when the impulses are separately distinguishable, corresponding to the positions in which they are depicted in the diagram. The complex and dynamic interaction of the three
impulses (and the five facets of literary understanding) is thus indicated. When one of the impulses (or one of the five facets of literary understanding, which constitute the arms of the whirligig) is absent, literary understanding is impoverished, because the richest understanding results from the interaction of all three impulses and all five facets.

The formal theoretical definition of literary understanding that is implied by this discussion may be stated as follows:

*The literary understanding of young children consists of five facets: the analytical, the intertextual, the personal, the transparent, and the performative. These five facets form the poles of three basic literary impulses: the hermeneutic impulse, the aesthetic impulse, and the personalizing impulse. Literary understanding is the dynamic process whereby these three impulses are activated and dynamically interact with each other.*

**Pedagogical Implications of the Study**

The research site for this study was chosen on the principle of "intensity sampling" (Patton, 1990). In other words, the school, classroom, and teacher were chosen because this particular site seemed to hold great promise for intensely manifesting the phenomenon to be studied: literary understanding. That the site did, in fact, manifest this phenomenon intensely has been demonstrated in chapter 4. In chapter 1, it was stated that "the data for the study, in general, reflect the high potential for children’s literary understanding rather than the level of literary understanding that may be found in more typical classrooms and schools." In this section, therefore, the potential inherent in this "information-rich case" (Patton, 1990) is discussed as a series of implications for classroom practice.

**Handling the Storybook Readaloud Situation**

In this study, the storybook readaloud situation was highly structured, in the sense that several routines and rules organized it. The readalouds were frequent, occurring twice a day. They took place in a certain part of the classroom at
predictable times. The children knew that they were free to comment at any time during the reading, and they knew the importance of listening to the comments of others. A great variety of comments were acceptable. They knew that making links to other books was valued, and that they could show books that related to the book being read aloud. This process was facilitated by the location of the readalouds in a space that was surrounded by most of the classroom’s collection of books. The children were accustomed to detailed discussion about peritextual features before they heard the verbal text of the story, because the teacher allowed time for a leisurely perusal of these features. All of these routines and rules were useful in assuring that the readalouds were highly productive. The routinized nature of the situation enabled the building of “progressively richer knowledge structures” (Snow, Nathan, & Perlmann, 1985, p. 168). Classroom teachers, therefore, should be sensitive to the ways in which their structuring of the readaloud situation through routines and rules creates the frame that enables progressively richer literary understanding.

Building a classroom community is an important concern for teachers (Peterson, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1994). In this study, the storybook readaloud situation was one of the most important sites for the formation of a literary “interpretive community” (Fish, 1980) in the classroom. Children felt free to share and construct their literary competence in the context of a secure environment that encouraged— even valorized—speculation, wondering, spontaneous performative response, and provocative interpretations. Teachers may want to reflect on how their own storybook readaloud practices assist in the formation of a classroom interpretive community.

One aspect of the way readalouds were handled in this study deserves special mention. Two-thirds of the children’s conversational turns in this study occurred during the reading of the story, whereas one-third of the turns occurred after the reading. Moreover, the quality of talk during the readalouds was also high. Allowing children to talk during the reading of the story may not be a common practice among teachers, however. In Hoffman, Roser, & Battle’s (1993) recent study of storybook reading practices, the category of discussion during reading does
not even occur—only discussion before and after, as a possible indication of how little it may happen in classrooms.

Teachers may feel that they want children to listen carefully to the story and experience it aesthetically, saving talk for after the reading so that the story is experienced as a unified whole. This practice certainly has merit; however, if used exclusively as the sole model for storybook readalouds, it may result in far less discussion and a lower level of literary understanding for the children.

If we always expect children to listen quietly to a story and to save their responses until the story is finished, we may be imposing our adult view of what constitutes the proper way of experiencing literature—a view that may not be particularly productive for young children. Because the children’s responses in this study were so often of the moment and in the moment, to hold the response to the end of the reading would have been, in many cases, to lose it. As well, certain types of responses manifested by the children occurred almost exclusively during the reading of the story; if children are always expected to hold their responses, their response may be less rich. For example, performative responses, predictions, and "talking back to the story" characteristically happened as the story was being read. These types of responses may simply not be in evidence if children are not allowed to comment during storybook readalouds.

One of the special affordances of the storybook readaloud situation is talking as the story unfolds. In most literature circles, literature discussion groups, and classroom book clubs (Daniels, 1994; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Leal, 1991; Raphaël & McMahon, 1994), the discussion takes place only after the story is read. These literature discussion groups are certainly valuable, but storybook readalouds offer the possibility of evoking different types of responses.

Finally, to allow children to talk freely during the reading of a story gives teachers a window on the children’s process of making narrative meaning. In turn, this allows teachers the opportunity of scaffolding the children’s meaning construction as it is in the process of being constructed. It would seem that scaffolds are most useful as a structure is being built.
Encouraging a Variety of Responses

The data suggest that there were five types of responses made by children, responses that suggested five different types of literary understanding. In reflecting on their own classroom practice, teachers may want to consider how many of these types of response are manifested by their students. For example, if all the talk seems to be focused within the text, personalizing responses may be modelled and encouraged. If, on the other hand, only personalizing responses are manifested, teachers may want to model and encourage text-centered talk. There seems to be a range of types of literary understanding, and teachers can consider how they may increase their students’ repertoires to include a greater portion of this spectrum. Because textual features may play a role in evoking particular types of response, teachers should consider choosing a variety of genres and formats. There is a great range of picturebooks available today, from the treatment of serious social problems—like Fly Away Home (Bunting, 1991) and Amazing Grace (Hoffman, 1991)—, to the outrageous postmodern hijinks in The Stinky Cheese Man (Scieszka, 1992). Teachers’ knowledge of this ever-expanding range of possibilities is therefore crucial. If we limit children’s experience to a few genres, we may be limiting their developing literary understanding.

Taking Advantage of the Affordances of Picturebooks

One of the unique affordances of picturebooks is the rich visual stimulation they provide. For example, this study demonstrates the great potential of the peritext of picturebooks for making meaning. It may be that these features are often skipped or given short shrift. Children should be encouraged to explore this potential by discussing the possibilities of semiotic significance in the dust jacket, front and back covers, endpages, title- and half-title pages, and dedication page. As well, the great importance of the illustration sequence in the total meaning of picturebooks should not be ignored or underestimated. In picturebooks, the illustrations act to fill in gaps in the text, and the text acts to fill in gaps in the illustrations. There is a synergy between text and illustrations: together, they have a potential for meaning that is
more than the sum of their parts. In order to understand this special affordance of picturebooks, teachers need to refine and extend their own understanding of art, illustration, and picturebook theory. Bang (1991), Kiefer (1995), Stewig (1995), and Doonan (1993) discuss principles of art, the conventions and semiotic codes of illustration, and picturebook theory in ways that are quite accessible to classroom teachers who may not have as rich a background in the visual arts as they might wish. If teachers are to enrich their students’ aesthetic appreciation and understanding of the visual features of picturebooks, they must first possess their own appreciation and understanding. An important part of the literary understanding of picturebooks is the understanding that is related to this visual component.

Because picturebooks consist of at least two related sign systems (the visual sign system of the illustrations and the verbal sign system of the written text), they can increase the ability to move among several sign systems. This type of understanding is important for children’s use of such new textual entities as hypertext. Lemke (1993) comments that, in illustrated informational texts and hypertext, there are "many possible pathways through the textworld;" this is equally true of picturebooks. Margaret Meek (1982) argues that "A picture book invites all kinds of reading and allows the invention of a set of stories rather than a single story" (p. 174). By according illustrations equal importance with the text, teachers thus encourage this diversity of interpretation, and also facilitate their students’ abilities to integrate visual and verbal information.

**Understanding the Importance of Intertextual Connections and Story Variants**

In this study, intertextual connections were found to be pivotal in enabling the children to make a great variety of interpretive moves. To ensure the forging of intertextual links would therefore seem to be important. If these connections are not occurring as often as teachers think they should be, they can demonstrate and encourage children to make these connections. The question, "What other stories does this story remind you of?" may be used to stimulate intertextual links. Children who do make links to other books and cultural products should be praised, and their
responses may be probed to encourage intertextual analysis. Teachers may want to examine the eight ways in which intertextual connections were utilized by the children in this study, comparing them with the ways in which their own students make use of such connections. Perhaps there are many other ways in which intertextual connections could function.

It was found that there is a quantitative element in intertextual connections, in that after a certain number of stories are interrelated, a type of cognitive "critical mass" is achieved that allows the children to reach higher levels of abstraction and generalization about story theme and structure. Reading many stories to children allows them to more readily build up this critical mass. As well, reading many stories that are representative of the same genre would be helpful.

Reading many variants of one story (like the multiple versions and variants of the Cinderella story) may allow children to increase their intertextual knowledge with the greatest ease. Variants are identifiable as variants precisely because they share many common elements of structure, character relationships, and themes. It may therefore be easier for children to forge intertextual links among variants. Thus, teachers may want to consider units of study in which many variants and versions of the same story are read and reread. In this way, they arrange their storybook readings so that even children with little background knowledge in literature may begin to link stories together.

It should also be remembered that the children in this study made links to cultural products other than books. There were links to television programs, videos and movies, and the art or writing of other children. The study shows that even the most vulgar elements of popular culture may be utilized by the children to achieve remarkably sophisticated and beautiful interpretations. Therefore, the literary understanding of the children may be best served if all their intertextual links (including some that the teacher may consider too low-brow) are honored, rather than valorizing only connections to other books. The making of links between the story and the art or writing of other children seems to be particularly important, so that
children may see themselves as fellow authors and illustrators along with the authors and illustrators in books.

The Crucial Roles of Teachers

This study provides evidence for the critical roles teachers may play in enabling their students' development of literary understanding. The study identified five ways in which teachers scaffolded the children's literary understanding, and found that teachers played a critical role in supporting and developing that understanding. Teachers may reflect on their own scaffolding roles, and ask how their own comments, questions, and responses may assist children in reaching higher levels of literary understanding. When I first began thinking about the methodology of the study, I examined frameworks of questions (for example, Chambers, 1993) that could be used to stimulate the children's thinking. These frameworks, while useful collections of provocative and open-ended questions, did not prove necessary. In the overwhelming majority of cases, Ms. Bigler and I could follow the children's lead rather than directing the discussion. In this way, we could ensure that any new information we introduced was contextualized, making it more likely that children could assimilate it. Truly listening to the children seemed to be the key.

This listening and following the children's lead did not, however, absolve us from thinking seriously about our readalouds beforehand. Indeed, we found that if we were going to perceive the potential of "teachable moments" in what the children said, we needed to have already considered the possibilities for meaning for ourselves. This points to the necessity for teachers to refine and extend their own literary taste and sensibilities. Perhaps we jump rather too quickly to the consideration of the ways in which we can "use" literature in classrooms, rather than first experiencing and understanding literature ourselves. If teachers are going to follow the lead of the children, there is a sense in which they must be in even greater command of literature (and even more sensitive to its potentialities) than if they were in total control of the discussion. If we are going to help children add items to their "literary tool kits," then our own tool kits must be full.
This study identified a particular type of response that was quite unexpected. Performative responses were not even seen as responses until well into the study. The more Ms. Bigler and I examined these responses, the more intrigued we became with their creatively aesthetic qualities. What we learned from this experience was that the broader one's range of tolerance, the greater the diversity of children's responses. As well, the broader our definition of response, the more likely we were to perceive and appreciate it. A possible implication for teachers is to expand their conceptualization of what constitutes response to literature—"everything considered" (Hickman, 1983).

**Individual Response Styles**

The study suggests that at least some children, even children as young as first or second grade, may have styles of response that can be distinguished as unique and individual. There are several pedagogical implications of this finding. First, teachers should simply be aware of and on the lookout for manifestations of these individual styles in their students. What specializations or passions do individual children develop in regard to literature? Are there identifiable patterns in a child's responses that suggest a certain stance? Are there ways in which the child's response seems to express his or her identity theme or basic personality? Second, these individual styles may be understood and encouraged as elements of strength: as particularly well-developed aspects of children's literary understanding. In the study, Gordon became our resident expert on illustration arrangement and "texture;" Krissy became our expert on illustrational media and style. Third, teachers should facilitate the potential richness in children's social interactions with books by arranging times and places for them to discuss literature. Literary understanding is a social construction, with children bringing their own unique perspectives, thus extending and refining each others' thought.
Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study have several implications for further research. This section begins by considering how the construct of literary understanding and the readaloud situation might be further investigated and related to children’s literacy learning in general. Other possible theoretical frames that might be brought to the data are discussed, and various extensions of this line of research are suggested.

The Construct of Literary Understanding and the Storybook Readaloud Situation

The major theoretical construct of this study, that of literary understanding, is a part (and, as I have argued, a neglected part) of literacy learning in general. Research that makes clear the connections between literary understanding and the broader cognitive processes involved in learning to read and write, and that places the literary understanding of young children in the wider context of literacy learning, is therefore needed. The following are possible areas of investigation.

Meek (1988) asserts that texts teach what children need to learn. We know that narrative literature is highly motivating for children; but what other qualities make literature a powerful tool in learning to read? What are the crucial lessons in narrative that teach "how texts work" even as texts motivate children to continue to read? What lessons do non-fiction and informational formats (Pappas, 1991, 1993; Harvey, 1993; Kerper, 1994) teach children? What lessons does the hybrid genre of the "informational storybook" (Leal, 1991, 1993) teach children?

The connection between literature and writing is very powerful (DeFord, 1984; Sipe, 1993). Children with developed literary understanding may be children who are able to "write like readers" and "read like writers" (Hansen, 1987; Smith, 1984). The links between literary understanding and writing deserve more investigation; for, as we expand our view of what constitutes literary understanding beyond the traditional "elements of narrative," this broader view may reveal more connections between literary understanding and the ability to write well. How, for example, would a child’s aptitude for performative response impact on his or her ability to write forcefully and with strong rhetorical purpose? Of what use are
intertextual connections in learning to present a cohesive argument? How does the
development of the personalizing impulse assist children in generating written text that
"speaks" to its readers?

We might hypothesize that children with developed literary understanding are
children who are alive to the force and value of multiple interpretations of what they
read, and who know how to engage in a critical exchange of views with their peers.
What are the associations between literary understanding and this ability to consider
multiple points of view when discussing the interpretation of texts?

What are the connections between literary understanding and the ability to read
thoughtfully and inferentially? What are the associations between literary
understanding and the ability to interrogate or resist a text, not accepting it at face
value, but rather probing its underlying ideological assumptions?

Is the pleasurable surrender to the power of the text heightened by developed
literary understanding? What are the connections between pleasure and literary
knowledge?

How is transmediational skill—the ability to move easily among several
different sign systems—developed by experience with picturebooks? How does this
skill impact on children’s use and understanding of hypertext and other alternative
formats for presenting text?

The storybook readaloud situation has been the object of more research than
any other early literacy event. It continues to be the object of research because it is
possible to view this situation from many different perspectives. The literary
understanding that children develop during the storybook readaloud situation deserves
more complete investigation. For example, we have some convincing evidence that
storybook reading style not only varies across teachers (Martinez & Teale, 1993;
Dickinson & Keebler, 1989) but that some reading styles impact more powerfully than
others on later literacy ability (Dickinson & Smith, 1994). How do variations in
storybook reading style impact on the development of literary understanding? What
styles of storybook reading encourage or facilitate the development of particular types
of response from the children? How do the types of discussion and response during storybook readaloud situations compare and contrast with the types of discussion and response that occur during literature discussion groups and literature circles?

**Possible Alternative Theoretical Frames**

There are several alternative theoretical frames which could be brought to bear on the data in this study or similar data. In order to socially construct meaning, children must learn the skills of cooperation and the conventions of social discourse that involves several people. A sociological perspective, or the perspective of speech act theory, for example, might be useful in analyzing the ways in which children learned the rules and conventions of discussing literature, and the ways in which they developed tolerance for each others’ opinions.

When they discussed literature during storybook readalouds, the children were engaged in a pleasurable and sophisticated form of linguistic play, and their imaginations were highly engaged. Analysis could therefore profitably be framed with theories of play.

The data strongly suggest that boys spoke more often than girls, and that they tended to dominate the discussion, in both the whole group situation and the small group situation. Marks (1995) found that same results in her study of peer-led literature discussions in third grade. A gendered analysis, of the type developed by Davies (1989, 1993), would be useful in understanding the ways in which gender affected the nature of the discussion and the responses. Did the boys tend to focus on actions in the story, while the girls focused on characters’ feelings, as some researchers have suggested (Cherland, 1992)? Or is this a possible perpetuation of a stereotype (Evans, 1996)? How do boys and girls who do not conform to the norms of gendered behavior interact during storybook readalouds? Would a readaloud group of all girls or all boys generate a different type of discussion (Evans, 1996; Marks, 1995)? What types of gendered responses were generated by fairy tales, which tend to reflect the patriarchal hegemony (Trousdale, 1995); and how do these responses differ from the gendered responses generated by contemporary realistic fiction?
Analysis of the readaloud data from the standpoint of race and class (Cross, 1993; Perkins, 1992) could be illuminating, as well. The possible relationship between the African American use of "signifying" (Gates, 1988; Lee, 1995) and some features of performative response has been suggested. Are African American students from certain socioeconomic levels more likely to engage in and appreciate performative response to literature than their European-American peers? If this is so, how does the possible suppression of these types of responses in traditional classroom situations impact on these children's engagement in discussion about books?

This study was centrally concerned with the construction of literary understanding by young children; the less central focus was the role of adults in scaffolding this understanding. More finely grained and detailed analysis of the adults' talk in this study could reveal more roles played by adults in the conversation, as well as clarifying the associations between the talk of adults and the talk of the children.

In this study, some concepts from postmodern literary theory (Bakhtin, 1984; Barthes, 1976) were found to be useful in conceptualizing some forms of the children's response. Perhaps other contemporary literary theories could be equally heuristic.

**Other Lines of Research Suggested by The Study**

It was argued in chapter 1 that the literary understanding of young children has not received a great deal of attention from empirical research. There are several possible lines of research for further exploring the literary understanding of children.

**The Importance of Longitudinal Studies**

Longitudinal studies of the developing literary understanding of the same children over two or more years, though time-consuming and labor-intensive, would be extremely useful. Cox's (1994) research with children from Kindergarten through third grade seems to be one of the very few studies that is truly longitudinal in nature. Such longitudinal studies would assist us in understanding how literary understanding
develops over time. How, for example, are new elements added to the "literary tool kit?" Are these elements utilized in more complex ways? Is there increasing evidence of personalizing response to literature, or evidence of the life-transforming power of literature over time? Do children tend to make more generalizing and thematic statements as they develop literary understanding? Does individual response style hold steady over time, or are various styles and modes of response "tried out" by children, laid aside, or taken up again?

Testing the Application of the Conceptual Categories and Grounded Theory

The conceptual categories of children’s responses in this study and the grounded theory that arose from them need to be tested across many cases in order to validate, extend, and refine them. Do the five facets of literary understanding and the hermeneutic, aesthetic, and personalizing impulses seem to apply to the literary responses of other young children? What modifications or refinements are necessary into order to characterize the literary responses of slightly younger or older children? How would the use of other literary genres or formats affect the formulation of conceptual categories for children’s response? Would other readaloud styles used by teachers result in different conceptual categories or suggest a different configuration of impulses?

This study used only high-quality picturebooks (defined by their mention in standard texts of children’s literature, public recognition in the form of medals and awards, and favorable reviews). If low-quality literature were read to children, would their literary understanding enable them to critique these books? Landes (1983) found that young children displayed a preference for the original version of Peter Rabbit over simplified versions with less distinguished illustrations. This research is provocative, but such studies are rare.

The Role of Intertextual Connections

The findings of this study suggest the pivotal and crucial role played by intertextual connections in the children’s developing literary understanding. It would
seem, therefore, that more research in this area would prove useful. Are there other ways in which intertextual connections function to assist children in interpreting, predicting, summarizing, or evaluating literature? Is there evidence for the concept of a "critical mass" of intertextual connections in other classroom situations? Is it generally true that exposing children to many variants and versions of the same tale is the easiest way to facilitate the formation of intertextual links?

The Visual Affordances of Picturebooks

It is puzzling that the visual aspects of picturebooks have not been the object of more empirical research, given that these visual aspects share equally with written text in telling the story and affording potential meaning making. Recently, senior researchers in the field of literacy have called for "broadening the lens" of what we conceptualize as literacy (Flood & Lapp, 1995). Included in their broader vision is the role of aesthetic response, with specific mention of picturebooks: "Although educators have regularly recognized the importance of picture books in children's language and literacy development, the relationships between the pictures and the words (the language arts and the visual arts) have not yet been fully explored" (Flood & Lapp, 1995, p. 9).

The ways in which young children learn to exploit the meaning-potential of the peritextual features of picturebooks deserves more study. Peritextual semiosis proceeded quite intensely for the children in this study, and contributed significantly to their meaning making; but empirical research has thus far paid almost no attention to these important features of picturebooks.

In this study, the children displayed a seemingly effortless ability to use illustrations and verbal text in tandem, and to integrate these two sign systems in making narrative meaning. This ability is almost certainly learned, and research with younger children might be able to describe the process by which children achieve this ability. One possible line for further research is to pay particular attention to the children's interpretation of page turns in picturebooks. A page turn represents a necessary gap in text and pictures. For example, the second opening of Where the
Wild Things Are (Sendak, 1963) depicts Max chasing the family dog with a fork. When the page is turned to the third opening, Max is shown in his bedroom with a frown on his face. Children could be encouraged to speculate on what might have happened between the two openings. The gaps in page turns are not always as dramatic as this one; some are much more subtle; but there is always at least a slight rift in the narrative when a page is turned. For this reason, page turns might be a possible textual site for investigating the children's cognitive integration of text and pictures.

The learning of illustrational codes and conventions deserves a great deal more attention from researchers. The children in this study learned a variety of these codes; but there are many others (Moebius, 1986) that could be researched.

The Pleasures of Children's Literature

It has been suggested that the theorization of the pleasure children take in literature has not been well-developed, and that even reader-based theories (that might be expected to address this issue) rarely discuss pleasure in a serious way (Toupence, 1996). If it deals with pleasure at all, the discourse of literacy tends to approach it crab-wise and obliquely in theories of "attitude," "affect," or "motivation" (Matthewson, 1994; McKenna, 1994) that, for all their care and hard thought, seem curiously sterile, missing the target at which they were aiming. Research could focus on the ways in which children express their pleasure in literature, with the goal of developing a grounded theory of the literary pleasure of young children that would conceptualize that intense pleasure more directly. A possible beginning to this exploration would be to attempt to apply Barthes' (1976) distinction between "pleasure" [plaisir] and "bliss" [jouissance] to the literary experience of young children. Researchers might also investigate the particular pleasures afforded by the activation of the hermeneutic, the aesthetic, and the personalizing impulses.
The Usefulness of the Readaloud Situation for Silent Children

In this study, the readaloud situations in the large and small groups were characterized by a fast-paced, energetic discussion in which many diverse comments were made in a short space of time. We might raise the question of what type of thinking would be enabled and stimulated by this rapid-fire situation, and what type of thinking might be hampered or constrained by it. In short, was the situation deprivileging for children who may have needed more time to process their thoughts, and who could not easily follow a discussion that jumped from point to point? In their research on "silent sixth-grade students," Jones and Gerig (1994) found that language arts classes that were evaluated by teachers as successful (because of the lively nature of the discussion) may have had a negative effect on the more silent students:

These language arts classes were ability grouped, and the class discussions were particularly fast paced and competitive. The competitive atmosphere may have contributed to silent students’ decision not to participate in class discussion (Jones & Gerig, 1994, p. 175).

Studies that focus on the behavior of the less vocal students during storybook readalouds are therefore needed. Such students’ literary understanding may be more fruitfully investigated in situations that are less competitive and allow more time for response to develop.

Effects of Rereading on the Development of Literary Understanding

Barthes (1974, p. 16) humorously remarks that the rereading of books "is tolerated only in certain marginal categories of readers (children, old people, and professors)." Various researchers have found important gains in literacy learning for children who have been exposed to multiple rereadings of texts (Martinez & Roser, 1985; McCarrier, 1991, 1992; Morrow, 1988; Yaden, 1988). We might also ask what effects multiple readings of the same text have on the development of literary understanding. Literary critical perspectives on rereading (for example, Calinescu, 1993) may prove helpful in this line of research.
The Ideology of Children's Literature

This study touched only briefly and tangentially on the issue of the ideological and political assumptions of children's literature, though it is clear that children's literature is deeply inscribed by these assumptions (Stephens, 1992). How do children learn to discern the implicit ideology in books? How can texts function to heighten children's awareness of social issues, and engage their "moral imagination" (Coles, 1989) so that they can strive for social justice? How does literature assist children in envisioning other possible selves and other possible worlds? It would seem that literature and the other arts can provide a source of ideas for socially transforming society. Literary critics such as Wayne Booth (1988) have done much to rehabilitate the idea that literature can (and should) have a profound ethical and moral effect. The ability to imagine a different society may be partly based on the ability to impose a new narrative construction on the social facts at our disposal: to tell a different story. If this is case, then reading stories to children is a profoundly political, transformative action, which research can explore.

The Contexts of the Storybook Readaloud Situation

In this study, storybook readalouds were studied in three contexts: in the whole group of 27 children; in small groups of five; and in one-to-one readaloud sessions. The rationale for this arrangement was not comparative in nature; the intention was not to compare children's responses across the three contexts, but rather to assure that the children's literary understanding was more fully described. However, the use of the three contexts raises questions for future research that are comparative in purpose. Are there general differences in response across the three settings? Are there differences in the responses of individual students across settings? Is literary understanding better facilitated in some settings than in others? What are the special affordances of the three settings? These are the types of questions that might be addressed by such comparative research.
Conclusion

This study suggests that children as young as first and second grade can demonstrate impressive literary critical abilities. But why would we want young children to be literary critics? Why would we want to encourage the development of literary understanding? In addition to the part it plays in becoming literate, the significance of literary understanding may reach even beyond its connections to literacy, important as that is. During the past two decades, thinkers from many academic disciplines have pondered the meaning that stories can have for our lives. Knowledge of narrative may be a way—perhaps a primary way—of structuring reality itself. According to many cognitive psychologists and anthropologists (Bruner, 1980, 1986, 1990; Geertz, 1973; Wolf & Heath, 1992), the experience of "story" may be one of the most powerful ways we have of imposing order and meaning on the world. We know that experience shapes language (and literature); but language (and literature) can also shape experience. Various writers in the human sciences and the humanities (Hardy, 1978; Mitchell, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988; White, 1980) have argued that narrative is a crucial factor in the formation of identity and the constitution of what Jung called the Self, to the extent that the human mind may be understood as a mechanism for turning the raw data of day-to-day experience—the "booming, buzzing confusion" of life—into narratives, thereby rendering reality understandable and meaningful (Ricoeur, 1980). According to some psychoanalysts (Spence, 1982), one of the main ways we understand an event or a situation is by turning it into a story.

To understand stories and how they work is thus to possess a cognitive tool that not only allows children to become comprehensively literate, but also to achieve their full human potential.
Endnotes for Chapter 5

1. Rosenblatt (1984) speculates that young children have an "affinity for the aesthetic stance" (p. 272). This may constitute an overly romanticized idea of young children's intellectual capabilities and interests. The obvious pleasure that the young children in this study took in the various forms of literary analysis suggests that young children may have an affinity for the analytic as well. In any case, it was pointed out in chapter 2 that it is a misreading of Rosenblatt to assert that she sees no role for analysis. Rosenblatt believes that the aesthetic experience of the story should come first; then the responses generated by that stance may be clarified, extended, and refined through discussion with peers and with the teacher.

2. As well, Hartman (1992, 1994) has discussed the use of intertextuality made by mature (adult) readers. Hartman identified three discourse stances adopted by his eight adult readers. Logocentric readers' worlds were largely defined by the authority of the author and the text. Intertextual readers used many textual resources in exploring alternative interpretations. Resistant readers read "against" the text, asserting their own meaning. In terms of Hartman's findings, the children in the study reported here were primarily logocentric, although they also drew extensively from their intertextual knowledge in interpreting, predicting, and analyzing.

3. Lee (1995) goes on to summarize some of the "creative aspects of African American English": "(1) the playful possibilities of language, (2) a love of double entendre, (3) the placement of value on the manipulation of language for its own artistic merit rather than simply as a tool of literal communication, (4) manipulation of the symbolic function of language, (5) the use of densely imagistic and figurative language to express complex ideas in a few words" (p. 618). Lee's work has to do with African American adolescents; however, it is possible that some young African American children may utilize the same type of language. It is the expressively creative and playful qualities of signifying that bear a resemblance to what I have called performative response.

4. Picturebooks seem less a type of literary genre than a type of form or format for a variety of genres. For example, the picturebooks used in this study were the formats used for fairy tales and folk tales; contemporary realistic fiction; and contemporary fantasy or magical realism. Historical fiction, futuristic fantasy, nonfiction, and other genres may also use the format of the picturebook. By using the term "picture storybook," I limit the theory's application to fictional narrative. The literary understanding of poetry or nonfiction may possess quite different dynamics.

5. The fact that the facets of literary understanding (which arose from the five conceptual categories of children's talk) are not rigidly distinct does not detract from their usefulness. It is rather a matter of analysis and synthesis: after the various aspects of literary understanding are teased out separately through analysis, it is logical to attempt to put the threads together.

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6. The chart bears an obvious similarity to Benton’s model of the secondary world, which is reproduced and explained in chapter 3. Benton’s three dimensions (psychic level, psychic distance, and psychic process) are, however, quite different than the three literary impulses I describe.

7. I am indebted to Dr. Theresa Rogers for this metaphor.

8. I am indebted to Mr. Randy Donelson for bringing this idea to my attention.
APPENDIX A

CHRONOLOGICAL PHASES OF THE DATA COLLECTION
# Phases of the Study, Types of Data Collected, and Classroom Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHASE I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PHASE II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PHASE III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. a</td>
<td>II. b</td>
<td>II. c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- ==observe in classroom==
- ==observe readalouds==
- ==audiotape/observe whole group readalouds==
- ==audiotape/conduct small group readalouds==
- one-to-one readalouds
- one-to-one readalouds
- teacher interview
- teacher interview

| Fairytales and Folktales | "Night" theme (contemp. realistic fiction & contemp. fantasy) |
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS USED FOR TEACHER INTERVIEWS
Questions for First Teacher Interview

1. Describe the teacher training program you experienced, as well as your philosophy of teaching.

2. What areas of teaching and learning have you explored as you continue to work on your master’s degree?

3. How is the social nature of learning exemplified and provided for in your classroom?

4. How do you approach reading and writing?

5. Why do you use trade books to teach reading, rather than basal readers?

Questions for Second Teacher Interview

1. What were the children like as responders to literature at the beginning of the year, and what sorts of experiences did you provide for them that allowed them to progress?

2. One thing we struggle with is how explicit and intentional to be in our teaching of literary concepts to children. What are your thoughts on this?

Questions for Third Teacher Interview

1. Please reflect again on what the children were like as responders of literature at the beginning of the year. How do you feel you helped them develop their understanding of literature?

2. What specific items do you think the children added to their literary tool kits?

3. How did you feel about the experience of having someone do research in your classroom?

4. What new learnings have you gained as a result of this study?

5. If someone asked, "In what ways did Larry make you feel that you were (or were not) a co-researcher or collaborator in this study?" how would you answer them?

6. I think we both believe that literature can be a life-transforming experience for children. What evidence do you see that this was the case for these children?
APPENDIX C

PICTUREBOOKS USED FOR
WHOLE GROUP, SMALL GROUP, AND ONE-TO-ONE READALOUDS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>November-December</th>
<th>January-February</th>
<th>March-April</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Group</td>
<td>Masai and I (N) 11/13</td>
<td>Jolly Postman (N) 01/09</td>
<td>Ira Sleeps Over 03/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each Peach, Pear, Plum (N) 11/13</td>
<td>Rough-Face Girl 01/09</td>
<td>Smokey Night 04/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strega Nona (N) 11/15</td>
<td>Ugh (N) 01/11</td>
<td>Ira Sleeps Over (R) 04/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why Mosquitos Buzz (N) 11/15</td>
<td>Yeh-Shen 01/16</td>
<td>Where the Wild Things Are 03/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Three Bears (Galdone (N) 11/17</td>
<td>Mufaro's Beaut. Daughters 01/10</td>
<td>The Whales' Song 03/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goldilocks (Marshall) (N) 11/20</td>
<td>Snow White in New York 01/05</td>
<td>Under the Moon 03/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Iguana Brothers (N) 11/20</td>
<td>Little R. R. Hood (Hyman) 01/23</td>
<td>The Napping House 04/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somebody &amp; 3 Blair's (N) 11/21</td>
<td>Night in the Country 02/12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Angel for Sol.Singer (N) 11/22</td>
<td>Owl Moon 02/27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack &amp; Bnstalk (Marshall) (N) 11/27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jim &amp; Bnstalk (N) 11/27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bnstalk Incident (N) 12/06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R. R. Hood (Marshall) 12/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R. R. Hood (Coady) 12/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jack &amp; Beanstalk (Howe) 12/13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lon Po Po (N) 12/14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cinderella (Delamare) 12/18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cinderella (Galdone) 12/18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Princess Furball 12/19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group</td>
<td>Chicken Little 12/14</td>
<td>Ugh 01/10</td>
<td>Fly Away Home 03/11,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-to-One</td>
<td>The Tunnel 01/17</td>
<td>Prince Cinders 01/11</td>
<td>Amazing Grace 03/21,22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Billy Goats Gruff 01/16</td>
<td>Changes (R) 04/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chicken Little (R) 01/23,24</td>
<td>Very Lonely Firefly 03/25,26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 Billy Goats Gruff (R) 01/30,31</td>
<td>Chato's Kitchen 04/15,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Stinky Cheese Man 02/06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bad Day at Riverbend 02/26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Piggybook 02/12,15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

PICTUREBOOKS CITED IN THE STUDY


APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPTION SYSTEM USED IN THE STUDY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading the text of the book</th>
<th><strong>Bold</strong></th>
<th>T: Let me read that again. They spent all their time going to the Palace Disco.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Page turns</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[4th opening]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[title page]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[front cover]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal behaviors</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[nods]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[makes muscle pose with arms]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[pats to the box of laundry detergent]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtalking</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>T: She doesn’t seem to be too/clever, does she?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(two or more people talking at once)</td>
<td>//</td>
<td>Ter: Yeah, she probably// doesn’t know much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run-on talking</td>
<td>:</td>
<td>T: Our book today:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Another person begins talking with no pause)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gor: Is by James Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loud talking</td>
<td>ALL CAPS</td>
<td>I’d probably just go POW and karate chop him!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasized word</td>
<td>italics</td>
<td>She really does look like a witch!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representations of sounds</td>
<td>attempted phonetic representation</td>
<td>Ewww!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Um.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oooh!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Um hmm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
<td><strong>SYMBOL</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher is speaking</td>
<td>T:</td>
<td>T:  What do you think, Alice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A child is speaking</td>
<td>Three- or four-letter abbreviation</td>
<td>Ter:  = Terry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An unknown child is speaking</td>
<td>??:</td>
<td>?:  It's an African tale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several unknown children are speaking</td>
<td>???:</td>
<td>???:  Yeah!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of speaker</td>
<td>double space</td>
<td>T:  I bet we've all had lots of experiences with snakes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chs:  There was a snake in our yard, it was orange and black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintelligible speech (one word)</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>Ken:  She looks like a # witch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintelligible speech (multiple words)</td>
<td>###</td>
<td>Ken:  I had a garter snake and I ###, and my dad ran over it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF A STORYBOOK READALOUD (EXCERPT)
**SG1.04 [Small group]**

**Date:** January 16, 1995  
**Time:** 1:30 -- 1:55


L: Today, it’s:

Chs: [reading] THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF!

L: The Three Billy Goats Gruff, or 3 strikes, yer out! By Ted Dewan.

Chs: I love these books!

Jul: Is this your book?

L: Yes, it is.

Chs: Can we borrow this book?

L: You can tell--yeah [to Chs]-- because it has my name there.

Gor: Can I see it after we’re finished working?

L: Yeah, only we don’t want to fight over it, do we? [title page] And that’s the title page.

Gor: Oh, look, here’s a big hat for the Big Billy Goat Gruff [ptg to the top, biggest, blue hat], and here’s a medium-sized one for the medium-sized one [ptg] and a little one for the little one [ptg].

Chs: Just like The Three Bears!

Jul: Yeah, it is.

[first opening]

L: For Mum.

Sal: [reading] "For Mum."

Chs: M. U. M.!

Sal: She’s ugly. [ptg to vignette above the dedication, showing a nanny goat with glasses]
L: She's ugly?

???: Yeah.

Gor: Her eyes are like that big, or /something.

Jul: A little one, // a middle one, a big one. [ptg to the three pictures of the goats on the right-hand side of the opening]

Chs: That's me right there, that's me [playfully, ptg to the vignette above the dedication page]

L: OK. Not long ago there lived three billy goat brothers. A little one, a middle one, and a big one. . . The 3 Billy Goats /Gruff.

???: Gruff!//

[2nd opening]
L: The Billy Goat brothers never stopped nibbling.
Day and night, they nibbled everything in sight.
Then, when everything in sight was gone, they went somewhere else looking for more things to nibble.

Gor: That looks like a little toy Garfield [ptg to the Garfield figure in the extreme lower right]

Chs: Nibble mean eat.

Sar: They like to nibble, they like to eat.

[3rd opening]
One day, Little Billy Goat Gruff nibbled his way to a place far away from his brothers.
Then, all of a sudden, he stopped nibbling.
His eyes popped open wide.
Across the gorge lay the most dazzling sight he had ever seen.

???: Grass. Grass.

Sal: It's grass.
APPENDIX G

GLOSSARY OF PICTUREBOOK TERMINOLOGY
A Glossary of Picturebook Terminology

bleed When the illustration extends to the very edge of the page, with no white space or border, it is said to "bleed." When the illustration extends to all four edges of the page, this is called "full bleed."

borders Illustrators often design a border for their illustrations in a picturebook. Sometimes (as in many of Jan Brett's picturebooks) the border is used to tell more of the story, or to tell a parallel story.

continuous narration Joseph Schwarcz's term for the use of several separate illustrations on the same page (a montage) which indicate motion, action, or the sequence of time. A good example is the four panels in Maurice Sendak's In the Night Kitchen which depict Mickey flying higher and higher.

cut-out An illustration which has no frame, but which simply appears against the background. An example is the title page of Where the Wild Things Are, by Maurice Sendak, which shows Max in the act of menacing two monsters. Motion and freedom are suggested by the lack of a frame.

double page spread An illustrator may choose to spread the illustration over both pages of an opening. This is called a double page spread.

dust jacket The thick paper wrapper around the outside of the picturebook. Sometimes, the dust jacket's illustrations are the same as the illustrations on the front and back cover. In some cases, the front and the back cover have different illustrations or are simply plain cloth.

edition. The trade edition of the book contains the fullest expression of the art of the picturebook, containing a dust jacket, endpages, etc. The library edition, which has a stronger binding, frequently omits the dust jacket, reproducing the same illustration on the front cover. The paperback edition omits the dust jacket and frequently omits the end pages and/or illustrations on the back cover of the book.

endpages Also called endpapers. The first pages one sees when opening the picturebook, and the last pages one sees at the end of the book before closing it. Endpages are like stage curtains, framing the performance of a play. The color and/or design of the endpages are chosen to coordinate in some way with the rest of the book. In some cases, as in Steven Kellogg's Jack and the Beanstalk, the illustrator uses the endpages as an additional space to tell the story.
**establishing shot**  In film-making terminology, a film sequence which shows the overall terrain in which the action will take place. Picturebooks often include an establishing shot in the first illustration. The title page of *Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins shows the entire barnyard in which the action will take place.

**fold and gathers**  Before the picturebook is bound, all the printed pages are gathered and folded, so that reviewers can see what the finished book will look like. Often abbreviated “F and G’s.”

**frame**  In a picturebook, the illustrations are frequently surrounded by an illustrated border or by white space, giving the impression of a framed picture. Sometimes, part of the illustration may “break the frame,” seemingly breaking out of and overlapping the straight edge of the illustration.

**front matter**  The “fine print,” indicating the publishing information and copyright information, as well as the Library of Congress classification and the ISBN number. Sometimes, there is a note about what artistic medium was used in the illustrations. This information is occasionally located at the back of the book, in which case it is usually simply termed the “publishing information.”

**glossy/matt paper**  If the paper used in the picturebook is shiny and smooth, it is glossy. If it is dull, it is matt. “Glossy paper gives colors a glistening clarity, but it is distancing partially because the light shines equally through all the colors and creates an overall sheen that attracts attention to the surface of a picture and therefore makes it more difficult for us to focus on specific objects depicted” (Perry Nodelman, *Words About Pictures*). On the other hand, matt paper or rougher stock invites our touch and our sensuous interaction, as in Chris Van Allsburg's *Jumanji*.

**gutter**  When the book is opened, the middle line where the pages are bound. If an illustration spreads over both pages the illustrator must make sure that important parts of the illustration (like a character’s head) do not cross the gutter.

**home-away-home**  A frequent structural device in children’s literature. The main character begins at home, in familiar surroundings; then goes away and has some sort of adventure; and then returns home. Examples of this type of story are Beatrix Potter’s *Peter Rabbit* and Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*.

**illustrational sequence**  In a picturebook, the illustrations do not stand alone, but in an ordered sequence. Like a motion picture, this sequence conveys meaning, chronological order, and the narrative.

**irony**  In a picturebook, the illustrations never tell us exactly the same thing that the text does, and the text never tells us exactly the same things as the illustrations. There is therefore the possibility for irony: the text may comment ironically on the
illustrations, or vice versa. In Rosie's Walk, the illustrations are an ironic commentary on the flat, rather uninteresting text, which merely tells us that Rosie takes a walk. The illustrations indicate that a fox is trying to capture Rosie; this is never mentioned in the text.

**jacket flaps** The parts of the dust jacket which fold over the front and back covers. Frequently, the front jacket flap contains a summary of the book, and the back jacket flap contains information about the illustrator and the author.

**medium** (plural, *media*) The paints or other materials (tissue paper, real objects, etc.) the illustrator uses to produce the illustrations.

**montage** In laying out a page of a picturebook, an illustrator may choose to include several illustrations on the same page. This is known as a montage. In Peter Spier's Noah's Ark, several of the pages contain four or five separate illustrations.

**motif** A recurring element in the illustrations or text of a picturebook, for example, the triangular shapes reminiscent of witches' hats which occur throughout the illustrational sequence of Anthony Browne's version of Hansel and Gretel.

**narrative trajectory** The plot is not an emotionally even or flat sequence of actions; some actions increase our emotion, and some diminish our emotion. We could graph the plot as a rising and falling line, with a high point or climax. This whole sequence is known as the narrative trajectory.

**opening** In a picturebook, the pages are rarely numbered. Thus, there is a difficulty in referring to a particular illustration or page. The "first opening" is the two facing pages where the text of the book begins, and the openings are numbered after this.

**page break** The picturebook is carefully planned as a series of facing pages ("openings"). When we turn from one opening to another, these gaps are also carefully planned, and are known as page breaks. The reader/viewer is invited to make inferences about what happens in the page break from one opening to another.

**peritext** Gerald Genette's term for anything in a book other than the printed text. This would include the front and back covers, endpages, title page, etc. In a picturebook, the peritext conveys a great deal of meaning, and should be as closely examined as the body of the text.
**point of view**  An illustration is planned from a certain point of view, so that viewers feel themselves to be in a certain position in relation to the scene in the illustration. We can seem to look down on a scene, or seem to be placed below the scene, or on a level with it. In *Jumanji*, Chris Van Allsburg frequently varies the point of view in his illustrations, adding to the surreal or disorienting effect.

**spine**  The bound edge of the book, which is frequently reinforced with an extra strip of cloth or cardboard.

**stock**  The type of paper which is used in the picturebook. We can speak of glossy or matt stock, or stock of various weights, colors, and thicknesses. See *glossy/matt paper*.

**synergy**  "The production of two or more agents, substances, etc., of a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects" (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). In relation to picturebooks, this term refers to the fact that the illustrations and the verbal text of the book combine together to produce an effect which is greater than the sum of their parts. The total effect of the picturebook depends on the perceived interactions between the text and the illustrations.

**stamping**  An image or letters are sometimes pressed into the front or back cover of a picturebook by a heavy metal die. If the image is simply stamped without any color, it is called "blind stamping;" if it is pressed in gold or another color, it is called "foil stamping."

**text box**  The text of a picturebook may simply be printed below or above the illustrations, in a plain white space. The designer may also choose to print the text directly on the illustration. As well, the text may be printed in a box placed on top of part of the illustration. This is known as a text box. In *Outside Over There*, Maurice Sendak uses text boxes in several openings.

**title page**  The page which indicates the title of the book, the author, the illustrator, and (usually) the publisher and the city in which the book was published. The *half-title page* (if present) contains only the title of the book.

**trompe l'oeil**  An illustration which looks so realistic that it fools the eye, looking three-dimensional and real. In John Scieszka’s *The Book That Jack Wrote*, the picture frames are trompe l'oeil.
**typography**  Illustrators or designers choose the typeface or font which is used for the text, the title, and other printed portions of the book. The typography coordinates in some way with the meaning of the text and the overall look of the book. For example, very modern typography would look out of place in Margaret Hodges’ *St. George and the Dragon*, an old tale.

**vertical moment**  An important or emotionally charged moment in the plot of a story. Vertical moments in *Snow White* include the three times the wicked queen attempts to poison the young girl.

**vignette**  A small illustration used to break up section of text or otherwise decorate a page. The round illustrations on the last page of Maurice Sendak's *In the Night Kitchen* and the back cover are examples.
APPENDIX H

SCHEMATIC MAP OF THE CLASSROOM
APPENDIX 1

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF CATEGORIES OF CHILDREN’S TALK IN LARGE GROUP, SMALL GROUP, AND ONE-TO-ONE CONTEXTS
### Frequencies and Percentages of Coding Categories for Children’s Talk During Large Group Readalouds

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Frequencies and Percentages of Coding Categories for Children's Talk During One-to-One Readalouds

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APPENDIX J

SUBCATEGORIES OF CATEGORY 1: THE ANALYTIC
Subcategories of Category 1: The Analytic

1. Book as made object
   1.a Author/illustrator talk
   1.b Award/medal talk
   1.c Publishing talk

2. Language of the text
   2.a Interest in/awareness of visual features of print
   2.b Reading the text
   2.c Imitating story language
   2.d Restating the text
   2.e Questioning the meaning of a word or phrase
   2.f Providing suggestions for alternative wording
   2.g Describing/evaluating the language of the story
   2.h Proving a point by referring to the specific language of the text

3. Illustrations
   3.a Media/style
   3.b Arrangement (double-page spreads, borders, arrangement of words and pictures)
   3.c Description of general background or details of illustration
   3.d Illustration codes (significance of color, portrayal of movement, etc.)
   3.e Perspective/point of view
   3.f Comparison across illustrations

4. Making narrative meaning (description, evaluation, speculation, inference)
   4.a Describing plot (actions of characters or other events; includes cause and effect)
   4.b Predicting plot; confirming predictions
   4.c Suggesting alternatives to the plot
   4.d Story structure
   4.e Thematic or quasi thematic statements
   4.f Questioning the text
   4.g External characteristics of characters: appearance, location, identity, etc.
   4.h Internal characteristics of characters: feelings, thoughts, personality, capabilities
   4.i Using background knowledge for interpretive purposes
   4.j Interpreting symbols
   4.k General evaluative comments about the story or part of the story

5 The relationship between fiction and reality

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APPENDIX K

FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF CATEGORIES OF ADULTS' TALK IN LARGE GROUP, SMALL GROUP, AND ONE-TO-ONE CONTEXTS
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Frequencies and Percentages of Coding Categories for Adults’ Talk During One-to-One Readalouds

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