CHILDREN'S USE OF FICTION AND NONFICTION LITERATURE IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

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

By

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* * * * *

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1993
To David -
the joy of my life
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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

"What endless questions vex the thought, of whence and whither, when and how."

Sir Richard Burton

STATEMENT OF THE NEED

The belief that formal instruction is necessary for children to take the first steps toward becoming literate is a notion that research has proven to be false (Bissex, 1980; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Doake, 1985; Hall, 1987; Teale, 1981). Instead, research has repeatedly shown that even very young children actively try to understand and construct meaning from the world around them (Clay, 1972, 1991; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Holdaway, 1979). The conditions which facilitate children's oral language learning are the same conditions which facilitate children's written language learning. Some of these conditions include: a) the child plays the major role in constructing his/her knowledge; b) the child is surrounded by oral language which is used for meaningful purposes; c) the child is driven to competence in an attempt to make meaning; d) social interaction is both the means and the goal; and, e) language learning is holistic (Adapted from
Hall, 1987). Young children are exposed to oral and written language learning from the time they are born. Therefore, the child does not at some point suddenly become literate. Instead, literacy slowly emerges as the child constantly and actively constructs meaning from the oral language and written language surrounding him/her from birth. The term "emergent literacy" has been used by researchers to describe this gradual development of literacy competencies (Clay, 1972, 1991; Holdaway, 1979; Sulzby, 1985). Children's experiences with oral and written language learning are embedded in the rich social context of the home and family as children struggle to make sense of the world around them. Therefore, young children are developing well-formed concepts of reading and writing long before they enter school. One of the most significant features necessary for facilitating children's entree into literacy is parents reading and talking about books (Doake, 1985; Holdaway, 1979, Teale, 1981, 1986).

There is considerable research evidence supporting the many benefits that young children gain from being read to. Research has documented that reading to young children is beneficial (Clay, 1979; Cullinan, 1989; Doake, 1985; Holdaway, 1979; Snow, 1983; Taylor, 1983). This belief is virtually unquestioned by researchers, educators and the general public. Reading to children allows them
to be actively engaged with language, thus facilitating their learning of language. Reading to children is also the crucial element for their own reading and writing. Through books, children learn self-monitoring and prediction strategies (Doake, 1985; Holdaway, 1979), and concepts of print (Clay, 1991) which are important for their reading development. Reading is just as important for children as they learn the forms and structures of written discourse. Quality children's literature exposes children to a variety of lexical, syntactical and structural forms which they may in turn model in their own writing (Chomsky, 1972; DeFord, 1981; Eckoff, 1983).

Although research confirms the importance of reading aloud for children's literacy development, the reading that is done is primarily from books of narrative fiction (Fisher & Hiebert, 1990; Hiebert & Fisher, 1990; Meyer & Rice, 1984; Pappas, 1991; Wells, 1986). Narrative stories are a staple in many early education classrooms. In studies of early literacy, experience with narrative or story is commonly assumed to be the primary means by which young children acquire literacy (Bruner, 1986; Rosen, 1986; Wells, 1986). However, there is a gap in the knowledge base of studies that reflect the roles that nonfiction as well as fiction could play for children learning to read and write. In fact, findings from research studies investigating children's abilities to
read and write nonfiction are contradictory. Research conducted by Newkirk (1987) provides evidence that even preschool children are capable of reading and writing nonfiction. Pappas (1987, 1990) suggests the same finding, that children are successful with nonfiction. Langer (1985), however, found that children have less control over expository forms than fictional forms. Findings from other studies (McGee & Richgels, 1985; Taylor & Beach, 1984) also confirm children's difficulties in reading and writing exposition.

As evidenced by these contradictory findings, there is a gap in the knowledge base regarding nonfiction and children's competence with it. There are still many questions to be answered regarding young children's capabilities to learn about the various written forms or genres of our language. Educators and researchers have relatively little knowledge about young children's understandings of nonfiction, and even less knowledge about the role that nonfiction may play for children learning to read and write.

Complicating this issue of children's competence with fiction and nonfiction texts is dissent in the research community regarding definitions of fiction and nonfiction literature. Often the lines defining fiction and nonfiction texts are blurred. Traditional definitions of fiction cite that this type of literature is read for
entertainment. Nonfiction literature is read to gain information on a specific topic. However, cognitive psychologists argue that reading is the active construction of meaning guided by printed symbols (Clay, 1979, 1991). Reading is viewed as a transaction between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, Rosenblatt (1978) broadens the definitions of fiction and nonfiction by suggesting that as a reader interacts with the text, he/she may move back and forth between an information-gaining (efferent) stance and an emotional (aesthetic) stance. Thus, a reader may read any type of text from either an efferent and/or an aesthetic stance. This distinction comes not from the genre or type of text read, but from the stance the reader assumes as he/she reads that text (Hade, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1978).

Pappas (1987) has worked to clarify the definition of nonfiction literature. In her attempt to define the features typical of information books, she defines three obligatory global elements necessary to the genre of nonfiction. These elements are topic presentation, description of attributes and characteristic events. However, after examining over 110 children's information books, Pappas (1987) concludes that "the process of differentiating the information book from another genre, or setting its boundaries was a complex venture fraught with many difficulties" (p. 19). These difficulties arise
from the manner in which children's authors and illustrators choose to create the picture book. A book may be written using a recognized story structure, but it may also contain facts and information. Similarly, a book may be written using the obligatory elements described by Pappas (1987) for the purpose of conveying information, yet may also contain structural elements typical of narrative stories.

For the purposes of this study, the term "genre" was used in the nontechnical sense usually employed by children's literature textbooks (Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1993). The terms "fiction", "narrative" and "story" were used interchangeably to refer to texts written in a narrative, story format for the purpose of entertaining the reader. It is acknowledged, however, that a reader may also gain information from this type of text.

Kindergarten children gain information about the world from a variety of texts and textual formats. Some books written in a fictional, narrative format are written in a manner designed to offer information. For example, The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Carle) is typically classified as a fictional tale about a caterpillar. However, the format of the book emphasizes the days of the week and counting from one to ten. Therefore, this fictional tale can serve an informational function.
For the purposes of this study, the terms "nonfiction", "informational book" and "expository text" were used interchangeably to refer to those texts which are written in a variety of formats, including narrative, with the main purpose of providing information for the reader. It is acknowledged, however, that a reader may read an informational book not to gain knowledge, but for entertainment (definitions adapted from Rosenblatt, 1978). Therefore, there is not a clear line of demarcation separating the two genres of fiction and nonfiction. It may be argued that few books can be classified as fiction or nonfiction in the purest form. Instead, many children's books fall somewhere on a continuum between fiction and nonfiction.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Response to Literature and Literacy Behaviors

There are two bodies of research that have traditionally been separated. The educational community has considered research investigating children's responses to literature and research investigating children's emergent literacy development as two distinct bodies of work. However, I argue that there is an interconnection between children's responses and their literacy development that cannot be so easily defined and divided.
Rosenblatt (1978) and Britton (1970, 1982, 1984) provide the theoretical basis for research into children's responses to literature. Rosenblatt (1978) argues that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text. The reader uses background knowledge, prior experiences, beliefs and emotions in interaction with the text to create meaning. As such, the reader and the text influence each other. These two notions of reading as active construction and reading as a transaction between the reader and the text, are important to understanding children's responses. Rosenblatt (1989) also argues that "essential to any reading is the reader's adoption, conscious or unconscious, of a stance" (p. 158). She argues that readers can read for two purposes. An efferent stance refers to the kind of reading in which the reader reads to gain information. An aesthetic stance refers to the kind of reading in which the reader savors the experiences, ideas, scenes and emotions evoked within the text. Rosenblatt (1978, 1989) argues that readers do not adopt one stance or the other. Rather, readers' stances do not remain stable across one text or reading. Instead, stances reside along a continuum.

Similarly, Britton (1970, 1982) describes the relationship between the reader and the text. He argues that a reader may adopt a participant role or a spectator role. In the participant role, the reader reads for a
purpose, to gain information and/or to get something done. In the spectator role, the reader is not bound to read for a purpose, but to read for the pleasure of the activity. Britton (1968) also argues that children's responses are dependent upon their developmental level and that mature responses grow from rich and varied experiences with books.

Traditionally, children's response to literature has been defined to emphasize what children say about what they have read. Britton (1968), Applebee (1978), Cullinan, Harwood and Galda (1983) and Lehr (1988) all investigated children's verbal responses to the literature they had read. These responses were elicited through the use of story retellings or through the use of researcher questioning. However, it is possible to interpret response, specifically children's responses to literature, more broadly so that children's reading interests, choices and preferences could be included.

Hickman (1979) pioneered the study of children's responses in the naturally occurring setting of the elementary classroom. In addition to identifying developmental aspects of children's responses, she also broadened the definition of response to include any behavior that reveals a connection between children and literature. This opened up the research data to include not only children's reading interests and preferences, but
also conversation, writing, artwork, drama and other child creations that could be linked to books. Since her study, other researchers (Hade, 1989; Hepler, 1982; Kiefer, 1982; McClure, 1985) have also used this definition of response to better understand the sense that children make from the books they read. By broadening the definition of what counts as response, researchers have found that conversation, writing, artwork and drama reveal important aspects of children's thinking.

In addition, these same researchers have all noted the importance of reading and responding in the presence of others. Hepler and Hickman (1982) noted that "the literary transaction, the one-to-one conversation between author and audience, is frequently surrounded by other voices" (p. 279). Therefore, a rich and supportive social context facilitates children's responses. Children not only help each other decide what to read, but talking about a book also allows the reader an opportunity to negotiate content and meaning with others (Hepler, 1982; Hickman, 1979). Through response and through interaction with others, children learn to express thoughts and feelings about literature, they learn perspective-taking and they learn to connect books to their own personal lives.

Separate from this body of research on children's responses to literature is a much larger body of research
investigating children's literacy behaviors. Contributions to the field of reading from cognitive psychologists confirm that reading is a constructive process in which children actively construct meaning from print (Clay, 1991). Indeed, the emergence of literacy is multi-faceted and includes children's involvement with print in rich and varied contexts. In interaction with books, children draw upon their oral language abilities and their knowledge of written language to "talk like a book" (Clay, 1979). Fox (1983) investigated young children's narrative competence as they recited story monologues. She found that children as young as 3 years of age could draw upon a variety of sources (their own experience, television, books and movies) and integrate portions of these sources into their story monologues. Additionally, children included a variety of literary and story conventions within their monologues. Other researchers, such as Cochran-Smith (1984), Doake (1985), Harste, Woodward & Burke (1984) and Sulzby & Teale (1987) all report that through interaction with reading and books, children play the major role in constructing their own literacy learning. As such, children's talk about books and their interactions while reading and writing all significantly contribute to their literacy knowledge.

These studies have investigated children's literacy behaviors and literacy learning without recognizing these
behaviors as response to literature. I argue that children's responses to literature are important literacy behaviors and that literacy behaviors include children's responses to literature. For the purposes of this particular investigation, response was broadly defined as talk, reading, writing and/or art creations that could be directly related to fiction or nonfiction literature. This broad definition encompasses a large range of behaviors and creations that are both responses to literature and literacy behaviors.

**Talk About Books as a Literacy Behavior**

Because of the social nature of language and literacy learning, classrooms where the focus is on such learning, have a highly complex social dimension. Therefore, literacy behaviors children exhibit cannot be understood without also examining the social context in which these behaviors occur. Researchers argue that "when children share experiences, ideas, and opinions, they are engaging in their most intellectually demanding work" (Martinez & Roser, 1991, p. 650). In classrooms where literature is given prominent attention and children are given the opportunity to engage in conversations about the literature they read, this "book talk" (Chambers, 1985) exposes children to differing opinions and points of view, and allows children the opportunity to reflect, re-think
and refine their understandings. Wood (1988) argues that these social interactions create the "intellectual tools and activities which form the basis of understanding" (p. 82).

The Social Aspect of Learning

Children do not learn in isolation. Children learn from and through interactions with others. Theorists and researchers agree that literacy learning is interactive, collaborative and social (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Jaggar & Smith-Burke, 1985; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1962; Wood, 1988). Vygotsky (1962) argues that by talking and interacting with others, children not only structure their immediate activities, but also form the processes of reasoning and learning. Children actually "learn how to learn, reason and regulate [their] own physical and mental activities" through the processes of talking, explaining, informing and physically and verbally interacting with others (Wood, 1988, p. 135). Cazden (1985) views children's reading as an activity that is done with others. She argues that "learning to read...is certainly a cognitive process; but it is also a very social activity, deeply embedded in interactions with teachers and peers" (Cazden, 1985, p. 595).
PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to determine and investigate kindergarten children's literacy behaviors as they interacted with both fiction and nonfiction literature. A further purpose was to determine the patterns and characteristics of the children's voluntary and/or free response and the patterns and characteristics of children's talk and social interaction as they interacted with both fiction and nonfiction literature. Finally, the last goal of the study was to determine and document the role of the teacher in the children's transactions with fiction and nonfiction literature. This was accomplished by observing, describing and interpreting the patterns of literacy behaviors exhibited by kindergarten children as they responded and interacted with both fiction and nonfiction literature during two classroom theme-based units. A comparative description was made between the patterns of children's literacy behaviors with both fiction and nonfiction literature in order to determine similarities and differences in the roles that both genres played for the children in one kindergarten class as they learned to read and write.
DISCUSSION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Literacy Behaviors - Defined

Collaborative discussions about literature are recognized by the research community as important literacy behaviors (Chambers, 1985; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Hepler, 1982; Hickman, 1979; Kiefer, 1982). In addition, investigations into young children's reading and writing indicate that from birth, children are learning the forms and functions of the language that surrounds them (Clay, 1972; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). It is recognized that the processes, motives, functions and uses of reading and writing of very young children are identical to those of literate adults (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Taylor, 1983; Teale, 1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Therefore, the talk, reading, writing and responding that young children exhibit represent important literacy behaviors, "windows" (Hade, 1990, p. 2) into the sense children are making of their literacy experiences.

For the purposes of this study, the term "literacy behaviors" was used to define any type of verbal and/or nonverbal behavior that children exhibited that could be directly related to the reading of print. This included but was not limited to: children's talk, children's writing, children's reading and children's voluntary/free response to literature read in the classroom.
Literacy Behaviors As Indicators of Learning

Cochran-Smith (1984) argues that the idea of a literacy event, in which children exhibit literacy behaviors, is useful for helping teachers and researchers see the context within which children use and make sense of print, the ways children organize print to meet their needs, the kinds of talk that accompany uses of print, and the nature and extent of the social interaction related to print. By observing and describing the behaviors children exhibited as they read, wrote, talked and interacted with each other and the teacher, I was able to document behaviors indicative of learning. Literacy behaviors are indicators of children's increasing abilities to make meaningful connections with fiction and nonfiction. I acknowledge that an investigation of children's literacy behaviors as documented during the relatively short period of time of this study is not necessarily evidence of children's long-term literacy development. However, the literacy behaviors described are indicators of children's emerging growth toward conventional reading and writing.

Emergent Literacy and Reading Behavior

Researchers acknowledge that children begin to learn to read from birth (Clay, 1972, 1991; Doake, 1985; Sulzby, 1981; Teale, 1981) and that literacy emerges (Clay, 1972) as children interact with print in the world.
around them. For the purposes of this study, the term "reading behaviors" defined the behaviors children exhibited in interaction with books in which the child had the belief or intent to make meaning (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Wells, 1986). Doake (1985) terms these behaviors "reading-like", and Holdaway (1979) terms these actions "reading re-enactment". Whatever term is used, it is acknowledged that these reading behaviors are important for children's literacy development. Clay (1972) argues that children practicing reading-like behaviors are engaged in self-regulation and self-correction which fosters their understanding of the structures and meanings of written language. Children engaged in these behaviors are practicing the same behaviors and processes typical of conventional readers. Some researchers argue that these behaviors are not "reading-like" but constitute "real reading" (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching concerns of this study were the identification and documentation of literacy behaviors demonstrated by children in one kindergarten class as they made meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature, the apparent influences of the text on these behaviors and/or transactions, and the social/interactional contexts in which these behaviors occurred.
The following research questions guided the collection and analysis of data.

I. What is the role of the teacher in children's transactions with fiction and nonfiction literature?

II. What is the role of peers for children's transactions and meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction literature?

1. What are the patterns of talk/social interaction that occur as kindergarten children interact with fiction and nonfiction texts?

2. What are the patterns and characteristics of voluntary/free response that occur as kindergarten children interact with fiction and nonfiction literature?

3. What reading behaviors do kindergarten children demonstrate as they interact with both fiction and nonfiction texts?

4. What types of writing behaviors do kindergarten children exhibit as they interact with fiction and nonfiction texts?

**IMPORTANCE IN THE FIELD**

Research has confirmed the importance of reading to children (Clay, 1979; Cullinan, 1989; Holdaway, 1979; Wells, 1986). However, there are contradictory findings regarding children's interactions with nonfiction
literature. There is a body of research citing the difficulties that children experience when attempting to read and write nonfiction texts (Hidi & Hildyard, 1983; Langer, 1985; McGee & Richgels, 1985; Taylor & Beach, 1984). Contradicting these findings, is a body of research citing children's success with informational literature (Bissex, 1980; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Newkirk, 1987; Pappas, 1990, 1991). Most studies investigating children's success with exposition have been conducted with children in the upper elementary grades (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982; McGee, 1982; Meyer, 1977; Taylor, 1982). Few studies have investigated the influence of nonfiction literature with kindergarten children. Of the studies that have investigated children in kindergarten, the emphasis has been on children's writing (Newkirk, 1987) or on children's success at using structural elements specific to varying genres when retelling a story of both fiction and nonfiction (Pappas, 1990, 1991). This study was unique in that it consisted of a broad, general comparative investigation of the literacy behaviors observed as kindergarten children interacted with both fiction and nonfiction texts. Findings from this study begin to fill in the gap in the knowledge base regarding how fiction and nonfiction can be used with children learning to read and write.
SUMMARY

Within the frameworks of emergent literacy and response to literature, the purpose of this study was to investigate children's literacy behaviors as they interacted with fiction and nonfiction literature in an attempt to determine how these literacy behaviors facilitated children's growth as readers and writers. A comparative description was made between the patterns of children's literacy behaviors with both fiction and nonfiction literature in an attempt to determine similarities and differences in the roles that both genres might play for the children in one kindergarten classroom as they learned to read and write.

A discussion and survey of related literature which provided a theoretical base for this research study can be found in Chapter II. Chapter III is a detailed description of the methodological design of the study. An analysis and discussion of key findings from this study can be found in Chapters IV and V while Chapter VI discusses implications and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"There is nothing so practical as a good theory."

Kurt Lewin

INTRODUCTION

It is an accepted belief of educators, researchers and parents that reading to young children is beneficial. Many research studies investigating the relationship between reading to young children and their subsequent literacy development have demonstrated that parental reading and book discussion is one of the most important activities for children learning to read (Clay, 1972; Cullinan, 1989; Doake, 1985; Holdaway, 1979; Snow, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Wells, 1986). However, most of what is read to young children is narrative prose, or stories (Fisher & Hiebert, 1990; Hiebert & Fisher, 1990; Meyer & Rice, 1984; Pappas, 1991; Wells, 1986). Few studies have investigated the role that nonfiction literature can play for children's emerging literacy. A discussion follows which focuses on the nature of the relationship between children's literature and children's literacy learning. Research will be examined that argues the importance of
narrative and nonfiction literature for young children. In addition, research will be examined regarding the impact of literature on children's oral language development, written language development and emerging reading development. Research will also be investigated regarding children's response to literature. Finally, learning does not happen in isolation. The social context surrounding children as they learn to read is an important vehicle for their meaning-making. In addition, the role of the teacher is crucial for children's emerging literacy development. Research will be reviewed which highlights social learning theory in general, specifically emphasizing the role of social interaction and the role of the teacher for children learning language and literacy.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE

Human beings continually construct stories to make sense of the world around them. As a member of the human race, children are born into this world of narrative. Hardy (1977), a literary theorist, claims that narrative is "a primary act of mind" (p. 12). She argues:

We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. (Hardy, 1977, p. 13)

Therefore, children are surrounded by narrative structures from birth. Following is a discussion which explores
how children develop narrative structures from playful, adult-infant exchanges, how narrative helps children organize the world around them and develop cognition, and how children's literature and stories build and extend children's development of narrative.

Precursors to Children's Narrative Development

Psychologists and linguists suggest that the earliest playful exchanges between infants and parents are the precursors to the child's developing narrative ability (Snow, 1977; Whitehead, 1985). Research conducted with parents and infants indicates that the movements, gurgles, burps and gazes of young children are construed by parents as indicating sociability and intention. Snow (1977) describes the interactions between infants and mothers as being conversational. Mothers interact with their babies as if they were engaged in a conventional conversation. Mothers typically discuss actions and objects of mutually shared interest and focus in the infant's world using the present tense. Mothers also ask a great number of questions. Perhaps most importantly, mothers treat the infants as true conversational partners, assigning intent and purpose to children's facial movements, burps, and vocalizations (Lindfors, 1987; Snow, 1977).

As children become more linguistically mature, characteristics of the mother's speech also change.
Mothers seem to consistently stay just one step ahead of the child's linguistic ability - constantly upping the ante for the child by making the linguistic demands slightly ahead of where the child currently is in his/her development (Lindfors, 1987).

Another feature common for adult-infant interactions is the conversational or playful routine. During these rhymes, games or original repetitive routines, mothers typically allow time slots for the infant's turn. Stern (1977) reports that the pauses during dialogue exchanges between mothers and infants are on the average the same duration as a typical pause in an adult to adult conversation, .60 seconds. These infant-adult dialogues appear to be the initial sequences crucial for the child's development of narrative (Snow, 1977; Stern, 1977).

Narrative, Organization of the World and Cognitive Thought

Narrative is essential for helping children organize and order their world. Wells (1986) writes that "stories provide the framework within which behaviors are interpreted" (p. 196). Storying is an activity that pervades all aspects of a child's learning. It is one of the central features of the child's early language learning and provides the framework for children to interpret the world (Bruner & Lucariello, 1989; Weir, 1962; Wells, 1986).
Evidence suggests that children's inclination to order their world through story starts at a very young age. In Weir's (1962) classic study in which she looked at the pre-sleep monologues of her young son, she reports that one of the central features of Anthony's language play is his participation in a shared dialogue in which he plays both roles in his "conversation" between himself, his blanket or stuffed animal. Anthony carries on conversations about his parents, about routine events in his day, and about fantastic events. He creates a narrative story which helps him order and control his world. Narrative storytelling is symbolic language play. Vygotsky (1978) argues that when children talk to themselves, they are actually regulating and planning activities in ways that foreshadow verbal thinking. These narrative monologues serve the function of allowing Anthony not only to contemplate and gain control over the here and now of his crib, but also to structure his thinking and his growing understandings and hypotheses of his world.

Bruner and Lucariello (1989) found similar narrative dialogues when examining the pre-sleep monologues of a young 2-year-old child named Emmy. Emmy did not perform the shared dialogues typical for Anthony Weir. However, the researchers did observe that, like Anthony, Emmy spent a great deal of time recounting the routine events of her
life. Bruner and Lucariello concluded that young children strive to understand the happenings of their world and the various relations among agent, action and goal by narrating about these relations and events. The investigators argue that this monologic narrative may very well be a prerequisite for the development of narrative thought (Bruner & Lucariello, 1989). Moffett (1968) adds that adults have various genres of discourse available to them, so they may choose the discourse most appropriate for their intended meaning. However, children "utter themselves almost entirely through stories" (Moffet, 1968, p. 49), making stories children's primary route to understanding.

Britton (1970) claims that children's narratives, pre-sleep monologues, and even early babbles are evidence of children's use of language in the spectator role. This is language that is not used to get something done, but is instead used to create a world separate from the world of reality - language used for "looking on" (Applebee, 1978, p. 35). Although children themselves make use of language in the spectator role when reading story books, very young children (younger than 7 years of age) are often unable to distinguish spectator role experiences from real life experiences. Children often have difficulty distinguishing experiences of characters in books from real experiences (Applebee, 1978). Almost 73 percent of the 6-year-olds in
Applebee's (1978) study were uncertain whether characters in stories were real. Children's difficulty distinguishing spectator role experiences from reality makes literature all that more powerful. Applebee argues that the limited life experiences of children can be extended through narrative and literature. Stories allow children to make connections between what they are learning and what they already know. Stories also help children learn fact from fiction. Narrative is a fundamental means of grappling with new ideas and "[provides] a major route to understanding" (Wells, 1986, p. 206).

Bruner (1986) argues that a relationship exists between narrative story and cognitive thought. Evidence from researchers who have examined children's pre-sleep monologues leads Bruner to suggest that this fundamental relationship may begin forming in children as young as 2 years of age (Bruner & Lucariello, 1989; Weir, 1962). Young children verbally construct a theory of the world in their head (Smith, 1985) during pre-sleep monologues, using language as a way to organize and structure their thinking (Vygotsky, 1978). Bruner (1986) argues that all humans construct their own theory of reality through two modes of cognition: logic (or what Bruner calls paradigmatic or logico-scientific thought) and narrative story. He also suggests that a fundamental relationship exists between stories and human cognition. He argues
that humans, adults and children, construct their own reality, using narrative to order and structure the events in their lives. Narrative guides the search for meaning, which is the primary function of human cognition.

Like Bruner, Rosen (1986) argues for the importance of narrative for young children's development of cognition and thought. He agrees with Hardy (1977) that narrative is a "primary act of mind" (p. 12) and argues that because of the primacy of narrative in human functioning, this serves as evidence of narrative's relationship to thought. Rosen states: "The narrative forms we master provide genres for thinking with" which imposes formal coherence on a "virtual chaos of human events" (Rosen, 1986, p. 30). From the research presented, it is clear that children are born into a world of narrative and that this storying is vital for children's developing thought processes and understandings of the world.

**Beyond the Crib: Literature and Development of Narrative**

Children live in a world full of narrative, a world in which narrative assists adults and children alike in making sense of life experiences. Because of this, children develop and learn the rules of narrative production at a very young age. Fox (1985) conducted a study looking at the oral monologues of a small group of children, ages 3 and-one-half to 6. She studied the oral
narrative productions of these children in order to determine what rules for production the children employed, as well as to ascertain the influence that written stories had on children's emerging narrative competence. Fox found that children develop complex rule systems which they employ for different kinds of storying.

One of the children in her study, Jack, had clearly developed rules for the production of poems, which were different from the rules he used for talking of for the production of stories. Jack's rules for the production of poems included: 1) use of present tense; 2) minimal or absent narrative; 3) emphasis on description; 4) use of rhythm; and, 5) use of a soft, solemn voice (Fox, 1985, p. 15). Several months after Jack's initial poem production, his rules for poetry production became more complex. His revised rules now include use of meter, rhyme, repetition, nonsense words and repetition of a specific syntactic schema. Fox found that other children in the study also developed highly structured rule systems for the production of various narratives. Clearly, literature and storying greatly influenced these children's developing rule structures for various genres.

In fact, Fox found that books that had been shared with the children exerted the strongest influence over the children's oral monologues. Books influenced the children more than the children's immediate surroundings at the
time of the oral production, more than other media, and more than events and happenings in the child's own life. The narrative structures of books were used by the children in three main ways: the children used a character or plot from a story they had been read; the children used quotations and/or language styles characteristic of a book that they had been read; and the children used a technical form from a book, transforming that format to fit the child's own purposes. Fox concluded that children are capable at a very young age of learning complex rules for narrative formation. This study also illuminates the "diversity of ways in which young children can transform their literary experiences to their own narrative purposes" (Fox, 1985, p. 24).

The findings of other researchers (Pappas & Brown, 1987; Wells, 1986) substantiate this claim of the importance of books for children's development of narrative. Hade (1988) conducted research analyzing retellings of favorite stories from three children. He then analyzed the richness of these retellings in terms of twelve narrative transformations which "create the stuff and mood of the story" (1988, p. 314). His results show that children incorporate the language and syntax of stories into the language of their own retellings. In turn, the richer the text in which the child reads, the richer the retelling from that text. Hade argues that
"the language of the stories children hear is critical in developing narrative thought" (1988, p. 320).

Dombey (1985) in her research with parents' story-reading with their young children, found that parents actually help their children learn the culturally defined rules of storytelling by mediating and modelling how to construct meaning from the transaction between text and the child's own knowledge. When parents allow a child to engage in conversation, to question, and to draw parallels between the story and the child's own experiences, Dombey argues that he/she learns to "interrogate the text" (1985, p. 41). Through this interrogation children learn to play an active role in their reading: to ask questions, draw inferences, construct and test hypotheses (Dombey, 1985) about not only the reading, but also about the structure of the narrative itself. Dombey (1985) concludes that children learn story language, which is very different from conversational language, and narrative structure through books. The parent's role of providing this scaffolding is vital in assisting the child's growing narrative competence.

Summary

From the research presented, findings do indicate that narrative performs an important function, not only for young children but for adults as well. From the
earliest conversational dialogues and sequences with infants, parents "teach" their children the ways that humans make sense of the world around them. Storying creates a structure for mental organization and facilitates cognition. Research suggests that narrative literature is crucial for young children. However, other researchers argue that narrative may be only half of the story. Some researchers suggest that children need nonfiction.

CHILDREN AND NONFICTION LITERATURE

Research has confirmed the importance of narrative or fiction for young children's cognitive thought and literacy learning. However, less is known about the importance of nonfiction for children. In fact, research findings about young children's ability to read and write nonfiction is quite contradictory. There is evidence to support the notion that even very young children recognize the varying rule systems inherent in various genres (Bissex, 1980; Fox, 1985). There is also evidence to support the notion that young children are capable of reading and writing various genres (Clark, 1976; Newkirk, 1987). Contrasting these findings is research that cites the primacy of narrative in young children's reading and writing (Langer, 1985; Moffett, 1968). Findings from these studies indicate that children are quite capable of
reading and writing narrative, but they have difficulty reading and writing nonfiction. Evidence from this line of thought suggests that children must be taught the structures inherent in exposition. A discussion follows which examines these contradictory arguments.

**Children's Competence With Nonfiction Forms**

As stated, research supports the argument that young children can differentiate between different genres of our language and that young children can indeed master a variety of forms specific to nonfiction reading and writing (Bissex, 1980; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1983; Newkirk, 1987; Pappas, 1986, 1990, 1991; Pappas & Brown, 1987).

In Fox's (1985) study of oral monologues of young children, in addition to Jack who had distinct rules for the production of poems, she also studied one child who spontaneously varied the register with which he told his stories depending upon the nature of his monologue. This child, age six, frequently created news readings and weather forecasts which utilized rule systems different from the rule systems he used to create purely narrative monologues. This is a clear indication that, at a very young age, children are able to use and distinguish between the rule systems of various genres.
In Clark's (1976) classic study of children who were fluent readers upon entry to school, she discovered through parent interviews that the children in the study read a variety of print materials at home. The children reportedly read nonfiction reading material almost as often as fiction material. Clark reports that the findings of her study have implications for parents and librarians regarding "accessibility of different types of reading material" for young children (1976, p. 103).

Research has also confirmed that children are aware of the various purposes of writing and are able to differentiate between different genres of our language. Bissex (1980) in her case study of her son, Paul, when he was ages five through nine, found that the majority of his writing was informational in function. He used writing as a means of showing evidence of his growing knowledge of himself and the world around him. He wrote books about topics that he knew about, and he wrote newspapers and magazines. Clearly, Paul had a firm understanding about the various functions and forms of written language, and he was adept at using these forms for his own purposes.

Harste, Woodward & Burke (1983, 1984) found in their study of young children's reading and writing that these children also had strong notions of genre differences. The children in the study could identify different genres by responding to organizational characteristics of letter
grouping and page placement. One child, Stephanie (age six), within a two-day period created a list of the guests, games and refreshments for her birthday party, a letter to her mother, a map and a story. Each piece of writing contained different organizational structures which the researchers called "signifying structures" (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984, p. 84). These signifying structures are text features which signal to the reader the type of text to be encountered. The investigators conclude that the syntax and semantic organizational formats that organize the children's writing in their study "closely parallel(s) writing decisions made in the adult community for texts of these types" (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984, p. 85). They add that the organizational structures of different genres provide clues for young children about the function of different genres.

Newkirk (1987) examined the non-narrative writing of 100 children in grades one through three. He found that the earliest forms of expository writing were lists and labels that children had written to accompany illustrations. These lists served the function of sorting, detailing and displaying the information that children have on different topics. He argues that this is a logical starting point for children's expository writing, because when children learn to read it is often
by naming and labelling pictures in books (Ninio & Bruner, 1978). Newkirk (1987) argues that "rather than looking to narrative as the 'natural' starting point for the development of writing, we might better look to the label" (p. 127). Evidence from the children's writing also suggests that as children grow older, their writing consistently contains more hierarchical organizational structures. The older children in Newkirk's study were more capable of sustaining coherent relationships among the statements and the paragraphs contained in their writing. Newkirk stresses that these children are successful nonfiction writers because they have been in process writing classrooms from the start of kindergarten. Because of this, children have been in classrooms where teachers have consistently modelled and taught them how to write exposition. The collaborative community in which children write has a tremendous effect upon their product.

Newkirk concludes by arguing that:

One might look at these early years not as a time when exposition is 'difficult' but as a time when, if given the opportunity, children make considerable advances in the direction of mature expository writing (1987, pp. 141-142).

Clearly, the students in Newkirk's study were quite competent readers and writers of exposition.

Pappas (1990, 1991) has investigated kindergarten children's understanding of both fiction and informational
books. Through her research, she has identified specific characteristics that differentiate fiction from nonfiction literature. One of the criteria she identifies is co-referentiality. This structure, found in fiction, is a device in which the author introduces a character and then refers to the character throughout the book with referent items such as "he", "she". She also identifies co-classification. This structure, found in nonfiction, is a device in which the author writes about a class, such as the class of squirrels and vegetables (Pappas, 1986). In Pappas' analysis of 20 kindergarten children's repeated readings of three fiction and three informational books, she found that the children could successfully read books from both genres. The children were sensitive to the distinctive features of co-referentiality versus co-classification and they successfully sustained the distinctive textual features unique to each genre.

In further analysis of one child's readings, Pappas (1991) again found that this child was just as capable of tackling the distinctive discourse features of the information book as she was the book of fiction. These findings led Pappas to the conclusion that educators and researchers must reexamine the ideology of the primacy of story in literacy development. She writes that "exclusive use of stories...may end up being a barrier to full access to literacy" (1991, p. 461).
Children's Difficulties With Nonfiction Forms

In a somewhat contradictory vein, research has also found that children may not be able to recognize and use the forms of nonfiction. Additionally, if children do recognize and use these forms, children's rule systems for nonfiction are not as well developed as their rule systems for narrative. Researchers in this camp argue that narrative is the primary mode for children's meaning-making and success with nonfiction does not occur until later elementary years.

Langer (1985) found this result in her research with older children. She investigated 67 children in grades three, six and nine. The children were given various writing and reading tasks and then questioned after each task. Her findings indicate that children have strong understandings of the content and structure of both story and report. In addition, the children recognize structures specific to each genre when they read and the children are able to use these structures when they write their own work. However, Langer reports that the children have competence dealing with narrative forms, and less control with expository forms. Langer suggests that children are more competent with narrative forms because, from an early age, children are surrounded by narrative. She adds that children's lack of exposure to nonfiction accounts for their lack of competence with this form (Langer, 1985).
Taylor and Beach (1984) agree with Langer. In their study of 114 seventh-graders, they found that children often have difficulty comprehending and writing expository text. They argue that many factors contribute to children's difficulty with exposition, including high levels of abstraction, unfamiliar concepts and lack of knowledge about text structure. The researchers hypothesized that if children received instruction in how to competently use text structure when they read, their memory of material read would increase. Indeed, they found support for this hypothesis. After receiving instruction, children in the treatment group had higher recall scores on unfamiliar social studies passages than students who had not been trained in the text structuring strategy. However, when analyzing the students' writing, writing from the children in the treatment group did not significantly differ from the writing of the children in the control group.

Findings by McGee and Richgels (1985) validate these results. They also argue that children are more knowledgeable about narrative text structure than expository text structure. They cite early and frequent exposure to stories as the reason. They argue, however, that by teaching students the various structures of expository text, children will become more capable of reading and writing nonfiction.
Finally, Hidi and Hildyard (1983) investigated children's abilities to write narrative and opinion essays. Working with children in grades three and five, findings from the study indicate that the children's narrative productions were superior to their production of opinion essays. Children's narrative writings were better formed, contained more cohesive and semantic ties, and were considerably longer. These results led the researchers to the conclusion that "children's difficulties with writing can be traced not to the process itself, but to the nature of the discourse that the children are being required to produce" (Hidi & Hildyard, 1983, p. 91).

**Summary**

Discrepancy abounds in the research regarding children's abilities with nonfiction literature. Is the nature of nonfiction discourse such that children inherently have difficulty? Or, given the proper guidance, modelling and encouragement, are children capable of reading and writing nonfiction? The research community continues to debate these issues. These questions are yet to be answered.
STORY READING AND ORAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

For the past several decades, researchers interested in children's language acquisition have reported the importance of adults reading aloud to children for children's oral language development. A discussion follows which examines the relationship between literature and story reading and how literature supports children as they learn oral language.

Irwin (1960) was one of the first researchers to document the crucial role that book reading can play for children's language acquisition. His study was conducted with 34 infants and mothers, all of whom came from homes where the father was engaged in blue collar work. Mothers of 24 infants were supplied with books and instructed to read to their child 15 to 20 minutes a day for 17 months. Mothers of ten infants were not supplied with books, and it was assumed that reading did not occur in these homes. Results indicate that four months into the study, children who were read to in the treatment group had a significantly higher frequency of phonetic production as measured by their spontaneous speech.

Five years later, Cazden (1965) found in her analysis of mothers' book reading to infants that reading books and extending the children's language during reading was the factor most important in encouraging linguistic growth in young children.
Chomsky (1972) conducted a classic study investigating the linguistic competence exhibited by 36 young children. In addition, she examined children's exposure to written language and how that may impact their rate of linguistic development. Her results indicate that, even when controlled for age and IQ, a strong relationship existed between the amount of time children spent listening to stories and their linguistic development. She concludes that "[the] results indicate that exposure to the more complex language available from reading does seem to go hand in hand with increased knowledge of the language" (Chomsky, 1972, p. 33).

Similarly, Snow (1977) led a team of researchers in conducting a study of mothers' speech to children during book-reading. The team found that the language mothers used during reading was much more complex than the language they used with their children during play. This led to the hypothesis that because the book constrained the topic of talk, the mother was free to devote a greater amount of time to making comments, which are usually longer and more elaborate than utterances that introduce a topic. This finding, in conjunction with further research, led to the assumption that book reading may be the ideal routine for young children learning language.

Similar research conducted by Ninio & Bruner (1978) revealed that it may be the routine of book reading that
helps facilitate children's language growth. The researchers reported that just as mothers and infants engage in vocalization routines, with the mother consistently providing incrementally more elaborate utterances for the child (Snow, 1977; Whitehead, 1985), mothers and young children also engage in book-reading routines with the mother providing predictable cycles extending across several utterances. As in oral vocalization routines, the mother in book-reading routines continually adjusts the linguistic demands to meet the needs of her child. Ninio & Bruner (1978) term this interaction a "scaffolding dialogue" in which the mother provides support for the infant during sequences of exchanges. The mother provides the linguistic structure that she perceives the child is trying to express. The mother does for the child what he/she cannot yet do for himself/herself (Vygotsky, 1962). Quite naturally, parents engaged in oral dialogues, as well as those engaged in book-reading, are very adept at operating within their child's constantly changing zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1962). While this is a typical interaction for Caucasian, middle class families, recent research suggests that a variety of oral language teaching and learning patterns are experienced by children of differing socio-economic and socio-cultural groups (Heath, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988).
One of the most important longitudinal studies investigating children's language learning was conducted by Wells (1986) in Bristol, England. He and a team of researchers followed the linguistic development 128 children from the child's first recognizable words to the child's entry into school. Thirty-two of these children were then studied until they were ten years old. One of the most significant findings of the study was the relationship between reading, or being read to, and oral language development. While all of the children progressed through essentially the same sequence of language development, the researchers found that listening to stories was the main factor contributing to differences in the children's rate of progress. Children who had been read to often during their preschool years and in the first two years of school made the most significant progress in terms of oral language growth.

Butler (1980) documented the growth of her granddaughter, Cushla, who was born with multiple handicaps. From birth, as much out of desperation as out of hope, the parents began reading to the infant, often for hours on end during the day and night. As an infant, Cushla was examined by many doctors, all of whom gave a grim prognosis of a life of mental and physical retardation. However, when examined again at 17 months of age, results from the tests indicated that Cushla's
language score was normal. The psychologist also noted that Cuslha had very advanced book behavior. She was able to examine books, scan the illustrations, turn the pages and utter some initial consonant sounds of the words as she attempted to label the pictures in the text. When tested at 44 months of age, findings indicated that Cuslha's language development had greatly improved and her attention span had increased to a normal level. Butler contributes Cuslha's remarkable strides in cognitive and language development to the books which surrounded the infant from birth. Cuslha's parents undauntedly read and sang to her, spending countless hours pouring over the words and illustrations of picture books. Cuslha's story is a tribute to the power of literature for children's language learning.

Summary

These findings in addition to more recent research (Goldfield & Snow, 1984; Ninio, 1983; Snow, 1983) have led to the conclusion that reading with young children provides them with a predictable routine and exposure to increasingly more complex, more elaborate and more decontextualized language than any other type of parent-child interaction. Many researchers argue that sharing stories is the ideal routine for young children learning oral language.
STORY READING AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Exposure to literature and story is not only important for children's oral language learning, but research shows that it is also important for children's written language learning. According to Wells (1986), stories may provide one of the most enriching contexts for the development of writing. Stories, those in books and those of the children's own making, provide a reason and a meaningful context for children to communicate. This, in turn, provides an outlet for children to reflect on experiences and to extend their linguistic potential. By writing stories, children are provided the means by which to direct their own thought processes, forcing their conceptual system to constantly expand in the quest to express and represent their experiences (Donaldson, 1978).

Clay (1975), one of the first researchers to recognize and stress the importance of children's early writing, suggests that reading plays an important part in the early writing process. She argues that children can learn important writing skills and concepts by being read to. These skills and concepts include: how to attend and orient to printed language, how to analyze letters and words from left to right, what to study in a word in order to reproduce it, and how to sequence movements (Clay, 1975).
Research supports the importance of stories for children's own written language growth. In Wells' (1986) Bristol Study the researchers found that stories provide "one of the most enriching contexts for the development of language, both spoken and written" (p. 203). Wells argues that stories provide children opportunities to learn the symbolic representation of written language for expressing thoughts and feelings.

DeFord (1981), analyzing samples of writing from different first-grade classrooms, found that reading material influenced what and how children wrote. DeFord observed three first-grade classrooms for seven months in order to determine how various instructional approaches may influence children's reading and writing strategies. The three classroom teachers used either a phonics, skills, or a literature approach to language learning. DeFord discovered that not only did children in the literature classroom write a wider variety of literary forms, these children also had a higher percentage of stories that the researcher judged to be well-formed.

Eckoff (1983) found similar results. She studied how various reading materials affect children's writing. In this study, Eckoff analyzed two different basal reading series and children's writing from two second-grade classrooms. The basal reader used in one classroom was written in an unnatural, simplified writing style, while
the basal reader used in the other classroom was written in a style that closely matched the style and complexity of quality children's literature. The researcher then analyzed the writing from children in both classrooms through the use of a narrative and an expository writing stimuli. Results indicate that children do, indeed, incorporate the linguistic structures of the basal text they read into their own writing. The writing of children reading the basal that matched the literary style of children's literature contained more complex sentences and more complex verbs. Their writing was also longer and contained more conventionally used punctuation. Results indicate the importance of quality literature for children's writing development.

Graves (1983) argues that children who write need literature, not only because their need for information rises, but also because children take from the literature what they need for their own writing. Research done with children who read quality children's literature in the classroom corroborates Graves' argument. Hickman (1979) found in her study of children in grades K-5 that literature the children read is a source for them as they write. Evidence from Wells (1986), DeFord (1981), Eckoff (1983), and Hickman (1979) all substantiate the importance of quality children's literature for children's writing development.
Bissex (1980) also found that literature was an important source and a great influence on her son's writing. In her longitudinal case study of her son's reading and writing development, she notes that "from the beginning Paul's writing was influenced by his reading in many ways" (p. 196). She documents that Paul learned punctuation, including the colon and ellipses, spelling, vocabulary and syntax from the literature that he had read or that she had read to him. Bissex also reports that Paul's reading of newspapers, magazines and science fiction literature also greatly influenced his writing. He learned the writing form, style, spatial arrangement and content of these varying genres. Bissex notes that Paul modelled his own writing after these literary examples that were so familiar to him from his reading. Clearly, Paul "learned by practicing in his writing things he had observed in reading" (1980, p. 196).

Finally, Dressel (1990) investigated whether the quality of literature read aloud and discussed with 48 fifth-graders would affect their writing. Children were randomly assigned to two treatment groups. One group of children read a highly rated mystery series as judged by experts in children's literature. The other group of children read a lesser rated mystery series. For approximately six weeks, the researcher read three books from each series to the respective groups, and then
discussed aspects of the story with the children. She then worked with each group to help the children write their own mystery story. The stories were then rated holistically for meaning and content. Evidence from the children's writing suggests that children who hear differing qualities of literature do, indeed, write stories which are qualitatively different. Dressel argues that the quality of the children's writing was directly affected by the quality of the literature they read. This is powerful support for the argument of reading only quality children's literature in the classroom.

Summary

Findings on the relationship between literature and children's writing suggest that literature is important for children who are learning written language. Not only do children learn the various forms of written language, but literature is also an important model for children's own writing. Research also suggests that it is not just the act of reading literature that influences children and their writing. Findings from several studies indicate that because children model their own writing after the writing they hear and read from books, it is important for teachers to share quality literature.
STORY READING AND LEARNING TO READ

It has long been recognized by researchers, educators and parents that reading to children has many positive influences on children's literacy development. The following discussion focuses on just some of the ways that reading to children enhances and facilitates children's own emerging reading. Evidence from research with early fluent readers suggests that reading and discussing books with young children positively influences their own reading, subsequent success in school, reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Story reading is also vital for children's knowledge about other important literacy lessons including concepts about print (Clay, 1991), literacy set (Holdaway, 1979) and contracts of literacy (Snow & Ninio, 1989).

Reading: Early Readers and Success in School

One of the earliest and most influential studies on the influence of reading to young children is the study by Durkin (1966). In her longitudinal study of children in New York City who learned to read prior to entry to school, Durkin reported two important findings. First, she found that, when matched on intelligence, the average school achievement of the early readers was significantly higher than the non-early readers in the study. Secondly, she reported that the early readers, all of whom were
reading at a second grade level or above upon entry to school, had all been regularly read to by their parents.

Clark's (1976) classic longitudinal study of young fluent readers in Glasgow and Dunbartonshire, Scotland, revealed similar findings. Researchers in this study, in an attempt to distinguish the factors that influence a child's success with reading, investigated 32 children who were already reading upon their entry to school. In addition to conducting parent and child interviews, the researchers followed these children through several years of school. Findings from this study indicate several factors related to the children's early fluent reading. These factors include: 1) parents who value education and who take the time to talk, answer questions, explain and listen to their children; 2) parents who model reading by reading extensively themselves and encouraging their children to read; and, 3) parents who make extensive use of the library. Evidence from this study indicates that story reading and verbal interaction are essential for young children learning to read (Clark, 1976).

Again, in the Wells' (1986) longitudinal study in Bristol, England, with 128 children, researchers found a strong relationship between the amount of time children spent listening to stories in their preschool years and first two years of school and the children's subsequent success in school. In addition, findings from this study
indicates that by the time the children entered school, their rank order in the class had usually been established. Children who entered school as the most successful of their class at age five, remained at the top of their class at age ten. The same relationship held for children who entered school at the bottom of their class. Wells states that the major influence determining success in school was the amount of time the child had spent listening to stories. Wells concluded that "of all the activities that are characteristic of [literate] homes, it was the sharing of stories that we found to be most important" (1986, p. 194).

Wells reports that stories have an important role in education, beyond their contribution to literacy. Wells argues that storytelling "is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning. It is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning" (1986, p. 194). Clearly, findings from these influential studies indicate the importance of story reading for children's own success with reading.

Reading: Comprehension and Vocabulary Development

Evidence from research strongly suggests that reading has an important influence on young children's own reading and subsequent success in school. However, studies have also shown that reading aloud affects children's comprehension and vocabulary development.
It would be ideal to have every child born into a home where story sharing is a routine occurrence. However, not all children come from homes where this is the norm. Feitelson, Kita and Goldstein (1986) investigated the effects of story reading with disadvantaged first-graders. Children participating in the study came from "multi-problem families and families on social welfare" (Feitelson, Kita and Goldstein, 1986, p. 343). Three classes of first-grade children were assigned at random to the treatment condition, which consisted of twenty minutes of story reading from trade books by the regular classroom teacher, five to six times a week for six months. Two classes of first-grade children were assigned to the control group, which received only their regular reading instruction. Results of this study indicate that the children who had been read to for six months had significantly better results on various tests of comprehension and active language use. This group also out-scored the control group on measures of decoding. The investigators report that an unexpected result of this study was the children's own increased interest in reading trade books and sharing these books with their friends and siblings. Many children from the treatment group reportedly convinced their parents to buy books or borrow books from the library.
In addition to facilitating children's success with reading in school and building children's comprehension and interest in reading, story reading also enhances children's vocabulary as reported in an early study by Cohen (1968). Using seven elementary schools from disadvantaged neighborhoods in New York City, she set out to investigate how reading would affect children who have very little experience with traditional parent-child book reading. Two hundred eighty-five children participated in the study. Children in the experimental group were read to every school day for nine months. The teachers were encouraged to read with intonation and expression and to follow up the reading with an activity relating to the book. Children in the control group received the traditional basal reading instruction. Story reading was a treat they received only on special occasions. Children were then tested at the end of the year. Results indicate that children who received the story reading had higher scores in vocabulary, word knowledge and comprehension. Cohen summarizes the results by arguing for the importance of teachers reading books with children, especially those children who do not receive extensive book reading with parents prior to entry to school.
Other Important Literacy Lessons

Joint book-reading between parents and children or teachers and children also helps children learn many other important literacy lessons. Research conducted by Ninio (1980, 1983), Ninio & Bruner (1978) and Snow & Ninio (1989) has led to the hypothesis that most young children in American middle-class families are inducted into "contracts of literacy" (Snow & Ninio, 1989, p. 121) during story reading. The researchers argue that through book-reading, children are "tutored" (Snow & Ninio, 1989, p. 122) in the special rules that apply to book reading, rules that are very different from the rules for face-to-face dialogue. These "contracts of literacy" (Snow & Ninio, 1989, p. 121) that children learn include: books are for reading, the topic of the conversation is determined by the picture on the page, pictures in books are symbolic representations of the real object they represent, words are to be read and pictures are for naming, and the fictional world of books is separate and different from the world of reality.

Snow and Ninio argue that children learn these important "contracts of literacy" (1989, p. 121) during story reading with adults. However, Clay (1991) argues that children learn other important literacy concepts necessary for the children's understanding of the reading process. These concepts about print include: 1) print can
be turned into speech; 2) print contains the message; and, 3) some language units are more likely to occur than other units.

Similarly, Holdaway (1979) argues that children with a background in book reading develop a "literacy set" (1979, p. 49). Children who have had numerous and varied exposure to reading and books develop a "complex range of attitudes, concepts, and skills predisposing them to literacy" (1979, p. 49). These children, when confronted with the task of reading for themselves, are set, ready with the tools necessary for the task. This literacy set includes: a high expectation for print, a set of oral language models for the language of books, familiarity with written language, an understanding of conventions of print, the ability to attend to and understand decontextualized language, and the ability to make connections between characters' experiences in stories and the child's own real life experiences (Holdaway, 1979).

Children's learning has often been described as creative construction (Clay, 1991). Just as children creatively construct their own knowledge about the world around them, they also creatively construct their own knowledge about print as they learn to read. Another important aspect of children's early reading behavior is what Clay (1972) first termed "talking like a book" (p.
This important aspect of learning to read is a prime example of children creatively constructing their own knowledge (Clay, personal communication). This phenomenon, termed "reading-like behavior" by Doake (1985, p. 82) is "a highly significant behavior that seems to emerge in children consistently, as a result of their being read and reread familiar stories" (Doake, 1985, p. 82). As children have many various experiences with print, they develop a high expectation for the form and structure of written language, and they begin to construct the story for themselves. They re-construct the story structure, sequence of events and language patterns, thus easing their transition into independent reading. This is highly significant learning that comes only from many experiences with print.

Summary

Evidence from research indicates that reading and literature have many positive effects on children and their emergent literacy learning. Children who have been read to are better readers, are more successful in school and have increased comprehension and vocabulary development. Reading also facilitates children's understanding of important concepts about print.
RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

Children's responses to the literature they read or hear are important vehicles for their meaning-making and learning. Children's responses to literature provide insight into their language and their thinking. Rosenblatt (1978) argues that response to literature involves a unique personal transaction between the text and the reader. This transaction is an ongoing process that involves not only the past experience of the reader but also the "present state and present interests or preoccupations of the reader" (1978, p. 20). It is through this transaction that an astute observer can see children displaying their thought processes.

Reading and responding are social activities. When children are given the time and opportunity to respond and interact with books, they are given the means to grapple with concepts and ideas that are "a head taller than themselves" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102). Children learn by considering possibilities (Donaldson, 1978). It is through thoughtful consideration of different possibilities and alternate viewpoints that children learn to process and define their own interpretation and meaning for themselves. Therefore, it is crucial that children have the opportunity to talk, discuss, argue and interact with others as they read because children learn through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978).
A discussion follows which examines the developmental aspects of children's responses to literature and the importance of the social context for young children as they thoughtfully consider literature.

**Development and Response**

Researchers have documented that there are developmental differences in children's responses to literature. Applebee (1978), using questionnaires, interviews and a repertory grid technique, investigated children's changing responses to story from early childhood to adolescence. Comparing the children's responses to their corresponding level of development as determined by Piaget's stages of cognitive development, Applebee's evidence suggests that children have developmental patterns of response to literature. When asked to tell about their favorite story, the 6-year-old children in this study tended to simply retell the story, complete with the title, formulaic opening and conclusion, and dialogue. Applebee (1978) notes that this type of response is typical for children who are at Piaget's preoperational stage of development. At this stage, representation is concrete and children's thinking can be described as having aspects of egocentrism (little awareness of the stance of the listener) and centration (the tendency to focus on a single detail). These thought
processes are reflected in the children's narratives. The nine-year-old children, who are in Piaget's stage of concrete operations, tended to respond with summaries of the events of a story. These summaries usually did not include the formulaic markers common to younger children's retellings, but instead children typically categorized the stories with terms such as scary or nice. Nine-year-old children were also able to recognize the difference between the objective events of the story and their own subjective responses. These responses were typical for children at Piaget's concrete operational stage of development in which children are learning to sort, classify and categorize. Applebee (1978) clearly argues that the patterns and characteristics of children's responses are due to their corresponding stage of cognitive development.

Evidence from Hickman's (1979, 1981) study with 90 children grades K-5 also suggests developmental patterns of response. Traditional studies of response have been conducted in a structured, clinical setting and have focused only on the verbal responses children have to stories. Hickman, however, acting as a participant observer in three classrooms, found that children in grades K-1 were most likely to respond physically with their bodies. She cites examples of children clapping, bouncing and giggling as the teacher read aloud. Children
also frequently acted out or dramatized the events from the story, using their hands and their bodies to mimic the actions of the characters in the stories. Children in grades 2-3 earnestly set about the task of becoming independent readers. These children were frequently engaged with books and they spent a great deal of time reading, alone or together with friends. Finally, children in grades 4-5 typically responded by being intensely absorbed in their reading. Hickman writes: "Only at this level did readers grow so engrossed in a story that they became oblivious to their surroundings" (1981, p. 350). Hickman summarizes these findings by arguing that children's responses are developmental and reflect the children's level of thinking and language development. However, she also argues that the social context plays an important role in shaping children's responses.

Kiefer (1982) investigated first and second-grade children's responses to the style and technique of the illustrations of picture books. Like Applebee (1978) and Hickman (1979), she found that children's responses were developmental. The children in her study consistently responded to the picture books in an egocentric manner, focusing on what they liked or what they thought about the book. Kiefer also noted that the younger children often responded physically. This response, which seemed to
occur more often with the boys than the girls, often involved the children pantomiming the story, or adding sound effects. Kiefer also found that the social environment played a crucial role in the children's development of deeper, richer and more multifaceted responses. In addition, she suggests that the teacher plays a crucial role in modelling enthusiasm and ways of talking about books. It is also important for the teacher to provide many quality picture books for the children and to have the patience to allow children to visit and revisit the books. This encourages children to respond in a deeper, broader manner.

Cullinan, Harwood and Galda (1983) also found developmental differences in their investigation of fourth, sixth and eighth-grade children's responses to two novels. The researchers acknowledge that children's prior experiences with literature affects their responses. They argue that evidence from the study indicated the existence of developmental differences in children's levels of comprehension and response.

Other studies by Schlager (1978) and Favat (1977) suggest that not only are children's responses dependent upon their cognitive level of development, but children's choices of literature may be dependent upon this as well. Schlager (1978) reports that books chosen by children "reflect [their] perception of the world" (p. 137). Favat
(1977) argues that fairy tales typically present the world from a point of view similar to the world view of a child at the preoperational stage of cognitive development. He suggests that this is the reason why children ages six to eight are highly interested in fairy tales. Favat (1977) argues that reading fairy tales to children of this age fulfills a basic psychological need.

Researchers in the area of response to literature are continually exploring children's thinking. Increasingly, researchers and educators are expanding our definition of what counts as response as we struggle to understand children, their cognitive development and their responses to the books they read so that we may better help them stretch and refine their thinking.

**Social Aspects of Response**

The social context surrounding children is an important ingredient for understanding their responses. Vygotsky (1962) argues that children construct meaning through conversations and social experiences. Expanding on this notion, Wood (1988) argues that "social interaction and such experiences as talking to, informing, [and] explaining...structure not only the child's immediate activities but also help to form the processes of reasoning and learning themselves" (1988, p. 135). These are powerful arguments for allowing children the
opportunity to interact with each other as they explore literature. These are also important reminders for researchers to recognize the role that the social context plays for children and their thinking.

Hepler and Hickman (1982) describe a classroom environment where children and teacher learn from each other as they read together as a "community of readers" (p. 279). This type of environment encourages children to learn to read and to read to learn by reading real books. Hepler and Hickman noted in their research with children that "what children do with books, what they say about them, and what they seem to think of them are all influenced in part by other people" (1982, p. 279).

Hepler & Hickman (1982) documented many instances in which children informally talked with each other about books. The researchers noted that these informal exchanges served important purposes. As children talked with each other about what books to read they were able to rehearse and organize the structure and content of the book. In addition, talking with others about books allows children the opportunity to discuss and negotiate various meanings and interpretations.

The literary transaction that occurs between young children and books is highly influenced by the social context. In order to understand what children are doing with literature and what they are thinking about
literature, it is important to take the setting, the people and the social context into consideration (Hade, 1990; Hepler & Hickman, 1982).

**Summary**

If it is true, as Donaldson (1978) argues, that children learn by considering possibilities, creating opportunities for varied responses in a social context may be the opportune way for children to enrich their literacy experiences. Observing children's responses may be one of the best vehicles for understanding their thinking and learning.

**SOCIAL CONTEXT AND LEARNING**

Bruner (1966) suggested that the social roles played out in schools, roles such as pupil and teacher, are a relatively new phenomenon only typical in modern, industrialized nations. He argues that the notion that children must be formally taught in order to learn is not a universal belief. Bruner argues that children develop ways of thinking and reasoning as a direct result of social interactions with others. This theoretical argument concerning the social aspect of the learning process will be explored, with specific emphasis on how the social context influences children's literacy learning.
A Theoretical Perspective: The Social Foundations of Learning and Cognition

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) is one of the most influential forces behind the argument for the importance of social interaction for children's learning. He argues that long before a child enters school, the individual is learning higher order cognitive and linguistic skills through interactions with the adults and peers that are a part of the child's life (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Children learn language in various social contexts that are shaped and influenced by the culture in which they live.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) argues that social interaction is the fundamental vehicle for education and crucial for a child's development of thought. His theory emphasizes the transactional nature of learning. Social interaction does not lead to cognition; it actually forms the processes of cognition. He suggests that infants develop thought and speech as separate yet parallel processes. Initially, infants use speech and gestures in a regulatory manner, influencing the people and objects that surround them. However, at approximately two years of age physical actions and speech are internalized to form inner speech and verbal thinking (Vygotsky, 1978). Social interaction is the vehicle for a child's internalization of thought processes. Through language interaction with more knowledgeable others, the child engages in thought processes and activities that he/she could not accomplish
alone. The more knowledgeable other, whether it is an adult or a peer, acts as "consciousness for two" (Bruner, 1985, p. 29) by using language to provide assistance for the learner. These collaborative activities allow the child to not only attain local knowledge (knowledge specific to the task), but the child also learns the instructional process itself. As children engage in activities with more knowledgeable others, they gradually internalize the explanatory dialogue and conversation which accompanies the task. Vygotsky (1978) argues that these social and external activities are gradually internalized by the child to form the processes of self-regulation. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) explain:

[The child's] higher cognitive processes [are] formed in structures that are transmitted to the individual by others in speech, social interaction, and the processes of cooperative activity. Thus, individual consciousness arises from the actions and speech of others. (p. 29).

These collaborative experiences allow the child the opportunity to learn how to regulate and organize his/her own thinking (Wood, 1988). In explaining this theory, Tharp & Gallimore (1988) propose that "what is spoken to a child is later said by the child to the self, and later is abbreviated and transformed into the silent speech of the child's thought" (p. 44). Tharp & Gallimore go on to argue that language acts as the mythical winged Mercury, "[carrying] content from the interpsychological plane to
the intrapsychological plane" (Tharp & Gallimore, p. 44). In this way, language actually structures thought processes and concept formation.

For Vygotsky, the activities which form the basis of a child's understanding arise out of social interaction with more knowledgeable others (Wood, 1988). Through this assisted performance (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), the child can perform what he/she could not do alone. According to Vygotsky, learning precedes development and creates the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85). This zone is the distance between the child's actual development (what the child can do alone) and what the child can do with assistance. For Vygotsky, "teaching is good only when it awakens and rouses to life those functions which are in a stage of maturing, which lie in the zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1956, p. 278; quoted in Wertsch & Stone, 1985). Following this line of thought, Bruner (1983b) suggests that the more competent other erects scaffolds which support the child as he/she learns new tasks. This scaffold is adjusted to varying levels depending upon the child's competence. Bruner (1986) argues that learning "is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture" (p. 127). In the same way that children develop inner speech and thought by interacting with others, children also increase their cognitive functioning through language. Therefore, children
construct meaning through interactions with others. This joint social construction facilitates and actually creates the tools for cognitive and linguistic progress (Wood, 1988).

**Social Context and Literacy Learning**

These theories have important consequences for literacy learning. Theorists agree that language learning is social and collaborative (Clay, 1991; Doake, 1985; Holdaway, 1979; Jaggar & Smith-Burke, 1985). Children do not learn in isolation; they learn through interactions with peers and adults who provide models and support for the child's learning. Cazden (1985) argues that learning to read is "a very social activity, deeply embedded in interactions with teachers and peers" (p. 595). Wells (1986) agrees, arguing that discussions with others allow children the chance to attempt to understand the world and make a connection between "their existing model of the world and the new information that is being presented to them" (p. 100). The following research studies investigate the social foundations of story reading, writing and literature discussions and how these events facilitate children's language and literacy learning.

A central finding from studies of adult-child story reading is the social nature of this activity. Research reported by Ninio (1980, 1983), Ninio & Bruner (1978) and
Snow (1977, 1983) suggests that story reading is a socially created activity. In their research with mother-infant dyads, Ninio & Bruner (1978) found the mother to be a source of stability during the sharing of books. She keeps the dialogue and story line going and accepts the young child's vocalizations as meaningful contributions to the conversation and story. She also provides a scaffold for the child, supplying to the conversation what the child is unable to contribute. She consistently adjusts her demands on the child as the child grows in linguistic and story-telling competence. Initially, the story reading activity is other-regulated, with the majority of the interaction provided by the adult. However, the parent consistently ups the ante, gently forcing the child to assume increasingly more responsibility for the task. In this manner, the child learns the social rules for interaction and the socially constructed patterns of participation which are crucial for the child's developing language and literacy learning (Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Teale, 1981).

Researchers investigating story reading interactions report patterns of change in the manner in which these interactions take place. Sulzby & Teale (1987, 1991) argue that the concept of scaffolding is a useful concept to help describe the changes that occur. Sulzby & Teale (1987, 1991) document in their research with parent-child
story readings that parents do, indeed, provide a scaffold for the child during reading, gradually shifting the responsibility for accomplishing the reading to the child. Readings with very young children (ages 1.5 to 3 years) were highly interactive in nature. Gradually, however, interactive patterns shifted until the child was able to engage in independent re-enactments of the text.

Similar findings have been documented by Heath (1983), Martinez & Roser (1991) and Snow (1983). Cochran-Smith (1984) also reports such findings in her research at Maple Nursery School. She describes story reading events as interactive negotiation because "both reader and listener interactively [participate] in order to build jointly or negotiate a meaning for the story" (Cochran-Smith, 1984, p. 126). The researcher argues that the negotiated, socially interactive nature of the story reading sessions allow the children the opportunity to practice the "silent process of decontextualized book reading" (1984, p. 168). When analyzing data from over 100 story reading sessions, Cochran-Smith documents three broad types of story reading interaction sequences commonly found at Maple Nursery School. The first sequence, readiness interactions, helped to establish book reading norms and behavior appropriate for reading. The second type of interaction, life to text, helped the children make sense of the events and characters in the
books. Finally, the third interaction type, text to life, allowed the children to apply and extend information from the text to events and experiences in their own lives. In addition to the varying patterns typical in each of the interactional frameworks, Cochran-Smith (1984) also reports changes in the patterns of social interaction based upon the children's apparent understanding or misunderstanding of the book read.

Interactive negotiation is not just a feature common to story reading. Rowe (1989) investigated the role of social interaction with children ages three and four as the children visited the writing/drawing table at their nursery school. She discovered the children's interactions were not just a context for their literacy learning, but the children's writing production was explicitly affected by their interactions with others. By listening to the children's conversations at the writing table and by watching the children as they wrote, Rowe (1989) found many instances in which the children's writing or literacy knowledge was explicitly affected by their interactions with others. She was able to systematically document eight ways in which social interaction affected the children's writing and/or literacy knowledge. These learnings included: activation, confirmation, formation and revision of literacy knowledge; formation of shared literacy registers by
members of the authoring community; authors shifting stances to become audiences for their own work; internalization of audience's perspective; and experiencing literacy activities beyond the author's independent abilities. Data from this study suggest that social interaction plays a crucial role in determining the kinds of cognitive strategies children will eventually internalize as they learn to read and write. Finally, Rowe (1989) concludes that the data from her study support Vygotsky's (1978) theory that "all the higher psychological functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (p. 57 as quoted in Rowe, 1989, p. 345).

Research evidence supports the role of social interaction for story reading and writing. In addition, however, research also indicates the importance of social context for literature discussions. Investigations into classroom talk reveal that "when children share experiences, ideas and opinions, they are engaging in their most intellectually demanding work" (Martinez & Roser, 1991, p. 650). Eeds & Wells (1989) provide evidence of this in their study of fifth and sixth-grade children. Over a period of four to five weeks, the children engaged in literature discussion groups, meeting two days a week to discuss a self-selected novel. The researchers report that the children interacted and helped
one another develop a richer, deeper understanding of the text. In collaboration, the children were able to: articulate shared meanings, share personal stories with particular relevance to the book, predict, confirm and/or disconfirm hypotheses, and value and evaluate the text in a literary sense. The children in these discussion groups were able to engage in "grand conversations" (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p. 27) which allowed them to collaboratively reach findings and generalizations that they could not have made alone. Eeds & Wells' (1989) findings support the notion that "talk helps to confirm, extend, or modify individual interpretations and creates a better understanding of text" (p. 27).

Summary

Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) theoretical perspective on social interaction and its importance for the development of children's self-regulation and cognition provide a framework for studies investigating the role of interactive collaboration for children's literacy learning. Researchers investigating story reading, writing and group literature discussions all cite the value of social interaction. Through interaction, the more capable other provides a scaffold which supports the novice learner, allowing the child to do more than he/she can do alone.
THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Clearly, the social context is important for children's development of self-regulation and cognition. As evidenced, Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Bruner (1983b, 1986) and others (Cazden, 1985; Clay, 1991; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wells, 1986; Wood, 1988) have documented that learning occurs with others in a highly social context. However, in elementary classrooms, the architect of the social environment is the teacher. The teacher plays an important role in constructing the environment for children's literacy learning. The teacher is important for direct instruction for children's ways of thinking and learning and for facilitating the community of literacy learners.

The Role of the Teacher: Instruction In Ways of Thinking And Learning

Bruner (1966, 1983b) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978), in addition to other researchers and theorists, place great emphasis on the role of language and instruction for children's growth. Vygotsky argues against the Piagetian view of development, and argues instead that "the developmental process lags behind the learning process" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90), creating the zone of proximal development. In fact, Vygotsky places instruction at the heart of human development and argues that the ability to learn through instruction is a basic feature of human
intelligence. It is within each child's zone of proximal development that true learning takes place (Vygotsky, 1956, p. 278; cited in Wertsch & Stone, 1985).

Guided by this theory, the role of the classroom teacher becomes crucial. As discussed previously, the teacher not only erects scaffolds which support each child as he/she learns new tasks (Bruner, 1983b) but the teacher is also important for actually helping to structure the child's thinking. Through the process of self-regulation, teachers (and more expert others) help the child to gradually internalize thought processes. Because the teacher is more competent at tasks such as perception and memorization, the teacher can use this expertise to point out, remind, suggest, and praise children as they engage in academic tasks. All of these language functions "serve to orchestrate and structure the child's activities under the guidance of one more expert" (Wood, 1988, p. 76). This guidance allows the child to perform at developmental levels well beyond his/her age, allowing the child to achieve with help what he/she could not achieve alone (Vygotsky, 1978). In doing this, the child is not only learning local knowledge about the task, but is also "learning how to structure his own learning and reasoning" (Wood, 1988, p. 77). Through the regulating actions and speech of more expert others, the child is taught the process, and is eventually able to engage in independent
thought and action. In this way, teachers perform the important role of actually teaching children how to think and learn. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) argue that teaching must be redefined as "assisted performance" (p. 21) because true teaching occurs when children are able to perform with assistance from others. They continue to argue that "teachers cannot be content to provide opportunities to learn and then assess outcomes. Responsive, assisting interactions must become commonplace in the classroom" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 21). In this way, the teacher's role is vital for children's learning. Teachers have the capacity to structure the child's intellect by teaching the child how to learn.

The Role of the Teacher: Facilitator and Community Builder

How are these theoretical arguments put into practice? Wells (1986) provides the metaphor of a teacher as a "master providing guidance to an apprentice, who utilizes that guidance in the pursuit of his or her chosen goal" (p. 120). This process is best accomplished through mutual negotiation of meaning between the student and the teacher or between a more expert student and a novice student. It is this collaborative approach that encourages children to take risks to explore possible meanings and interpretations. Social interaction and the
role the teacher plays in that interaction act as a frame for what and how students will learn. Researchers have documented teachers putting the aforementioned theories into practice. Though the descriptive terms may differ, in all of the classrooms studied the teacher's role is that of a facilitator of children's learning, one who works to build a community of learners. Indeed, a common feature in research studies of children's response to literature, children's reading, and children's writing is the importance of the teacher for children's growth. Research investigating children's response to literature suggests that the classroom teacher is an important component for influencing how children respond to poetry and prose. Hickman (1979) found in her study of spontaneous and solicited responses of 90 elementary age children that the teacher had considerable power in influencing the responses of the children. This influence was exercised in several ways. The teacher manipulated the classroom environment to include or exclude specific books. The teacher determined which combinations of books were offered, which supplies and materials were available to the children for their extensions, and which children could pursue these activities. Hickman (1981) argues that "various expressions of response were either permitted by or facilitated by or generated by the climate of the school and the classroom" (p. 352). Hepler & Hickman
(1982) have proposed the notion of a community of readers to describe classrooms where teachers and children read real books for meaningful purposes. In these communities, children and teachers work together to explore literature and possible meanings, interpretations and responses, all the while modeling real reading behavior.

Kiefer (1983) investigated first and second grade children and their responses to picture books. Like Hickman (1979, 1981) and Hepler and Hickman (1982) Kiefer also found that the setting and the teacher had great influence over the depth and the richness of the children's responses. She argues that the influence of the teacher is "important to the broadening of [a child's] response" (1983, p. 197). Kiefer adds that the teacher's enthusiasm for a book helps children decide what to read and the language the teacher uses when discussing books is often adopted by children in the classroom. In addition, the teacher has the ability to direct children's attention to subtleties and stylistic variations within texts.

McClure (1985) in her year-long investigation of fifth and sixth-grade children's responses to poetry also documented the powerful role of the teacher in facilitating children's responses. She writes that it was clear that the co-teachers in the classroom where she participated "created a physical and emotional climate which supported children's emerging responses to poetry"
(McClure, 1985, p. 274). These teachers worked collaboratively with the children, supporting and encouraging student initiative and exploration. The teachers also set up an environment that encouraged peer interaction and divergent thinking. Like Hickman (1979, 1981) and Hepler & Hickman's (1982) community of readers, McClure, too, documented the importance of the social network of the classroom for "supporting and refining children's tentative responses to poetry" (1985, p. 278).

Martinez & Roser (1985) found in their exploration of adult story reading style and children's subsequent responses that children tend to respond to literature in a manner similar to the manner in which the adult in the environment responds. Taken collectively, the aforementioned studies suggest that the teacher plays an important role in eliciting and shaping children's responses to literature.

in storybook reading indicates that story reading with young children involves much more than the adult merely reading the words in a book. Cochran-Smith (1984) found in her examination of children and adults during story reading that the preschool teacher acted as a mediator during story reading. The teacher assisted the children by helping them connect their own experiences with events in the book (life-to-text interactions) and by helping the children apply the meanings of books into their own lives (text-to-life interactions). The teacher used modelling and questioning strategies to accomplish these tasks. However, the teacher also played an important role in setting up a literature-rich environment in which young children had the time, space and opportunity to interact frequently and meaningfully with books.

Teachers can also influence how children learn the writing process. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning is a social process and that children are initiated into the use of their culture's signs and tools, such as written language, by their interactions with others. Rowe (1989) investigated the role of peer and teacher interaction in the literacy learning of 3 and 4-year-olds. The researcher collected oral and written texts as children worked at a classroom writing center. Rowe reports that data from this study suggest that the type of interaction between children and teachers "plays an important role in
influencing the kinds of cognitive strategies children
will eventually internalize and use independently as they
read and write" (1989, p. 345). She concludes that
findings from her study support the argument that "social
interaction plays an important role in determining not
only what children learn but the kinds of thinking they
will use" (Rowe, 1989, p. 346).

Graves (1983) agrees with this argument and urges
teachers to compose with children, demonstrating and
verbalizing the thought processes involved in writing. He
adds that the objective is to make explicit what children
ordinarily cannot see, the thoughts and decisions that
guide what goes down on paper. This is a prime example of
the teacher mediating the child's learning by acting as
"consciousness for two" (Bruner, 1985, p. 29), providing
language and modelling assistance for the learner to
complete a task that the learner alone could not
accomplish.

In addition to providing modelling and scaffolding
for young written language learners, Burton (1985) has
documented the teacher's role as being that of a
facilitator. Burton (1985), acting as a teacher-
researcher, investigated the reading-writing connection
with third and fourth-grade children. As part of his
study, Burton invited an independent researcher into his
classroom to objectively document Burton's role and
influence as a classroom teacher. The independent researcher repeatedly described Burton as a facilitator. "[Mr. Burton] is a choreographer and an orchestrator" (Burton, 1985, p. 101) and a teacher who "creates the underlying structure for an environment in which opportunities for learning are available" (Burton, 1985, p. 105). Even though this study took place in an informal classroom, the teacher-researcher was never described as non-directive. Instead, he was "indirect and unobtrusive" (1985, p. 105) while facilitating and orchestrating the events in the classroom. Clearly, Burton's facilitative role supported and fostered the children's own processes of thinking and learning.

Teachers impact students and student learning in many ways. In addition to the aforementioned influences, Wells (1986) concludes that children's learning is not solely dependent upon their own resources and the content of what they are taught. Children's success in learning is highly dependent upon the opportunities they are given to negotiate the meaning of classroom activities through conversations with the teacher.

Summary

As architect of the social environment of the classroom, the teacher has a highly influential role for a child's learning. Grounded in the theoretical
perspectives of Bruner (1966, 1982, 1983b) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978), researchers have documented the impact teachers have on young children's literacy learning. Teachers can actually help to structure a child's intellect by erecting scaffolds to support the child's learning while encouraging independence and eventual self-regulation. The teacher also fosters children's learning by establishing a facilitative community of learners. Within this community, children feel free to take risks and learn from others within the classroom. As a facilitator, the teacher supports children's learning by influencing how and to what depth children respond to poetry and prose. Teachers also have the opportunity to mediate the child's learning by providing modelling and scaffolding for young written language learners.

CONCLUSION

Research supports the importance of narrative in the lives of all children. From the moment of birth, children are surrounded by narrative: in the talk that they hear around them as soon as they are born, in the conversational stories and rhymes that they participate in as a child, in the stories they hear in books. Children and adults constantly engage in narrative to organize the complex world around them. Perhaps, most importantly, narrative has been linked to children's development of
cognitive thought. It has been described as the primary way children organize their world.

Perhaps just as important as narrative, but not as widely researched, is the role of nonfiction. Contradictory findings abound on the topic of children's competence with nonfiction forms. Researchers investigating children's oral monologues as well as researchers documenting the progress of young fluent readers suggest that children are capable of retelling nonfiction forms and reading and writing various genres. When looking qualitatively over a period of time at the learning of one child, as Bissex (1980) did with her son, findings suggest that when children have the opportunity to read, write and explore various forms and genres, children can make impressive progress with genres other than narrative (Bissex, 1980; Newkirk, 1987). However, a body of research exists which contradicts these findings. Much of the research investigating children's success with reading and writing nonfiction suggests that many children have little knowledge of the structures of nonfiction texts. Research also shows that many children have difficulty reading, understanding and writing genres other than narrative fiction.

On the other hand, there is no disputing the importance of reading and literature for children's literacy development. Virtually all researchers and
educators agree that reading is one of the most important factors for children's literacy development and subsequent success in school. Studies from as early as the 1960s have documented the importance that literature and story reading play in the child's development in all aspects of the language arts. Especially prominent is research supporting the importance of story reading for children's oral language development. Book-reading has been shown to facilitate and extend children's linguistic growth, with gains being most evident during mother-infant book sharing routines. Research documenting these book reading cycles suggests that the scaffolding dialogue provided by mothers in each dyad accounts for the infants' linguistic growth.

Findings from research studies examining the relationship between reading and children's emerging literacy development also clearly document the powerful influence of reading with young children. Children who read or who have been read to incorporate structures from the literature they read into their own writing. Bissex (1980) argues that children can also learn punctuation, spelling and the style, format, and lay-out of various genres from literature.

Research from the field of reading is just as conclusive as research investigating children's writing. Children who read or who have been read to are more successful in school, have better comprehension and
vocabulary development and are better equipped to learn important concepts about print.

Researchers investigating children's responses to the literature report that children's responses are developmental. An astute observer can document children's thinking and learning as they make sense of the books they are reading. Children and learning do not occur in a vacuum (Meek, 1980). The social environment plays a key role in how children learn from books and from those around them.

Finally, literacy learning occurs in a social context. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) provides the theoretical framework for our understanding of the role that social interaction plays for children's construction of knowledge and cognition. More capable adults and peers provide a scaffold for the learner, teaching not only local knowledge but also the processes involved so that the learner may gradually come to regulate his/her own learning (Wood, 1988). Interactive socialization facilitates children's literacy learning. Many researchers have investigated how social interaction facilitates children's learning during story reading, writing and literature discussions. Vygotsky (1962) argues that social interaction is the very means which allows the child to internalize higher mental processes. He argues that formation of higher mental processes should
be the goal of education. The role of the teacher in children's literacy learning cannot be underestimated. Effective classroom teachers can erect scaffolds to support children's learning and can actually help structure the child's intellect and processes of thinking and learning. Ideally, the teacher should act as a facilitator and community builder, fostering interactive negotiation of meanings within the classroom environment. In this way, children learn how to think and learn.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

"The gift of personal presence is being able to tell the stories of others."

Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 8

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to determine and investigate kindergarten children's literacy behaviors as they interacted with fiction and nonfiction literature. In addition, the inquiry defined the teacher's role in relation to children's literacy behaviors and social interactions with fiction and nonfiction texts. The study focused on the comparative description of children's interactions with fiction and nonfiction literature in one kindergarten classroom.

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Howe and Eisenhart (1990) argue that "the data collection techniques employed ought to fit and be suitable for answering the research questions entertained" (p. 6). The research questions outlined in Chapter I suggest that qualitative methodology is the most appropriate manner in which to deal with the multiple,
socially constructed complexities of children's interactions with fiction and nonfiction literature in a kindergarten classroom. One characteristic of qualitative inquiry is the use of the natural setting as the direct source of data (Bogdan & Bicklen, 1992). This notion was particularly important for this study. This inquiry took place in the natural setting of a kindergarten classroom in order to understand and describe the naturally occurring phenomenon of children's interactions with each other and with literature. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that "no phenomenon can be understood out of relationship to the time and context that spawned, harbored, and supported it" (p. 189). Because children's interactions cannot be separated from the context in which they occurred, it was vital to conduct this study in the children's natural classroom setting.

A second strength of qualitative methods is the naturalistic inquiry strategy borrowed from the field of classical anthropology which allows the researcher to be the key data-gathering instrument. This was a necessary component to this research inquiry because of the highly social nature of children's interactions with literature (Clay, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Hickman, 1979). Children's negotiation of meaning in interaction with literature, the teacher and each other cannot be separated from the social learning context in which these
interactions occur. As such, in order to describe and understand the phenomenon under study, the researcher must become the primary data-gathering instrument because it would be virtually impossible to devise a priori a non-human instrument with sufficient responsiveness and adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities found in the social learning environment of a kindergarten classroom (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

SITE SELECTION

The research questions posed by this study demanded a research site with specific qualifications. In choosing a site and a teacher for this study, several criteria were considered: a) The school's educational philosophy; b) the teacher's knowledge and use of children's literature; and, c) the teacher's philosophy on teaching and learning. First, because of the nature of the inquiry, I wanted a school that implemented a literature-based curriculum in which children had free and ready access to a variety of literature. Second, I wanted a teacher-participant who was knowledgeable about the content and quality of children's literature and integrates children's literature and the language arts across the curriculum. Finally, I wanted a participant-teacher who was knowledgeable about the reading and writing process and allowed children to be actively involved in voluntary self-selected reading,
writing and play activities. In addition, I was also interested in working collaboratively with the teacher in the planning of the thematic unit to be taught during the duration of the research study.

GAINING ACCESS

Personal previous employment afforded access to a kindergarten classroom at Parkview Elementary, an elementary school in a suburban school district of a large, mid-western city. In addition, Parkview Elementary met all of the aforementioned criteria. Because I had previously worked as a kindergarten teacher in this particular district, I had a previous friendship with the participant teacher, Leslie Miller.¹ This friendship allowed for instant rapport which facilitated and enhanced the collection of data. Spradley (1979) acknowledges that "rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture" (p. 78). Because of the collegial history which the two of us shared, the friendship and rapport allowed for a breadth and depth of data which might not have been attainable otherwise. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) argue that "friendship may assist you...to achieve and act on new perspectives in a negotiated fashion" (p. 100). The rapport and prior friendship allowed constant negotiation in the planning and data collection between Leslie and myself. I approached Leslie about this study in the
summer of 1992. I explained my research goals and Leslie was enthusiastic about inviting me into her classroom for the study. In the fall of 1992, the building principal and the district board of education were consulted and approval was given to conduct this research study. I made several visits to the classroom prior to the beginning of the study to discuss the research with Leslie and to meet the children. Before the commencement of the study, several letters were sent home explaining the research study to the parents (see Appendix A). At this time, permission was received from all of the parents of the children in the study for me to audiotape and videotape.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Leslie has been a kindergarten teacher for six years. She has an interest in children's literature and has nearly completed a Master's degree in Reading, Literature and Language Arts. Leslie's kindergarten classroom is one of two kindergarten classrooms at Parkview Elementary. Both kindergarten teachers have a morning and an afternoon class of approximately 22 students each. Kindergarten children are in school for 2 and 1/2 hours five days a week. Parkview contains approximately 550 students grades K-6 and serves a very diverse suburban area. Approximately one-third of the children come from apartments, one-third of the children come from middle income housing (homes
valued in the $100,000-$200,000 range) and one-third of the children come from upper income housing (homes valued in the $400,000+ range).

The students who participated in the study were in Leslie's afternoon kindergarten class. This class consisted of ten boys and ten girls, 19 of whom were Caucasian and one girl of Eastern Indian descent.

THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

The use of the researcher as a data-gathering instrument was particularly important in this study. As such, I placed myself within the classroom culture as a participant-observer. Because I wanted to study children's literacy behaviors as they interacted with fiction and nonfiction literature in a natural classroom environment, I did not want to unduly influence the established classroom culture or Leslie's teaching by unknowingly imposing my beliefs about children and their interactions with literature. Glesne & Peshkin (1992) argue that participant observation consists of a continuum from mostly participation to mostly observation with the main outcome being understanding the research setting, its participants, and their behavior. With this in mind, one of the research goals for my initial visits to the classroom was the establishment of my role as a researcher within the classroom social context. This may have been
complicated by my previous relationship with Leslie and her teaching style. However, in my initial field visits, I concentrated heavily on "making the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1973, p. 11). As such, I continually questioned my own assumptions and perceptions about what I was seeing in the classroom, relationships within the classroom culture and Leslie's teaching. This process was facilitated by a field journal which provided a neutral outlet for me to reflect upon and learn from my experiences and perceptions. In this way, thoughts, ideas and perceptions were made visible and I was able to track my own subjectivity and how this might be influencing the research.

Spradley (1980) notes that the greater the degree of participation of the researcher in the field site, the more difficult it is for the researcher to become aware of the tacit meanings of the culture. Because of the nature of the inquiry and my desire to study children's interactions in an established classroom culture, it was my intent to situate myself within the classroom more on the observer end of the participant-observer continuum. As such, I concentrated on making my participation as reactive as possible (Corsaro, 1984).

In my role as a researcher, I focused on observing and being nonjudgmental. I usually just observed while taking notes and/or audio recordings of the classroom
events. I politely refused requests for help and I usually spoke only when spoken to. I tried to keep my questioning of students to a minimum. Early in the study, I found myself being tested by the children as they struggled to define my role in their classroom. In my first several weeks in the classroom, a pattern emerged with several boys who often played and sat together. While Leslie was occupied with other children, the group of boys would engage in activities obviously not acceptable to the classroom teacher, such as hitting, wrestling or running in the classroom. They would then look over at me to see if I would reprimand them. I held firm to my observer role, trying hard not to be seen as the teacher in the classroom. I found that if I avoided eye contact, the children were more likely to act as they would if I were not there. King (1984) noted this same phenomenon, arguing "if you do not look, you will not be seen" (p. 123). As such, except in emergencies (such as when Leslie had to leave the room and I was the only adult present), I refrained from any activity that would portray my role in the classroom as that of a teacher.

While the children were in the classroom, I was mainly an observer. However, my role as a researcher changed slightly when the children went home. At this time, Leslie and I became more like colleagues. She would ask for advice regarding specific students, asking what I
thought about the reading and/or writing done by a particular child during the day. We also discussed discipline concerns, curriculum concerns and other topics typically discussed by colleagues in education. We also collaborated on the planning of the thematic unit which was taught during the research study. During these planning sessions, Leslie, Jann Olenick (the other kindergarten teacher at Parkview) and I collaborated by sharing ideas, philosophies regarding children's reading and writing, and children's books appropriate for the unit. While Leslie and I valued each other's opinions, at this time of the day our relationship was collegial and I was careful to situate my advice as suggestions, not as what should be done. I never felt that Leslie was unduly pressured to take my advice because of my role as a researcher. I always felt that our relationship was a reciprocal and collegial friendship. We continuously learned from each other.

While I had defined my researcher role for myself and with Leslie, the young children in the classroom continued to struggle with who I was and what I was doing in their classroom. At the beginning of the study I introduced myself as a former kindergarten teacher. I told the children that I was interested in what kindergarteners do in school, what they like to read, what they like to write, and what they like to play. I also told the
children that I would be watching and writing down what I see and hear so that I could learn more about young children's reading and writing which would in turn help other teachers know how to better teach kindergarteners. Even though I explained my purposes as clearly as possible for 5 and 6-year-olds, I was constantly asked questions like: "Are you a mommy?", "Are you a teacher?", "Do you live here?" and "Why do you write down what I say?" One child, when asked who I was by a parent answered: "She's one of the school helpers."

Simon & Dippo (1986) argue that data is not found but produced through the social interaction of the researcher and the research participants. Considerable interaction occurred between all of the participants in this study - the researcher, the classroom teacher and the children. It is through these complex social interactions that I learned to observe, understand and interpret the data for this study.

TIME FRAME AND ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The gathering of data took place over a time span of approximately four months. I visited Parkview 4 days a week, although during the month of January and February, due to holidays, teacher work days and snow days, I averaged 3 to 4 days a week in the classroom. I arrived prior to the afternoon children's arrival at 11:30 and
usually left 15-30 minutes past the children's dismissal time of 2:00. However, during the collaborative planning of the thematic unit, it was common for Leslie, Jann Olenick and me to stay 2 to 4 hours after school for collaborative planning and preparation for the unit.

The typical general organization of time in the classroom was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:10</td>
<td>Arrival; Circle (Story, News)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:40-1:40</td>
<td>Thematic Study Time (Reading and/or Writing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:40-1:55</td>
<td>Play/Handwriting/Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study was designed to be implemented in three interrelated phases. The first exploratory phase, which lasted for approximately 4 weeks, from December to January, had three goals: a) to develop rapport with the children in the classroom; b) to develop a preliminary definition of literacy events within the classroom which could serve as prime times for the collection of data; and, c) to create and define the researcher's participant-observer role.

These goals were indeed accomplished within the weeks encompassing Phase I of the study. I found that rapport was fairly easy to build with the children. They were eager to share their work and their learnings with an interested party, even though they may not have understood why I was in their classroom. They soon began to see me,
not as a teacher or a friend, but as someone interested in what they were doing.

The second goal of Phase I, the identification of literacy events was important for the developing direction and the subsequent narrowing of the focus of the study. Erickson (1986) argues:

It is necessary to begin observing...in the most comprehensive fashion possible. Later in the research process one moves in successive stages to a more restricted observation focus. (p. 143).

With this notion in mind, one of the primary focuses of observation during Phase I of the study was to gain a broad sense of the social context of literacy within the classroom. This occurred as I began to observe and record data in the most comprehensive manner possible. As suggested by Erickson (1986), I deliberately planned to spend time in specific places at specific times during the school day. For example, initially, I spent a great deal of time observing children in each of their play centers to determine how literacy behaviors were integrated into the children's play. I also focused intently on what literature Leslie chose to share with the children, when these times occurred and how she shared the books. In each setting, I began to see a pattern in the frequency of events and types of events that occurred in relation to books. Erickson (1986) argues that after identifying the full range of events within a classroom the researcher
focus begins to narrow to a more restrictive range of events. The identification of these patterns allowed me to gain a more restrictive focus which allowed for the identification of socially defined literacy events within the classroom.

Cochran-Smith (1984) argues that the idea of a literacy event, in which children exhibit literacy behaviors, is helpful for allowing teachers and researchers to see the context within which children use and make sense of print, the ways children organize print to meet their needs, the kinds of talk that accompany uses of print, and the nature and extent of the social interaction related to print. The initial intense comprehensive data collection, identification of patterns of frequent interactions with books, and the subsequent restriction of my focus allowed me to identify literacy events within the classroom that permitted opportunities for collecting the most informative data.

The identified literacy events were:

1) Circle - At this time Leslie read aloud books and poems and modelled shared writing (which she termed the News)

2) Free Reading - At this time the children read any book of their choosing by themselves or with other children

3) Journal Writing - At this time the children wrote and/or drew in their journals using invented spelling, usually of a topic of their own choosing
4) **Teacher Read-Alouds** - At specific times during the day Leslie read both fiction and nonfiction books aloud to the class, usually as part of the thematic unit.

My identification of these times for the most productive collection of data related to the children's literacy learning within the classroom was vital to the future direction of the study and helped to guide and focus my research energies during these times within the classroom culture.

Phase II of the study, January to March, lasted for approximately 8 weeks. Goals for this phase of the study included: a) negotiating and planning a researcher-teacher negotiated thematic unit which consisted of quality fiction and nonfiction children's literature as defined by Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1987); b) choosing four focus children upon which to focus the inquiry; c) collecting data from a variety of methods; and, d) beginning data reduction and analysis to further guide the inquiry.

The first goal of this phase was readily accomplished. As mentioned previously, a researcher-teacher negotiated thematic unit of study was planned and implemented during Phase II of the study. Guidelines for planning and implementing this thematic unit were taken from Pappas, Kiefer & Levstik (1990). In all aspects of planning this unit, Leslie, Jann and I worked collaboratively. Based upon the curricular objectives mandated by the district in which Parkview Elementary was
located, we decided to plan a theme-based unit around the
topic of Health and Nutrition. After identifying unit
objectives (those mandated by the district and some that
Leslie and Jann thought were important), we then
brainstormed topic areas to be covered, possible
activities, experiments, quality children's literature and
possible literature extensions. From this collection of
possible topics, activities, books and extension ideas,
lesson plans were developed. These lessons included a
variety of large group, small group and individual
learning experiences in which the children were actively
involved in reading and writing. While I may have
influenced the choice of specific books and/or literature
extensions, Leslie and Jann were accustomed to planning
collaboratively with each other and therefore I do not
believe that they planned and/or taught in a manner
significantly different from their usual style. This was
verified after the collaboratively planned thematic unit
had ended. I continued my research in the classroom and
saw that the planning and teaching that had occurred with
my input did not vary significantly from the planning and
teaching that occurred after my involvement. The only
difference I noted was the amount of time that the
children spent reading and writing independently. While
this was an important component of Leslie's kindergarten
program prior to my entry into the classroom, I noted that
Leslie allowed the children more time to read and write during the collaboratively planned thematic unit. She told me that she did this purposefully because she knew I was interested in the children's reading and writing.

As part of this literature-based thematic unit, quality children's literature was selected, primarily by the researcher, based upon recommendations from Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1987, 1993). Approximately 100 books, an equal number of fiction and nonfiction, were brought into the classroom for use during the thematic unit. These books were placed in the classroom library and the children had access to them at specific times of the day. In addition, Leslie chose specific books to read aloud to the children. Books were classified as either fiction or nonfiction based upon the following definitions:

**Fiction, narrative, story** - This type of literature included texts which were written in story format for the purpose of entertaining the reader. These were books which have not been assigned a Dewey decimal classification number and were found in the picture book section of the urban public library. It is acknowledged, however, that a reader may also gain information from this type of book.

**Nonfiction, information, expository text** - This type of literature included texts written in a variety of formats, including narrative, with the main purpose of
providing information for the reader. These books have been assigned a Dewey decimal classification number and were located in the nonfiction section of the urban public library. It is acknowledge, however, that a reader may read an informational book for entertainment. (Definitions adapted from Rosenblatt, 1978).²

The second goal to be achieved during Phase II, the identification of focus children, was also accomplished. These children were selected in negotiation with Leslie based upon the purposeful sampling technique of choosing "information-rich cases" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Early during Phase II, Leslie and I collaborated in choosing these four children. We looked for children who freely and frequently interacted with books and writing and children who were willing to talk and share their work with me. In addition, an attempt was made to be gender representative. Therefore, two boys and two girls were chosen. The selection of these four focus children proved not to be crucial to the study. Originally, I thought that the in-depth nature of this particular inquiry would require me to narrow my focus to several children. I thought that I would not be able to capture and document the in-depth analysis of an entire classroom of children. However, I soon found that the four focus children were frequently not the children engaged in interesting literacy behaviors. As such, I began to attend to the
identification of key literacy events within the classroom to aid in the narrowing of my focus. This allowed me to focus my attention on children at key times for the collection of the richest data for the study. The third and fourth goals of this phase, data collection and data analysis, will be discussed later in the chapter.

Phase III of the study consisted of peer-debriefing and member check which occurred during data collection and in the weeks following the data collection. The outcome of naturalistic inquiry is the reconstruction of multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, it is obligatory that the participants have the opportunity to contribute not only to the data, but also to the researcher's interpretations of the data. Reliability checks were built into the data analysis and achieved through the means of "negotiated outcomes" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 211) in which the data and the initial findings were presented to the participants. In this manner, I could check and verify facts from the data and emerging interpretations and hypotheses. This was accomplished periodically during informal conversations with Leslie and during the formal interview with Leslie at the end of the study. However, during the last phase of the inquiry, I met with Leslie and together we reread selected observational fieldnotes. Additionally, Leslie read through draft versions of this report and shared her
interpretations and thoughts regarding my presentation of events. This allowed me to validate and/or revise the meanings and interpretations that the children and Leslie were making of the classroom events during the data collection phase.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that peer-debriefing provides an initial opportunity to test working hypotheses and to develop the next steps in the emerging methodological design. This open forum allowed me the chance to bounce initial descriptions and interpretations off of a colleague for the purposes of exploring aspects of the investigation that may remain only implicit in my mind. This process became an important link for my understanding of the children's meaning making with literature and the teacher's role in facilitating their understandings. I met with a peer-debriefer approximately every two weeks for the duration of the study. At this time, my peer-debriefer provided not only a cathartic outlet, but also probed and questioned my thought processes and preliminary hunches. This helped me explore some of the implicit aspects of the inquiry and helped me further define and narrow the scope and focus of the inquiry while keeping me open to multiple interpretations.
METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data collection began with observation and informal interviews with Leslie prior to the beginning of the study in December. When the study formally began in December, a combination of techniques was used to yield a wide variety of data.

Classroom Observations

Descriptive fieldnotes were taken over the course of the study. Fieldnotes were my written recordings of the events in the classroom and consisted of detailed descriptions of classroom events, conversations with the children and/or Leslie and detailed descriptions of reading and writing behaviors that occurred in the classroom. At the end of each day, these notes were entered into the computer at which time I expanded my notes, elaborating any additional details pertinent to the day's events. In all, over five hundred pages of handwritten notes and over one thousand pages of transcribed notes were made.

Also at the end of each day, methodological notes were added to the fieldnote record. These included comments such as: "Leslie has not read straight through the two nonfiction books that she read to the class, watch to see if this is a pattern" or "Josh, Jesse, Justin and John all seem to be writing about the same topic - ask
them about this”. I then made a copy of these methodological notes which I took with me to Parkview the following day. These notes served as reminders about possible emerging patterns in the data and helped me begin to clarify and refine the focus of the study.

Audio Recordings

Audio recordings were made beginning during Phase II of the study. Because I suspected that the children would be very interested in the tape recorder and may not act naturally when they were being recorded, I attempted to de-sensitize them to the recorder by carrying it around with me for a week before I actually began recording. This allowed the children to get used to seeing the recorder with me. Some of the children during this first week would point to the recorder and giggle or come up close and speak loudly and deliberately into the microphone. However, for the most part, this behavior subsided within the first week and the tape recorder became just another tool, like my clipboard, that the children got used to seeing when I was around.

Audio recordings were made primarily during the defined literacy events, but I always had it with me so I could quickly turn it on when I heard something of interest. These audiotapes were then transcribed and typed into the computer, incorporated into the fieldnotes
for each particular day. Transcribed notes from the audiotapes were typed in capital letters so they could be differentiated from the fieldnotes in case I needed to go back and listen more carefully to a segment of tape.³

**Interviews**

Informal interviews occurred throughout the study with all of the involved participants - children, Leslie and the parents of the children. Leslie had parent helpers in the classroom daily and I found that the parents were very willing to talk with me about their child. These informal discussions yielded valuable information that helped me better understand the children as readers and writers.

However, formal interviews were conducted with the four focus children identified early in the study and with the mother of each of these children. A formal interview was also conducted with Leslie at the end of Phase II of the study. These interviews were tape recorded and transcripts were entered into the computer.

**Children's Writing and Drawing**

One of the focuses of this study was to understand the characteristic patterns of writing behavior that children exhibit and the written products that children produce as they interact with fiction and nonfiction
literature. Therefore, the children's writing was important data for helping me interpret their understandings of fiction and nonfiction literature. Most of the writings and/or drawings were collected from the children's personal journal. This was photocopied with permission of the parents and the child and the original work was promptly returned to the child. Other writing and/or drawing done as part of the thematic unit was also collected, photocopied and promptly returned to the child. The children's journal writing provided a safe environment for them to express themselves and also to experiment with various conventions of writing. These writings proved to be invaluable for providing a window to the children's growing understandings about language and conventions of print.

**Video Recordings**

Video recordings were made at the end of Phase II of the study. Specific literacy events were chosen to be video recorded to act as triangulation for patterns tentatively identified from fieldnotes and audio recordings. These video recordings were reviewed each evening and notes were taken from them and entered into the computer.
Book Counts

Three times during the data collection during the children's free reading time, fiction and nonfiction books were tracked and counted in an attempt to determine children's preferences. It was virtually impossible to track each specific book because the children were free to move around the room and interact and share books with friends as they read. However, I was able to track the number of fiction and nonfiction books read on these three particular occasions. After the children were done reading a book, I asked them to place the book in a box. I then sorted the books into piles of fiction and nonfiction and then counted the number of books in each pile. This only provided a rough estimate of children's choices. Because the children were free to read wherever and whatever they liked, this method did not account for the books that several children may have read together or for the books that the children may have passed around amongst themselves before depositing in the box.

DATA ANALYSIS

As argued earlier, data is not found, but constructed between the researcher and the research participants (Simon & Dippo, 1986). Data analysis, therefore, is the process which leads to the reconstruction of meanings which have emerged between the researcher and the
participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These interactions are inductively reconstructed so that others may also learn from the research process. Like other steps in the research design, analysis too, was highly influenced by my theoretical notions and beliefs about educational research and how children think and learn.

Theoretical Frame for The Study

This inquiry was theoretically situated within the naturalistic, interpretive paradigm. Rooted in the fields of anthropology and sociology, the focus of this type of research was to describe, understand and interpret "the immediate and local meanings of actions" as defined from the point of view of the research participants (Erickson, 1986, p. 119). Therefore, as researcher in this particular study, I looked at the phenomenon under study in its naturally occurring context of the classroom and then worked to develop the patterns of meaning and action of the research participants with theories that may explain patterns within the findings.

A Way of Looking At Literacy

My beliefs about how children learn also influenced this research inquiry; specifically the manner in which I chose to analyze data. Theoretical notions of the social construction of knowledge framed the analysis of this
study. A key feature of this learning theory is the argument that children's higher-order functions develop out of social interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defines higher-order functions as culturally constructed and historically developed activities which originate as actual relations between humans and are then gradually internalized by the child. These functions include reading, writing, voluntary attention, logical memory and the formation of concepts (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, a child's development of literacy, for example, cannot be understood without also examining the child's interactions with other children and adults. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and other researchers (Bruner, 1962, 1966, 1984; Clay, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Wertsch, 1985; Wood, 1988) argue that formal and informal cognitive and communicative functions are transmitted from more experienced members of a culture to the inexperienced members and that culture through social interaction. Therefore, children's knowledge is a product of "joint construction of understanding by the child and more expert members of his culture" (Wood, 1988, p. 16).

**Data Analysis: A Way of Looking At Literacy**

Grounded in this theoretical perspective, it was of utmost importance for me to focus my attention on the social interactions among children as I struggled to
understand the sense they were making of literacy within the culture of their classroom. Based upon my beliefs about the importance of the social culture of the classroom for children's literacy learning, I continually looked at the data from this perspective in an attempt to answer the research questions. The emphasis of the study was on documenting and analyzing children's literacy behaviors as they made meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature, the role of the text for influencing children's behaviors and/or transactions and the social/interactional contexts in which these literacy behaviors occurred.

I. What is the role of the teacher in children's transactions with fiction and nonfiction literature?

II. What is the role of peers for children's transactions and meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction texts?

1. What are the patterns of talk/social interaction that occur as kindergarten children interact with fiction and nonfiction texts?

2. What are the patterns and characteristics of voluntary/free response that occur as kindergarten children interact with fiction and nonfiction texts?

3. What reading behaviors do kindergarten children demonstrate as they interact with both fiction and nonfiction literature?
4. What types of writing behaviors do kindergarten children exhibit as they interact with fiction and nonfiction texts?

Spradley (1980) argues that data analysis and data collection inform each other. As such, as I began to focus on the analysis of the data, daily decisions about what to look for in the classroom, what to ask the children, what to ask Leslie were all informed by my tentative analysis of the data that I had previously collected. As I became immersed in the data and in the social context of the classroom, I began to see that the concept of a literacy event (Cochran-Smith, 1984) would be helpful for understanding the meanings that Leslie and the children were making from their interactions with print. For the purposes of this study, I have defined a literacy event as a time and/or a context in which children or teachers and children use and make sense of print. This definition includes, but is not limited to the ways children organize print to meet their needs, the kinds of talk that accompany uses of print and the nature and extend of social interaction related to print (Adapted from Cochran-Smith, 1984).

As mentioned earlier, one of the goals of Phase I of the study was the identification of literacy events, times and contexts in which the children and/or Leslie were engaged in the reading and/or writing of print. I also
began to see that the social context of the event - who was present, what the children and/or teacher were doing, how the children and/or the teacher were interacting - all were key to understanding the meaning each research participant made during that literacy event. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) call these contexts in which collaborative interaction and learning occur "activity settings." They argue that activity settings are the who, what, when, where, and why of children's interactions within the classroom and that these interactions/activity settings include both a cognitive as well as a social component. The "who" of activity settings are the persons involved in the activity. The children and/or adults involved are not present by accident, but are participating in the activity as a function of the opportunities and the other children present within the classroom culture. The "what" of activity settings involves a description of the things that are done within the literacy event and a description of how they are done. The "when" of activity settings is the pattern of occurrence within the framework of the life of the classroom. The "where" of activity settings is the place the activity exists. And finally, the "why" of activity settings involves both the motivation and the meaning of the activity for those who are involved in the activity. Tharp & Gallimore add that in order to further children's
learning, "we must understand especially the meaning attached to the activity by participants" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 73). Therefore, the concept of a literacy event borrowed from Cochran-Smith (1984), combined with Tharp & Gallimore's (1988) notion of an activity setting provided the unit of analysis for this study as I set about the task of examining the meaning both Leslie and the children made while interacting with print in the classroom.

Data Analysis: Using Literacy Events/Activity Settings

Upon completion of the fieldwork at Parkview Elementary I spent approximately two months transcribing audiotapes and videotapes. All of the information was then entered into Ethnograph, a DOS computer program designed to aid in organizing and analyzing qualitative data. After doing a computer printout of all of my data, I then spent approximately 4 weeks reading and rereading the data. Each time I read through the data, I jotted down emerging patterns, personal thoughts, preliminary findings, possible hunches and emergent interpretations. At this point in the research, I had listened to each of the audiotapes twice (once on the day they were made and once during the transcription process), I had watched the videotapes and transcribed the contents into fieldnotes, and I had read the fieldnotes several times.
Formal data analysis using the combined concepts of literacy events and activity settings began as I sifted through the mounds of fieldnotes and audio notes. I began by looking for those literacy events which seemed to be the richest in terms of the reading of fiction and nonfiction literature and the writing that occurred with each event. During Phase I, I had identified four literacy events - key times in which children and/or the teacher interacted with print. These included: Circle, free reading, journal writing and teacher read-alouds. Upon further analysis, these large blocks of time were further narrowed down into the following literacy events in which the majority and the richest reading and writing occurred: Leslie reading fiction and nonfiction, specific children reading fiction and nonfiction, Leslie modelling writing, children writing and play.

Given the research questions posed at the outset of the study and using the "who, what, when, where and why" structure of activity settings as outlined by Tharp & Gallimore (1988), I then began a detailed analysis of the identified literacy events.

I went through all of the data, specifically focusing on the identified literacy events/activity settings. This intense immersion and frequent revisitation of the data allowed for progressive focusing that allowed significant patterns and features of the routine and culture of
classroom literacy events and the children's reading and writing to take on new, deeper meaning (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1989). From the identified patterns, preliminary codes were developed. For example, one of the key literacy events I examined was Leslie reading aloud nonfiction texts to the children. Using the analysis frame of the activity setting as defined by Tharp & Gallimore, this activity was analyzed using the "who, what, when, where and why" framework. This was analyzed in the following manner:

**Activity Setting/Literacy Event:** Leslie reading nonfiction

**Who** - Whole group activity involving Leslie and the children

**What** - (operations) Leslie read aloud to the children, making a point of not only showing them the illustrations, graphs, charts and diagrams, but she also talked about them, making analogies and generally adding relevant information from the children's worlds that may help them better understand the information they were receiving.

Analysis of Leslie reading aloud nonfiction texts revealed a pattern in her reading. When she read nonfiction, she never read straight through the book in the manner that she read fiction. Instead, she read a few pages, added personal comments and/or allowed comments from the children and then she skipped several pages and/or
paraphrased contents of pages. She also made a habit of pointing out and showing the children how to use the table of contents, index, glossary or other features common to nonfiction texts.

When - Almost without exception Leslie read aloud to the children every day. However, she alternated reading fiction and nonfiction literature, spending roughly the same amount of time reading each during the time of data collection.

Where - The whole group meets in what Leslie calls Circle, an open area on the carpet where all of the children can sit and see the illustrations of the book while Leslie reads to them.

Why - Whole group read-aloud sessions are important for numerous aspects of the children's growth as readers and writers, including oral language learning, written language learning, comprehension and concepts about print (Clay, 1972). Leslie explained to me that she thinks reading aloud nonfiction literature is especially important so she can model for the children ways to read and make meaning from these types of texts.

I systematically examined all of the data that I had collected and I analyzed it in the manner described. Then I coded it in terms of the patterns identified. As I analyzed each activity setting/literacy event, I continually looked for patterns within that event. I
especially tried to focus on: (who) the children present, (what) the reading, writing, social interaction of the activity itself, (when) the time of the activity, (where) the location of the activity and (why) the motivation and how these all combined in a manner that allowed the children to make meaning with writing and reading fiction and nonfiction literature. Additional data was then compared according to their similarity or difference to the previous data. This method of data analysis was constant comparative (Glaser & Straus, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and allowed major categories to emerge which I then looked to verify or disconfirm.

After this first round of coding, I then went through all of the data again. This time, I began an analytical interpretation looking for theories to explain the phenomenon, patterns and themes identified in the first round of coding. Therefore, I added another layer of theoretical codes to the data. For example, as I became immersed in the data, I noted a pattern of children spending extended amounts of time reading and/or looking at books by themselves. I used Meek's notion of private lessons (Meek, 1988) to explain how these children seemed to literally teach themselves to read through extended practice and time alone with books. During each round of coding, when a pattern had been identified within the data, I then conducted a systematic search of the entire
data corpus looking for confirming and dis-confirming evidence, thus establishing "evidentiary warrant" for the assertions that were emerging from the data (Erickson, 1986, p. 146). This intense immersion in the data was very helpful as a means of interpretation. It allowed me to identify significant patterns in the data and to develop a preliminary outline for the remaining chapters of this report.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The goal of any research study is for the findings to be judged as warranted and credible. Findings from research done in the positivist paradigm are judged warranted and credible based upon the issues of internal validity, external validity, objectivity and reliability. However, Guba & Lincoln (1989) argue that qualitative research cannot be judged based upon these positivistic notions. Miles & Huberman (1984) emphasize that, unlike quantitative research, there are no rules in qualitative research to indicate whether procedures are rigorous and findings are valid. Erickson (1986) argues that "the [qualitative] researcher's aim is not proof, in a causal sense, but the demonstration of plausibility" (p. 149). Lincoln & Guba (1985) have proposed four alternative criteria for the establishment of the trustworthiness and validity of qualitative inquiry. These criteria are
credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility

Guba & Lincoln (1989) have proposed several techniques common in the field of anthropology and sociology that can be used in any qualitative study to increase the probability of "establishing the match between the constructed realities of respondents and those realities as represented by the evaluator" (p. 237). These techniques of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, progressive subjectivity, peer-debriefing and member checks have been invaluable tools for strengthening the credibility of this study.

Observation and data collection were both prolonged and persistent. Persistent in the sense that I repeatedly worked to search and confirm patterns. Eisner (1975) argues that persistent observation provides depth and an understanding of the pervasive qualities of the classroom - those qualities that are relevant to the study. Through persistent observation I was able to sift through the data, narrow the focus of the inquiry and identify the interactions and events which were most relevant to the study. This process added depth and breadth to the inquiry.
In addition, my data collection was prolonged. I observed and collected data in the classroom three to four times a week for a period of approximately 16 weeks. I also returned to the classroom periodically after the end of data collection to meet with Leslie and the children to conduct member checks regarding interpretations of the data and emerging hypotheses. Prolonged engagement entails the investment of sufficient time to learn the culture of the classroom and to build trust with the research participants. Because Leslie and I had a pre-existing relationship, trust and rapport were an immediate strength of the inquiry. However, I did invest a great deal of energy building trust and rapport with the children and their parents. Midway through the study I felt a relationship growing with the children. Yet, I knew that trust and rapport had been firmly established when I received an invitation to a child's birthday party. These relationships were not by-products of the research, but vital for my understanding of the participant's construction of reality within the classroom culture. Data is not found, but constructed in relationship with others (Simon & Dippo, 1986).

The third technique for establishing credibility is triangulation. Triangulation seems to have varying definitions within the research community. Denzin (1989) argues that triangulation is the use of multiple methods
of data collection. Denzin (1989) and Patton (1990) argue for varying types of triangulation—triangulation of methods, sources, investigators and theories. Zaharlick & Green (1991) define triangulation as the cross-checking of researcher interpretations and analyses with the research participants, a process termed "member checking" by Lincoln & Guba (1985). However, Guba & Lincoln argue that "member checking processes ought to be dedicated to verifying that the constructions collected are those that have been offered" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241) while triangulation is the cross-checking of specific factual data. Despite the variations in definition, triangulation was an integral component of this inquiry. For this study, I employed triangulation of methods (observation, audio recordings, video recordings, collection of artifacts) and sources of information (Leslie, children, parents, documents). The cross-checking and verification of interpretations, analyses and findings was accomplished through member checks with Leslie and the children.

The fourth technique for ensuring credibility is termed "progressive subjectivity" by Guba & Lincoln (1989). This is the process of monitoring the researcher's own subjectivity and developing constructions of reality. For my study, the use of a research field journal was invaluable for the tracking of not only my thoughts and feelings, but for recording my a priori expectations and
emerging constructions. Because I was familiar with this particular context and teacher, this increased the possibility that my prejudices and attitudes would bias the data (Bogden & Bicklen, 1982). Therefore, I made a conscious effort to "make the familiar strange" (Erickson, 1973, p. 11) and to honestly track my perceived influence upon Leslie and the classroom community. Ball (1990) terms this type of documentation of researcher subjectivity and self-awareness "reflexivity". He argues that reflexivity, is the "conscious and deliberate linking of the social process of engagement in the field with the technical processes of data collection" (1990, p. 159). For Ball, reflexivity defines rigor within the research inquiry.

As final checks of credibility, member checks and peer-debriefing was built into the study. Member checks were held both informally and formally to continually check the accuracy of the data and emerging interpretations. Approximately one month after leaving the classroom, after I had been immersed in the data and had identified preliminary patterns and themes, I re-visited several of the children for a member check session. With one group of four boys (Josh, Jesse, John and Justin) I played several segments of a videotape in which I had captured them storying about pictures in a nonfiction book. After watching these video segments
together, I then asked the boys to talk about what they were doing, how they decided what to talk about, if the stories they told were real or pretend, how they decided on the rules of the storytelling format, and various other questions related to the segment. This session lasted for approximately an hour and proved extremely useful for helping me clarify some of the preliminary assertions I was forming about their literacy learning. I conducted another member check session with Travis. For this member check, I played an audiotape of Travis' reading. I also had the book present for him to look at as he listened to himself read on the tape. Again, I asked him various probing questions about what he was doing and why he was choosing to read the way he did. In addition, as a final member check with Leslie, the classroom teacher, I sent her a draft copy of Chapter IV of this report. I also sent her a questionnaire which contained pertinent questions I still had about the findings. After reading the preliminary version of Chapter IV, Leslie answered the questionnaire by sending me an audiotape in which she talked about her perceptions about the events I had written about and her reactions to the findings. Therefore, member checks added another layer to the data which helped me clarify and explain some of the patterns and themes that I had identified early in the research process.
Peer-debriefing also proved to be a valuable component of the research process. As cited earlier, peer-debriefing sessions occurred approximately every two weeks during data collection, less often during coding and analysis. During these sessions, my colleague and I shared our varying trials and tribulations of our own respective studies. We shared knowledge about research methods, questioned each other about possible interpretations of data, argued about theoretical understandings and overall pushed each other to examine and explore or re-examine and re-explore varying aspects of our research. I got ideas for the best data collecting equipment, behavioral patterns to look for with the children, categories for coding, and how to best tell the stories that I now have to tell.

Transferability

Transferability is Lincoln & Guba's (1985) parallel criteria for the positivist's notion of external validity. Lincoln & Guba (1989) argue that the major technique for establishing transferability is by providing thick description (Denzin, 1989) and the widest possible range of information so the readers of the study will be able to draw conclusions regarding the parallels of the study to their own specific educational situations. In the reporting of this study, I have made every attempt to
provide detailed, thorough and complete descriptions in order to aid in the transferability for those teachers and/or researchers who may wish to apply my findings to their own situations.

**Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability involves the documentation of the emerging research processes which are the hallmark of naturalistic inquiry. As my study progressed, events occurred within the classroom that necessitated a shift in focus, a shift in method, or a shift in my thinking. Zaharlick & Green (1991) argue that the interactive - reactive nature of qualitative research may necessitate a change in research design and/or focus. They add that "each modification in design is a response to local conditions, to factors previously not known, or to new understandings" (Zaharlick & Green, 1991, p. 209). Based upon the ever-changing culture of the classroom and upon my ever-changing understanding of the classroom culture, changes and shifts in the research design and in my thinking were noted in a research field journal and in observer comments in the daily fieldnotes.

Confirmability is concerned with "assuring that data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiry are rooted in contexts and persons" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). This was accomplished by recording raw data from the
fieldnotes, interviews, audio and/or video recordings and
documenting where the results came from. I also documented
how patterns of data were analyzed, reduced and
synthesized into categories. These procedures assured
that findings are truly rooted in the reality as I saw and
heard it constructed in the classroom.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Cronbach (1975) argues that social phenomena are too
variable and context-bound to permit significant
generalizations. Therefore, for several reasons,
traditional definitions of generalizability do not apply
to this study. First, the size of the group, one
kindergarten classroom with twenty students, is too small
to make comparisons to other populations. Second, the
classroom, a literature-based kindergarten in a middle to
upper-class suburb is not typical or representative of the
norm. Third, another limitation of the methods employed
throughout this study was that only those aspects of
children's learning which were spontaneously made public
through the children's actions and talk were captured.
Although the data I collected contained rich examples of
children's learning in the social context of their
classroom, much more learning must have occurred that I
was physically unable to document.
In addition, despite attempts to remain neutral, the researcher acknowledges the existence of researcher bias and subjectivity. However, researcher bias was a strength of the study and added to my depth of understanding of the kindergarten classroom culture. My experiences as a kindergarten teacher provided a rich background of knowledge against which I could begin to interpret and analyze the children's meaning-making. It also helped me know where and when to look to capture the richest data. Therefore, my multiple roles and experiences as a teacher-researcher-participant-observer all influenced this study, from the formation of the first research questions to the final analysis and written report. It must be remembered, that the meaning-making described in this report reflects my interpretation of the events and culture of the classroom. However, to ensure the validity of the findings, I collected data using a variety of methods including observations, audio and video recordings, interviews and the collection of documents. Also, member checks and peer-debriefing were used to further corroborate and substantiate findings.

Despite the limitations of this study, the interactions between children and literature described in this study are becoming increasingly common in many elementary classrooms across the United States. The inclusion of solid descriptive data, often termed thick
description (Denzin, 1989), allows readers the opportunity to interpret the data and draw parallels to their own situations. As teachers strive to incorporate literature into the curriculum for children learning to read and write, this study may provide much needed information regarding children's interactions with fiction and nonfiction literature.
Notes

1. The classroom teachers are referred to by actual name. However, in complying with the wishes of the administration of the participating school and the parents of the children, the names of the school and the names of the children have been changed to protect their identity.

2. For a complete list of definitions used for this research project, see Appendix B.

3. For a sample of fieldnotes and audionotes taken while I was in the field, see Appendix C.
CHAPTER IV

THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER FOR CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING

"A good teacher has been defined as one who makes herself progressively unnecessary."

Thomas J. Carruthers

INTRODUCTION

The foci of this study were the identification and investigation of the similarities and differences in how kindergarten children make meaning with both fiction and nonfiction literature and what the classroom teacher does to facilitate the children's meaning-making with these texts. Although the children in Leslie's classroom were given the opportunity to read, write and play independently without adult interference, much of the children's life at school was highly influenced by Leslie and the choices she made as a professional. Her perspectives on teaching, children, learning, the organization of time and space, and the importance of collaborative learning are all significant influences which affected not only the children's learning, but also the data I collected and the findings I report. My intention in describing the organization of the classroom
structure and Leslie's teaching is not to evaluate them. Instead, I hope to describe and understand how she created a supportive learning environment and how this context provided a scaffolding to support children's learning as they interacted with fiction literature, nonfiction literature and written language.

THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY: SPACE

Parkview Elementary is a contemporary, one-story brick structure, built in 1990. The building itself is H-shaped, with two long hallways which each contain classrooms along both sides. Leslie's classroom was at the far end of the building, separated from her colleague, Jann Olenick, by a folding wall which doubled as a large bulletin board. This wall was typically left partially open. Each of the two kindergarten rooms was shaped roughly like a hexagon, with the large majority of the space containing carpet. The remaining space was tile flooring and Leslie used this space for painting and art centers.¹

Upon entering Leslie's room, I was immediately struck by the colorful profusion of print and children's work. Nearly every bit of wall space was used to display everything from number words, color words, and children's birthdays to numerous children-made graphs, literature extensions and writing. Children's artwork and writing
hung from the walls, cupboard doors and the ceiling. These displays, along with other classroom materials, were often sources for the children's reading as well as resources for their writing. There were many occasions when I observed children using the writing on these displays in order to help them learn and solve problems in their own reading and writing.

The physical setting of the classroom encouraged movement and collaboration and classroom routines seemed tied to these spaces. A large, open area on the carpet was used for Circle. This group activity started off the school day and the children sat on the floor in a circle. At this time, Leslie and the children discussed the calendar, various daily math/counting/graphing activities and Leslie usually read to the children. This area of the carpet was also used for most whole group reading and many whole group writing activities. An important part of the morning Circle was writing the News. Leslie used a large pad of chart paper and wrote the News with colored markers. The children were encouraged to read along as she wrote the date and the daily message. Towards the end of the year, the children assisted her by spelling words, abbreviations, and suggesting end punctuation for Leslie's writing. Most of the areas bordering Circle were used for specific activities, as follows:
Housekeeping - The playhouse was the center of the housekeeping area. The playhouse was a three-sided structure made of plywood which stood approximately 5 ft tall. A small group of children could play and dramatize here. At various times throughout the year, with the help of the children's artwork, Leslie turned the playhouse into other buildings. For example, at Christmas when the children were reading Hansel and Gretel stories, it became a Gingerbread House and during the Food/Nutrition study it became a restaurant.

Art Center - The art center seemed to be a favorite for the children. It contained many art supplies such as clay, glue, tissue paper, paint, scissors, paper bags and fabric scraps which the children used to create works of art.

Painting Center - Located strategically near the group sink, the painting center consisted of a small table complete with paper, paint and brushes. Two children could go to this center at a time and judging by the way the children pushed and shoved to get here, this too, seemed like a favorite area.

Writing Center - The writing center consisted of many tools for the children to use to write. Crayons, markers, pencils, chalk and chalkboards as well as a plethora of various types of paper made up this center. Children were free to write and draw as they wished.
Blocks - There were two block areas in the room, one area for big blocks (in various shapes of approximately 2 ft x 1 ft) and little blocks which were housed in crates. Children used these blocks to build everything from roads and buildings to Ninja Turtle hideouts. These two block areas were located across the room from each other. Often, both the little blocks and the big blocks facilitated elaborate and quite vocal and vivid dramatizations which attracted audiences of children. These block areas could dissolve into wild and rather rambunctious play. At such times, Leslie would call for an early clean-up or give a brief reprieve in the form of time-out for the children causing the most ruckus.

Shelf Toys - This area of the room consisted of several shelves which housed various games and puzzles. Children generally did puzzles individually, but many of the games such as Candy Land and Chutes and Ladders allowed several children to play together. A favorite item at this area was the Legos. Children played with the Legos daily, constructing buildings, vehicles, robots and other objects.

Library Corner - The library corner consisted of two bookshelves tucked together in the corner of the room. The corner also contained several stuffed animals for the children to read to and six to eight over-stuffed pillows on the floor for children to cuddle into as they read.
The library corner had a fixed set of books which remained the same through out the year. This group contained several fairy/folk tales and nursery rhyme books as well as a set of Childcraft encyclopedias. There was also a box that Leslie called the book box which contained multiple copies of paperback books such as School Bus (Crews), Rosie's Walk (Hutchins) and various small books which accompanied big books from the Wright Group Company.² The library corner also had a book stand which contained both commercial as well as class-made big books. In addition to these books which were a permanent part of the classroom library, Leslie got books from area libraries which were relevant to the current theme of study. She kept these in the classroom library as well. Children read individually, in pairs and in groups in the library corner.

**Math Manipulatives** - Math manipulatives were housed in large plastic tubs on several shelves. Leslie changed the content of these tubs based upon the math objectives that she wished the children to learn. Children could play with these tubs during math time or during playtime.

**Listening Center** - The listening center consisted of a record player, cassette player and headphones for two to four children to use simultaneously. The children listened to various stories, poems and songs on tape or record and often sang and/or read along with the tape.
Tables - The children used the tables for journal writing and for many whole group art and writing activities. Each table had four cubbies. The four who sat at that table used these to house their school box which contained their own personal markers, crayons and scissors. At the beginning of the year the children were allowed to choose where they wanted to sit and these seats remained fairly permanent throughout the year. On occasion, Leslie used the threat of moving seats to encourage the children to work productively at their tables. However, this threat was never carried out.

THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY: TIME

The daily routines seemed tied just as strongly to time as to space. Class began on the open area of the carpet with Circle time. Sometimes this would last for over thirty minutes as Leslie led the children in various math and counting activities, songs, poems, stories and writing activities. Other times Leslie kept Circle short to allow more time for other activities. After Circle the children went to Related Arts (Art, Music, Library, Physical Education). After Related Arts, Leslie and the children generally engaged in thematic study. At this time, Leslie typically read one or several books to the children and then the children engaged independently in a literature extension or another reading and/or
writing activity based upon the theme or topic of study. Playtime, Handwriting practice and/or Math came at the end of the day.

Playtime seemed to be the children's main focus and highlight of the day. On days when the schedule was too full to allow for playtime, at least one child always commented that the class did not get to play. In addition, playtime was so anticipated that many times upon arrival, the children began asking Leslie when they would play. When asked their favorite part of kindergarten, nearly all of the children named playtime. During playtime, the children were free to play at any of the areas/centers previously mentioned. To the casual observer, playtime may have looked and sounded a bit chaotic. However, the manner in which Leslie arranged the space and the materials that she provided for the children to play with subtly encouraged the children's use of literacy during this time. Researchers have acknowledged that literacy learning occurs as children engage with each other in real-life social contexts (Clay, 1991; Dyson, 1989; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Kantor, Miller & Fernie, 1991; Rowe, 1989). In this classroom, literacy was not viewed by Leslie or by the children as something separate from everyday life. Rather, literacy was viewed as part of the social fabric of the classroom community and children used reading and writing within this
community in real ways to get things done. This is evidenced in the following excerpts overheard during playtime.³

Myron and Andrew are playing at the little blocks. They have written their names on a piece of paper.

Myron (to me): "We wrote our names so that people know that we are in little blocks."

Andrew decides to add to their writing.

Andrew: "I don't really know how to write, so I'll just make letters." (He writes a collection of X's and T's)

Andrew: "It says 'We are going to make a church'."

Myron, puzzled, looks at the writing and asks Andrew: "What does X mean?"

Andrew: "It means that we are making a steeple and a cross on the church."

Another example overheard in the library corner during playtime.

Vince and Andrew are having what they call a library meeting. Vince, despite Andrew's disapproval, has assumed the position of the boss. Vince holds up a book about the human body and holds it as a teacher might, for Andrew to see the illustrations. Vince begins to talk in a very low, commanding voice.

Vince: "Ok, club, let's go reading books...Now, as you can see, this is the brain. There are eyeballs in the brain, teeth...turn the page."

Vince turns the page as Andrew watches and listens.

Vince continues (pointing to the illustration of the stomach), "And there's all the stuff..."

In addition to these examples of reading and writing, the playhouse provided a rich environment for dramatizing, reading and writing. This was especially evident during the Health/Nutrition theme study when the house became a
restaurant. Daily, children could be seen reading the menus, writing orders, reading cookbooks and engaging in various other literacy tasks necessary to the running of a restaurant.

Leslie set up the time and space within the classroom in such a way that children were free to talk and interact with each other. She also organized materials (writing utensils, paper, books) in such a manner that allowed children to read and write as necessary to fulfill the tasks of their play. This view is consistent with the research of Dyson (1989), Kantor, Miller & Fernie (1991) and Rowe (1989) who argue that children learn about literacy as they use literacy to reflect upon their lives and to get things done in their world. These and other examples of informal literacy events and interactions between children occurred daily and demonstrate the social contexts and the classroom events which frame and make purposeful literacy learning for the children in this classroom community.

THE CLASSROOM COMMUNITY: COLLABORATION

Leslie knew the importance of peers for the children's learning. She noted that one of the reasons why the children remained at the same tables throughout the year is that they have become friends with the other children at the table and are better able to trust and
learn from each other. Throughout the time that I was in her classroom, Leslie continuously worked to create a classroom environment that encouraged cooperation, not competition, among the children. She encouraged the children to be kind and courteous to each other and to celebrate each other's special days and accomplishments. On one particular day, Kelly requested that the class help her celebrate the birthday of her stuffed rabbit, Hoppy. Leslie led the class in singing "Happy Birthday" and writing Hoppy a birthday greeting in the News.

In addition to noting special days, Leslie also made a point of acknowledging a job well done and she encouraged the children to do the same with each other. Children frequently had an opportunity to read aloud to the group. Children read various types of print - stories that they had written, special books from home, books that they had just learned how to read, portions of the News or the enlarged version of the classroom poem. After reading, it was common for Leslie to praise the child for a job well done and then to ask the class to clap for the child. The children soon caught on to this public show of support and appreciation. By mid-year, it was not uncommon for the children to spontaneously applaud for a child who had just completed reading aloud to the group.

Leslie's encouragement of cooperation and collaborative learning was most apparent in her discussion
of writing. Almost daily the children had the opportunity to write in their journals. This was a time when the children could write and/or draw anything they wished. During this time, Leslie encouraged talk and collaboration. In the following example, after being in school only three months, the children had already learned that asking a friend for help was the way to learn.

    In December as Leslie prepared the children to write in their journals she asks: "How do you write the words?"

    Erica answers: "You sound it out or you ask someone at your table."

    Leslie: "Right. Ask a friend to help you."

In the following example which took place in January, the children were writing their New Year's resolutions.

    Leslie: "You're going to write whatever your resolution is, okay? If you can't sound out the letters, you're having a little bit of trouble, you can ask someone at your table for some help."

Later in the year, Leslie reinforced this notion again.

    Leslie: "You're going to draw a picture and write some words to go with it about the picture, okay? Everybody knows how to sound out words. Try to spell. If you don't know how, what should you do?"

    Children, in unison: "Ask somebody."

    Leslie: "Right, ask someone at your table if they know how to spell it."

To reinforce this idea of collaborative learning, several times during the year, Leslie modelled collaborative writing as she had the children help her write stories or recipes. During these lessons, Leslie
asked the children what she should write, she entertained several suggestions and then either asked the children which suggestion they preferred or she just picked one and wrote it down. As she wrote the word, she said it slowly, emphasizing consonant sounds so that the children could see the relationship between the letter she was writing and the sound that they were saying.

During these group writing lessons, and throughout the day, Leslie valued each child and the unique contribution each child made to the culture of the classroom. She always treated the children as competent readers and writers. At all times Leslie accepted the children's own writing approximations as important and meaningful. She never corrected their writing or told them that their writing was not spelled in the conventional manner. She continually focused on what the children could do and what they had done well. She encouraged the children to do as much as they could, and then to ask a friend for help if the children felt they needed it. This emphasis on collaboration fostered a sense of community within the classroom and a sense that each child has the responsibility to help other children learn and grow.
THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER: SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING WITH FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS

Social learning theorists argue that instruction is critical for human development. Vygotsky (1978) defines intelligence as the capacity to learn through instruction and argues that children's knowledge is often the product of joint construction of understanding by the child and a more knowledgeable member of the child's culture. Bruner (1966) also argues for the importance of instruction, emphasizing the role that language plays for fostering communication and understanding. Bruner (1966) argues that the processes of thought are communicated in subtle ways from the more mature members of a culture to the immature members of that culture. This occurs when adults are able to work within the child's zone of proximal development, the distance between the child's actual developmental level (what the child can do alone) and the child's level of potential development (what the child can do with assistance) (Vygotsky, 1978). This zone of proximal development defines those functions which are in the process of maturing. Vygotsky argues that "learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment" (1978, p. 90). Therefore, the adult/teacher's role becomes crucial for supporting children's learning and development.
Cochran-Smith (1984) noted in her research with young children in a nursery school that the adult story-reader had a profound influence upon the children's literary socialization. Cooperatively with the teacher, the children learned ways of negotiating textual meanings, ways of taking information from their experiences to make sense of texts and ways to apply textual information to their own lives. Therefore, an adult's guidance is critical not only for what children learn, but how they learn. Thus, Leslie's role as a more knowledgeable member of the children's culture was important for the children's learning about fiction and nonfiction literature. As evidenced, Leslie played a crucial role in setting up a collaborative learning environment that fostered the children's growth as readers and writers. In addition, she also played an important role as instructor, communicating to the children ways of making meaning from print. Unlike many teachers who employ direct instruction in reading, Leslie's philosophy in reading instruction is to immerse the children in print and to give them many opportunities to learn to read by reading. Leslie argued that one of the most important aspects of teaching children to read is "to provide [the children] with good fiction and nonfiction literature and lots of opportunities to interact with print." A key component of her reading instruction is reading aloud - a time when
she models the strategies that competent readers use to make sense of print.

From my intense observations in the classroom, important patterns emerged in the techniques that Leslie used when reading fiction and nonfiction literature to the children. She did not make a point of defining the terms fiction and nonfiction or discussing the specific differences in the two genres. However, twice during the year Leslie did make a comment about the relationship between fiction and reality. The first time was in December when she was reading The Gingerbread Boy by Paul Galdone.

Leslie (reading): "Once upon a time..."
She stops and comments: "One little boy in the morning class said that 'Once upon a time' means that the story did not really happen."
...
In January, as she was reading The Mitten by Jan Brett she stops just after reading about the bear who climbs into the mitten to keep warm.
Leslie: "Could this story ever really happen?"
Children (giggling): "No!"

Cochran-Smith (1984) calls this type of classification "metanarrative - a signal about how the book [is] to be read and interpreted" (p. 199). She argues that through these types of comments, the teacher subtly "encourages the children to read and interpret individual books in light of their belonging to particular
groups of works" (Cochran-Smith, 1984, p. 199). Instead of defining the terms fiction and nonfiction or discussing characteristics specific to the two genres, Leslie consistently modelled varying techniques for making meaning with both types of texts. A discussion follows which examines the technique that Leslie modelled with fiction and nonfiction texts.

**Supporting Children's Meaning-Making With Fictional Texts**

Children do not "naturally" learn to read. Learning to read is not a physical, maturational process. Instead, reading and writing are higher psychological functions (Bruner, 1966, 1985, 1986; Clay, 1972, 1991; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). As such, they are learned through social interactions with more knowledgeable others. Young children must learn the culture-specific ways of making sense and making meaning from texts. Cochran-Smith (1984) argues that "learning ways of taking information in order to make sense of texts is fundamental to the process of literary socialization" (p. 174). Cochran-Smith (1984) found in her study of young children and story reading that the teacher mediated between the book and the children through a process Cochran-Smith termed "life to text interactions". These interactions were specifically aimed at helping the children use their knowledge in order to make sense of the book the teacher was reading to them.
In this particular study, I found that Leslie engaged in similar interactions. She used her knowledge of young children and their experiences in the world and their experiences with literature to facilitate their meaning-making as she read aloud. I also found that the techniques she employed varied depending upon the type of text she read. When reading fiction, Leslie consistently facilitated the children's meaning-making through the use of six techniques. The following techniques provided a means of scaffolding for the children's learning about fictional texts: 1) relating the reading to the children's prior experiences and knowledge; 2) explaining, defining and/or extending confusing terms, concepts and relationships within the text; 3) reviewing the information read; 4) modelling how to use the illustrations to make meaning; 5) encouraging the children to predict and to read the text; and, 6) calling the children's attention to the conventions of books, such as the title, author, dedication and endpapers.

1. **Relating the Reading to the Children's Prior Experiences**

   When reading fiction, Leslie made a point of relating the reading to the children's prior experiences or background knowledge, especially if the reading contained terms or concepts that she thought the children might not know. For example, when reading *The Gingerbread Boy*
(Galdone), she paused to ask which children have made gingerbread boys and what ingredients they used to make the cookies. Several children shared their stories about baking gingerbread cookies with parents or grandparents. In February, Leslie read a story about Groundhog's Day.

Before reading, Leslie says: "Raise your hand if you know what a groundhog looks like."

Travis raises his hand and says: "They're brown and they have a long tail."

Leslie, holding up the front cover of the book: "Yes and here's a picture of one. Does anyone know where they live?"

Several children call out: "Underground."

Leslie: "Yeah, underground. They build little burrows underground."

In the preceding example, Leslie called on Travis to share his knowledge about groundhogs with the entire class. She then built upon the children's knowledge of where groundhogs live (underground), teaching them the term 'burrow' which was a term also used in the text.

When reading, Leslie gives the children ample time to share their own stories and experiences that relate to the text she is reading. For example, when Leslie read *Berlioz the Bear* (Brett) she read about a schnauzer. Travis added: "That's the kind of dog that I have, a schnauzer." Other children raised their hands and discussed the types of dogs that they have.
Just before author Peter Catalanotto came to visit Parkview, Leslie read his book *Christmas Always*. In the story, the Sandman, the Tooth Fairy, Jack Frost and Santa all come to visit the little girl, Katie. This led to lively discussions about these characters. During the discussions, Leslie honored the children's stories and their suspension of disbelief as the children used what they knew about these characters to help them make sense of Katie's experiences in the story.

Leslie: "Raise your hand if you've seen Santa."

All of the children's hands go up.

Jesse: "I saw him at the mall."

Leslie: "Did you talk to him? Did you tell him what you wanted?"

Jesse: "Yeah, I wanted a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle and I got one."

Erica: "This Christmas the real Santa came to my dad's work and I got to see him with my mom and dad and sister."

Leslie also honored the children's experiences and prior knowledge when she read *A Winter Day* (Florian). This book prompted lively discussions about winter activities. Leslie patiently allowed many children to share their experiences in the snow.

Leslie (reading): "Skates and sleds. Raise your hand if you've ever been ice-skating."

Monica: "I have. I went with my dad and my little sister to a park with a pond."

Leslie: "Uh-huh. It's kinda hard, isn't it, on a little blade."
Brandy: "It's real hard. The ice is slippery."

Monica: "Not for me."

Vince: "I fell and I went skimmed across the ice."

Andrew: "I can spin in the air and land on my feet."

Leslie: "When you're first learning when you go ice-skating you have to hold onto things, don't you?"

Andrew: "...and I can do the splits."

Josh: "No you can't!"

Erica: "I went with my mom and dad and they had hold my hand because I kept falling. One time I fell and hit my head real hard and I had to get a band-aid because there was blood and stuff."

When reading, Leslie allowed lots of conversation and sharing among the children so that all of the children could learn from each other's thoughts and experiences.

Finally, when reading a story about a little boy who dresses for play in the snow, Leslie drew on the children's experiences as a classroom community to help explain the type of hat worn in the story, a toboggan. For example, she did this by telling the children that a toboggan is the kind of hat that Justin wears. This comparison drew immediate recognition among the children. By using her knowledge of the children in her class, Leslie made links between the experiences of the characters in stories and the experiences of the children in her classroom. By linking prior experiences to new experiences in the text, she also teaches the children important ways of taking from books.
2. **Explaining, Defining and/or Extending Terms, Concepts and Relationships Within the Text**

Leslie seemed to always be on guard for terms, concepts and/or relationships within the text that the children may not understand. It was common for her to explain the meaning of words or to elaborate and explain concepts or relationships crucial to the story that may be difficult for the children to understand. In the first example, Leslie is reading *Peanut Butter and Jelly* by Nadine Bernard Westcott.

Leslie reading: "First you take the dough and knead it, knead it...knead is kinda like rolling it with the palm of your hand." (She demonstrates the motion.) "Pretend you're kneading dough."

Intuitively, she stopped the reading and defined the term "knead", a word that might be unfamiliar to young children. She built upon and extended the children's knowledge by having them actually try the kneading motion themselves.

When reading *Dylan's Day Out* by Peter Catalanotto, a book about a dog who escapes the confines of his house and runs free in a world full of black and white animals, people and objects, Leslie stopped the reading to talk about the nun that Dylan has encountered on his journey.

Leslie: "Do you know what a nun is?"

No response.

Leslie: "A nun is a lady who wears a black and white outfit like this and worships God by helping other people."
Leslie consistently stopped reading to define terms or concepts that either the children asked about or that she thought would be unfamiliar to the students. In defining these terms, concepts or relationships within the reading, she often extended the definition to include other information that would better help the children make sense of the text. The following example occurred after Leslie read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. She held up the final illustration which is a double-page spread of a butterfly.

Leslie: "He has all of the colors from the fruits he ate in his wings, doesn't he? Did you know that butterflies have matching wings? So the one on the left side is the same as the one on the right side. Same spots and that."

In the following example, Leslie again explained a concept that she perceived the children were having difficulty understanding - the myth of Groundhog's Day.

Leslie has just finished reading *It's Groundhog Day* by Steven Kroll.

Leslie: "So if he doesn't see his shadow, what does that mean?"

Vince: "He stays in."

Sari: "He wants it to be spring."

Leslie: "If the groundhog doesn't see his shadow, that means that it's going to be getting warmer, that spring is on its way. If he does see his shadow, then we're in for six more weeks of winter...unless you don't believe in the groundhog."

Leslie, attuned to the children's knowledge of the world, was able to provide a link from the children's
world to the story world by supplying important
information to help the children better make sense of
words, concepts and relationships within the text.

3. **Reviewing/Reminding Children of Previously Read Text**

An interesting pattern that emerged in Leslie's
reading of fiction was her review of what had previously
been read. This was usually just a brief summary,
inserted into the middle of a sentence or at the beginning
of a page. In essence, she was aiding the children by
lessening the load on their cognitive memory. She
accomplished this by "holding" the story for the children,
literally "re-minding" them what had previously been read.

Like memorization, concentration and attention are
activities that can strain a young child's cognitive
capacity. Wood (1988) argues that children may need the
support of a more knowledgeable assistant to "act as
external aids to memorization, as 're-mind-ers'" (p. 61).
As the adult models and mediates this process, the child
eventually will internalize the process and be able to
accomplish these tasks on his/her own. Leslie performs
this task of mediation throughout her reading of fiction.

Leslie is reading *The Giant Jam Sandwich* by John
Vernon Lord.

Leslie (reading): "What became of the sandwich?
Well, in Itchingdown they like to tell how the birds
flew off with it in their beaks and had a feast for a
hundred weeks."
Leslie: "So, the birds ended up eating all of the sandwich...and the wasps were gone from the town because they all got stuck in the jam, remember?"

In the following example, Leslie is reading The Valentine Bears by Eve Bunting.

Leslie stops reading and says: "(Mr. Bear) played a little trick on (Mrs. Bear), didn't he?"

Travis (confused): "What'd he do?"

Leslie: "Remember how I read that Mr. Bear woke up? Mrs. Bear thought that he'd be sleeping and that she'd have to dump cold water on him to wake him up, but he tricked her."

Leslie again, "re-minds" the children what has happened previously in the book and ties this information back into the ending of the story.

Leslie is reading the last page of Christmas Always by Peter Catalanotto.

Leslie (reading): "Softly, the night's final visitor crossed the room. He bent close to Katie's cheek, whispering, 'Never say never'."

Leslie: "Isn't that what her grandfather said to her earlier, 'never say never'? I guess he was right, huh?"

Leslie mediated in the same way when reading The Gingerbread Boy (Galdone). She reminded the children who was chasing the Gingerbread Boy by using her fingers to count and act as the scaffold to provide the "re-minder". Each time she read the refrain that the Gingerbread Boy called out, ("I have run away from a little old woman, I have run away from a little old man...") she kept count with her fingers, counting all of the people from whom the Gingerbread Boy was running. As she re-read the refrain
of this cumulative tale, she again held up her fingers as she counted and named all of the participants in the chase. Soon, the children were chiming in, counting and reading with her. By using her fingers as an aid in the counting, Leslie lightened the load on the children's memory so they could use their finite amount of attention to attend to other important aspects of the story. Wood (1988) argues that imposing structure or organization on what we are trying to teach is another seemingly obvious strategy that greatly facilitates children's learning.

4. Modelling the Use of Illustrations

The importance of the illustrations for making meaning is implicit in the definition of the picture storybook. In their definition of a picture book, Huck, Hepler and Hickman (1993) argue that "the picture storybook conveys its messages through two media, the art of illustrating and the art of writing" (p. 240). Indeed, the interplay of text and illustration is important for conveying the meaning of picture books. Leslie teaches this to the children by modelling and explicitly instructing them how to use the illustrations to further and/or deepen the story line.

In the first example, Leslie is preparing to read the story by showing the children the front cover and the illustrations of The Twelve Days of Christmas (Brett).
Leslie: "The name of this book is *The Twelve Days of Christmas* and it's by one of my favorite author-illustrators, Jan Brett. I like her illustrations because she includes a lot of detail. That means that there is a lot to look at..."

Leslie flips through the book, showing the children some of the illustrations as she talks. Each page is framed with an elaborate border that carries its own story line about the relationship between a man and a woman.

Leslie: "...and if you look at the border on each page, this part here, you'll see that Jan Brett tells another story with the pictures."

Leslie did not engage in this in-depth discussion of the illustrations with every fiction book. However, it was a pattern especially when she read books illustrated by Jan Brett. A similar discussion took place in January when Leslie read another Jan Brett book, *The Mitten*. Like *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *The Mitten* also has an elaborate border. In this book, however, two mittens frame each double-page spread. The mitten on the right page contains an illustration of an animal which foreshadows the next animal to squeeze into the lost mitten.

Leslie begins to read the story, stops and says: "If you look in the mitten you can see who's coming along next." (She points to the illustration)

The children quickly caught on to how this book "worked" and they took great delight in shouting out the name of the next animal to try to fit itself into the over-sized mitten.
Demonstrating how to use the illustrations to help predict the story seems like a simple lesson for Leslie to teach. However, she teaches not just local knowledge of the task itself, but the more global processes of using the illustrations to make meaning. Following this pattern of explicitly demonstrating how to use the borders in Jan Brett's illustrations to further the story line, Leslie engages in the same type of discussion with the children when reading another Jan Brett book, *Berlioz the Bear*.

Finally, Leslie also explicitly modelled how to use the illustrations in the reading of *Lunch* by Denise Fleming. This book is about a mouse who eats various fruits and vegetables for lunch. The illustrator foreshadows the mouse's next meal by showing a small portion of the fruit to be eaten on the preceding right-hand page. Without verbally telling this to the children, Leslie pointed to the bit of food showing as she read. This drew the children's attention to the illustration. She encouraged prediction by explicitly pointing to the portion of the illustration that conveys the information about the upcoming food.

Bruner (1966) argues that learning involves searching for patterns and rules and that instruction assists children in the formation and discovery of such patterns and rules. In the foregoing examples, Leslie demonstrated
ways of taking from texts, the rules for making meaning using illustrations.

5. **Encouraging Children to Predict and Read**

Leslie employed a fifth technique when reading fiction aloud to the children - encouraging the children to predict and read along with her. Smith (1985) argues that prediction is fundamental for a successful reader. He argues that the eye of a fluent reader is always ahead of the words that the brain is actually decoding, checking and monitoring for possible difficulties in comprehension. Therefore, prediction is a key skill for young readers. Leslie fosters prediction by encouraging the children to predict and read as she reads to them. She does this two ways: either by explicitly asking the children to predict a word, phrase, or upcoming event or by simply pausing, a method which the children have come to know signals their involvement.

In the following example, Leslie is reading *Lunch* by Denise Fleming. She continually asks the children to predict and read along with her about the mouse who eats fruits and vegetables.

Leslie reads the first word of the brief text: "Sour..."

She points to the word "purple" and asks the children: "What color word is that?"

A few children call out "Purple".
Leslie: "Purple, right..." (reading) "Sour, purple..."

Leslie points to the bit of purple fruit showing on the right-hand page.

The children call out: "Grapes!"

... Leslie continues reading the book in the same manner. Towards the end of the book, Leslie reads: "Then..."

She asks: "Now what do you think the mouse is going to do?"

Tiffany: "Eat the side-part." (referring to the watermelon rind showing in the illustration)

Leslie: "You think he's going to eat the green, there? Let's see..."

Leslie turns the page and reads: "He took a nap, until...until, what do you think?"

Justin: "Somebody's going to come."

Kelly: "He gets sick."

Leslie: "You think he's going to get sick?...He took a nap until..."

Leslie turns the page and reads: "Dinnertime!"

This interactional sequence was a very common feature of Leslie's story reading. Nearly every time she read a fiction picture book, she encouraged the children to predict and if the print was large enough for the group to see, to read along with her. This is evidenced again when Leslie read The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Although the print in the book was too small for the children to read as a group, she still encouraged participation by encouraging the children to predict the days of the week
that are a part of the text and the story line.

Leslie reads: "On Tuesday, he ate through two pears. But he was still hungry."

Leslie asks: "What comes after Tuesday?"

Children call out: "Wednesday."

Leslie turns the page (reading): "Uh-huh...On Wednesday he ate through three plums, but he was still hungry."

Leslie asks: "What comes after Wednesday?"

Children call out: "Thursday."

Leslie: "Uh-huh, Thursday. And what comes after three?"

Children: "Four."

Leslie: "Yeah...On Thursday he ate through four strawberries, but he was still hungry."

Children begin to catch on the to pattern and join in with her as she reads.

Note how she allowed the children to catch onto the pattern of the days of the week before she began to ask them to recognize the pattern in the counting. Again, she scaffolded the children's learning for them, setting the task and prompting them, doing for them what they cannot yet do alone. Wood (1988) argues that "pointing out, reminding, suggesting and praising all serve to orchestrate and structure the child's activities under the guidance of one more expert" (p. 76). Leslie is very adept at providing this support and guidance. By encouraging the children to predict and read along with her, Leslie teaches the children an important lesson. She
instructs the children about the patterns that are the key elements in the structure of this particular text, the pattern of the days of the week and the pattern of counting. More importantly, she teaches the children about repetition and patterns within texts and how these patterns can be used later to aid in recalling and reading the text. Indeed, after this read-aloud session, I did see children in the classroom library reconstructing and reading this text.

Because Leslie encouraged this type of joint book-reading interaction, the routine became so accepted and such a routine that she could prompt the children to predict and read just by pausing. In January, Leslie read a book that had a very brief text which was written large enough for the group of children to read. Note how Leslie begins the reading, modelling the syntax and story structure. Tiffany makes an important discovery about the structure of the book and she shares this with the group. The children quickly catch onto the rhyme scheme and without prompting, take over the reading work (Clay, 1991).

Leslie reads the first page: "A winter day."

She turns the page and reads: "Cold and gray."

Leslie repeats: "A winter day, cold and gray."

Leslie turns the page and reads. Several children join in and read: "Snowflakes."

Leslie: "Uh-huh...snowflakes."
Leslie turns the page and the children read: "Pancakes."

Tiffany comments: "It has rhyming words in it."

Leslie: "Yes, it has rhyming words in it. 'Snowflakes' and 'Pancakes'."

Leslie turns the page and the children read: "Cover your head."

The reading continues in a similar manner.

This interactional style was common in Leslie's classroom and the non-threatening and cooperative atmosphere facilitated the children's risk-taking. Holdaway (1979) calls such experiences "corporate learning" and he argues that these non-competitive learning experiences are powerful modes of learning. He argues that children learn to read by approximating text and behaving as readers. In this manner, children's reading eventually becomes self-regulated.

6. **Teaching Conventions of Books**

The final technique that Leslie modelled and taught to the children about reading fiction is what I have termed teaching the children conventions of books. This is a broad category that covers many of the physical aspects of picture books - author, illustrator, title, dedication page, awards the book has won and the discussion of other books by the same author/illustrator. Leslie made a concerted effort with each fiction book she read to discuss the various parts and people involved in
actually putting the book together. She also had lively stories and discussion about many of the authors and illustrators which seemed to help the children visualize these unseen authors as real people.

Each time Leslie read a book, she read the title and the name of the author and/or illustrator. She often introduced the title by saying, "The name of this book is..." which helped the children understand what was meant by the term "title." Leslie also worked to clarify the meaning of terms "author" and "illustrator."

Leslie, holding up the front cover: "A Winter Day, that's the name of this book. A Winter Day, by Douglas Florian. He's the author, what does that mean?"

Josh: "He wrote the book."

Leslie: "He wrote the book. He's also the illustrator, what does that mean?"

Andrew: "Write."

Kelly: "He did the pictures."

Leslie: "He did the pictures and the story. He's pretty talented. He can write and illustrate, huh? The dedication says 'To Mulford Page Radlauer'. That must be someone special to Douglas."

... This is again demonstrated in the following discussion of All I See by Cynthia Rylant.

Leslie holds up the front cover of the book.

Leslie, reading: "All I See by Cynthia Rylant and pictures by Peter Catalanotto. So he didn't write the words to this, did he? Cynthia Rylant did. But he did the pictures for her...Peter did."
In the following example, Leslie worked to clear up the confusion about authors and their books.

Leslie: "The name of this book is *The Polar Express* and it's written by Chris Van Allsburg."

Andrew: "I have that book, but I've never heard that name before. Mine is by someone else."

Leslie: "Well, all Polar Express books are written by the same person. He's the author of all of them."

Leslie also helped the children make connections between books that they have read...

Leslie holds up *The Mitten* by Jan Brett.

Leslie: "How many of you've seen this story? It's called *The Mitten*. I know that you've seen the illustrations. Jan Brett is the illustrator and author and she is the lady who wrote and drew the pictures for *Berlioz the Bear* and *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

...as well as helped the children get to know the author and/or illustrator as a real person.

Leslie is discussing *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle.

Leslie: "...it's by one of my favorite authors and illustrators."

Erica: "Eric Carle."

Leslie: "Eric Carle, right. It's very special because a couple of years ago we sent this book to Eric Carle. We couldn't go see him or couldn't have him come here, because he lives far away in another state...so we sent him some letters and he autographed this book."

There is a discussion about what "autograph" means. Leslie reads the inscription and shows the children a photograph of Eric Carle that he sent the class.

Leslie: "Here's a picture of what he looks like. He's an old man in his sixties, probably like a grandpa would be in his sixties. He didn't start
writing books until he was in his forties. That's older than me. So he kind of started writing books as an older man. He has a cat named Roberta and he puts Roberta sometimes in some of his books."

The author/illustrator Peter Catalanotto came to visit Parkview Elementary in February. Before he came, Leslie spent time letting the children get to know him.

Leslie holds up three of Peter Catalanotto's books.

Leslie: "Does anyone know anything about Peter Catalanotto?"

No answer.

Leslie: "Well, Peter lives in Pennsylvania and he is married and has a little girl named Chelsea. I also read that he has a dog and he spent one whole day following his dog around so he could get an idea of how a dog spends his day. That helped him write Dylan's Day Out."

Leslie opens up Dylan's Day Out and shows the children the black and white tile floor in one of the illustrations.

Leslie: "...I also read that he has a black and white tile floor like this in his house."

All of these discussions made the authors and illustrators more real to the children. Because the children wrote and drew daily in their journals, it also gave them an idea of how published authors get ideas for their work. By letting children see that books are written and drawn by people they have connections with, (people with cats and dogs, people with tile floors, people like grandpas) the children came to understand that the task of writing and drawing is not so mysterious. In fact, when Peter Catalanotto came to visit, he told the
children that he illustrated his first book when he was in kindergarten. Discussions such as these allowed the children to see themselves as writers and illustrators because in Leslie's eyes and in their own eyes, they were.

Finally, from the beginning of the year the children were fascinated with the gold and silver Caldecott Award stickers found on many of the books in the classroom. From the beginning, Leslie explained what these stickers meant.

Leslie holds up the front cover of The Polar Express.

Travis: "There's that gold medal. It won a gold medal."

Leslie: "Yeah, do you know what that means?"

Sari: "It means it's the best."

Leslie: "Right, the gold medal means that it has the best illustrations. Remember we read a book the other day with a silver medal on it? Which one (color) means the best?"

Several children: "Gold."

Leslie: "The gold, right. The book with the best illustrations gets the gold medal and the runner-up books get the silver medal."

...

Leslie holds up the book Strega Nona. The children comment on the silver medal on the front cover.

Leslie: "Yeah, it has a Caldecott Honor medal on it."

Andrew: "A silver award. Guess what? One of those books you gave me has one of those (on it)."

Leslie: "You're right. Remember, the gold one is for first place and the silver one is kinda like second place. And it's the Caldecott Award, so
what's that for?"

Sari:  "Beautiful pictures."

Leslie:  "Right, the pictures."

Having these discussion was another way to de-mystify the task of writing and illustrating and a way of teaching children to appreciate the art and beauty of picture book illustrations.

Summary

The aforementioned examples of techniques Leslie used when reading aloud fiction to the children show how important Leslie was for her children's learning about literacy. Perhaps just as significant as what she did to help the children make meaning with fiction is what she did not do. I found very few examples of Leslie directly questioning or quizzes the children about details and facts found in the reading. Instead, Leslie chose an interactional style of reading, in which the children were free to question, comment, predict, read and interact with the book, with Leslie and with each other during the story reading. Children participated in this type of dialogic interaction and negotiation of meaning everyday in conversations with friends and adults. The techniques and language formats that Leslie used when reading fiction are similar in many ways to features of conversation children already used very competently. Thus, the techniques
Leslie used helped the children learn what to do with fiction texts. This allowed them to eventually learn to build sense from reading on their own. Just like parents who socialize their young into the ways of their culture, Leslie socialized the children in her classroom in the ways of making meaning with fiction. Like family socialization, Leslie used these techniques almost subconsciously. These techniques are implicit in her philosophy of how children learn about literacy - they are the "stuff" of good teaching.

Table 1 summarizes the techniques that Leslie used to support children's meaning-making with fiction literature.

### TABLE 1

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Supporting Children’s Meaning-Making With Nonfiction Texts

Vygotsky (1986) argues that instruction and attempts to help children who are not yet able to accomplish tasks on their own are the raw materials of learning and development. For Vygotsky, cooperatively achieved success between an adult and a child is the very heart of learning. In talking with the parents of the children in Leslie’s classroom and with Leslie, it was apparent that the children came to school with a wide range of experiences with books. Some children had been read to all of their lives and some children were read to for the first time when they came to kindergarten. Typically, the majority of books that most young children interact with prior to entering school are books of fiction. Therefore, nonfiction books are a new genre for many children.

Social learning theorists argue that one of the most effective means of instructing children how to make sense from nonfiction literature is by interacting with an expert - someone who already knows the rules for making meaning with these types of texts. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) argue that true teaching is defined as assisted performance.

With Leslie’s assistance as model and instructor, the children in her classroom had the opportunity to learn ways to make sense from nonfiction literature as she read aloud. Just as she employed specific techniques when
reading aloud fiction literature, she also typically modelled specific patterns of reading aloud with nonfiction texts. She used some of the same techniques she used when reading fiction, such as: 1) relating the reading to the children’s prior experiences and knowledge; 2) explaining, defining and/or extending confusing terms, concepts and relationships within the text; 3) reviewing the information read; and, 4) modelling how to use the illustrations to make meaning. In addition to these four techniques she also modelled three different techniques: 5) questioning the children about the content of what was read; 6) involving the children in the book through the use of models, demonstrations and movement; and, 7) omitting portions of the text.

1. Relating the Reading to the Children’s Prior Experiences

When reading fiction, Leslie was very cognizant of the children’s prior experiences and she made an effort to define and explain unfamiliar terms and/or concepts. She used this same technique when reading nonfiction literature with the children. She spent a great deal of time talking with the children about concepts discussed in the books and allowing the children to share personal stories related to the reading. In the following example, Leslie is reading Christmas Time by Gail Gibbons and she is explaining the significance of the Star of Bethlehem.
Leslie: "The stars that people put on top of their Christmas trees are supposed to represent the Star of Bethlehem. Remember the star that the shepherds followed to find the Baby Jesus?"

Vince: "We put an angel on top of our tree."

Travis: "We don’t. My mom puts a star. It lights up."

Erica: "I have a Christmas goose on top of my tree."

Children giggle.

Although the book talks about stars being put on the top of Christmas trees, through this brief discussion, the children quickly learned the many diverse ways that families top their trees. In addition to allowing the children to share personal experiences, Leslie also shared pertinent experiences with the children. While reading about the fast rhythm of a baby’s heart, Leslie, six months pregnant, shared this personal anecdote with the children.

Leslie: "I have to go to the doctor every month for them to check my baby. You know how they check that, to make sure it’s okay? Because they can’t see inside me. They have to put this little, it looks like a microphone that you would talk into...they put it on my belly and they roll it around till they find the baby’s heartbeat. And it’s always very fast. Then they have like a little radio type thing that you can hear it. It gets loud. It goes through that microphone that they put on my belly and it comes out in the box and I can hear it. So the doctor knows if the heart beat is strong."

Leslie frequently stopped during the reading of nonfiction to let the children share personal experiences that related to the information she was reading about.

When reading *Your Heart and Blood* by Leslie Jean LeMaster,
Leslie encouraged the children to discuss their personal experiences of blood clotting and other mishaps.

Leslie: "Yeah, when you get a cut, if your finger kept bleeding and bleeding and it didn’t clot up, you’d really be in trouble...Clot means, like make a scab. You know when you cut your finger...you just have a little cut, you get a scab, kinda. That’s called clotting."

Brandy: "I got stitches...and I have a scab on me right now."

Leslie: "Yeah, that’s good when your blood will clot. When you have a cut it stops you from bleeding."

Brandy: "I got stitches and I had to go to the hospital."

Justin: "My baby brother fell down the basement steps. He broke his arm and he had to go to the hospital. And he has a cast on his arm."

Myron: "You mean his arm came off?"

Children giggle.

Leslie: "No, his arm didn’t come off. A cast means that his bones were broken and they had to fix it with a cast. It holds the bones together until they heal."

Leslie allowed lots of talk and conversation centered around the topic of discussion. In this manner, the children learned to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to make sense of the new information presented in the book. It was also an opportunity for the children to learn from each other as they recounted personal experiences. Leslie affirmed the children’s stories, confirming that they were "on the right track" in using their prior experiences to make sense of the nonfiction textual information. Like the life to text interactions
encouraged by the story readers at Maple Nursery School as described by Cochran-Smith (1984), Leslie also encouraged the children in her classroom to use their knowledge and experiences to make sense of the nonfiction literature she read.

2. Explaining, Defining and/or Extending Terms, Concepts and Relationships Within the Text

Just as she did with fiction, Leslie also paused often when reading nonfiction to clear up any confusion that the children may have had about words, concepts or relationships within the text. Leslie explained simple definitions of words, "bruise means that you hurt yourself, but not bad enough to break the skin and bleed." She also explained more difficult concepts, such as the elaborate blood flow process through the human body.

Leslie: "(The heart) has arteries, tunnels like. And valves...See, the blood comes in through these valves and it goes down through here and back up and out through the red ones...valves, valves and arteries. Do you understand the way it goes?"

In analyzing the patterns of Leslie’s explanations, I found that she often used analogies and explanations to convey information to the children and to extend unfamiliar concepts within the text. Leslie’s use of the analogy was a simple and effective way to facilitate the children’s understanding of unfamiliar concepts and a way to encourage the children to make comparisons.
When explaining what a tortilla is, Leslie replied: "You roll it up and eat it like a taco."

In this example, she is describing the shape of a human heart.

Leslie: "It’s not like a valentine heart, more like the shape of your fist."

Leslie explains an open-air market:

Leslie: "It’s like a grocery store, except it’s outside. It’s along a street and people bring their carts of things to sell."

Tiffany makes the discovery: "Like the Three Little Pigs went to the market!"

Leslie: "Yeah, same type thing."

Leslie used analogies as a quick and efficient way to help the children understand unfamiliar terms. I found that one of the children, Vince, also used analogies as he wrestled to make sense of unfamiliar concepts.

Leslie (reading): "Here is my headbone. It’s called the skull. It holds and protects my brain like a shell holding a nut."

Vince: "Like, um, a turtle. If you didn’t have bones in your head, your brains would fall out."

... 

Leslie (reading): "Your heart is a strong muscle. Night and day it squeezes, opens, squeezes, opens."

Vince: "Like a door? You open it and close it, open it and close?"

Leslie: "Right."

Cochran-Smith (1984) argues that through the use of analogies, children are taught to take information from their knowledge of the world and to compare it to textual information to help them make sense of what is read. In
addition, through the use of analogy, children must infer in order to correctly and accurately identify objects. Cochran-Smith argues, therefore, that using analogies is a way to teach children to integrate all of the information given in the text and to infer about the information not given in the text - two key strategies used by successful readers.

In addition to using analogies, Leslie extended the information in the book and the children's knowledge through explanations that go beyond the information presented in the text. When Leslie perceived that the children did not have sufficient knowledge of the world to understand a particular text, she explained the unfamiliar concepts in order to make the text accessible. In the following example, Leslie is reading about the heart and blood.

Leslie (reading): "...Hospitals have blood banks where blood from healthy people is kept..."

Leslie: "See, this is important to know."

Leslie (reading): "Sometimes sick or injured people lose too much of their own blood. Then a blood bank gives them the blood they need to get better."

Andrew: "How do they get the blood?"

Leslie: "See, some people go to the hospital or the doctor and they give blood. You know how they do that?"

Monica: "They prick their finger."

Leslie: "The nurse puts a little needle in you..."
Children gasp in exaggerated horror.

Leslie (giggling): "You have to be brave to do this...and then she drains out some of your blood, your healthy blood and if there's someone who's dying that has the same kind of blood, we all have different types of blood, but some of us have the same type of blood. Your blood can be saved to help save someone else's life."

Andrew (squirming): "I'm never, I'm never gonna do that! I mean it!"

Leslie: "You don't have to give blood if you don't want to. But a lot of people like to because then they know that they are saving someone else's life. It's usually your choice. They don't let little kids donate blood though. You have to weigh a certain amount. You have to weigh like 110 pounds before they'll take your blood."

In this discussion, Leslie perceived that the children might not have the prior knowledge to understand the concept of a blood bank. So, Leslie took the notion of blood banks which is presented in the text and through the use of a narrative story about giving blood, extended the children's thinking beyond the text, thus opening up a new world of information to the children. Bruner (1983) argues that a fundamental relationship exists between stories and human cognition. He argues that the imposition of structure actually forms cognition. Stories provide this structure. Therefore, the imposition of structure through the use of stories actually forms children's cognition. As she read nonfiction, Leslie used the same technique of explaining, defining and extending terms and concepts within the text as when she read fiction.
3. Reviewing/Reminding Children of Previously Read Text

The third technique that Leslie used with nonfiction was also a technique she used when reading fiction. As discussed previously, this reviewing and/or reminding the children what had previously been read is a type of scaffolding or assisted performance that is an important teaching and learning strategy. Griffin & Cole (1984) argue that scaffolding has immense importance for children's learning and cognitive development.

They argue:

Many of the acts of the adult in assisting the child are qualitatively different from one another. Sometimes the adult directs attention. At other times, the adult holds important information in memory. At still other times, the adult offers simple encouragement." (Griffin & Cole, 1984, p. 47)

Repeatedly, I observed Leslie using this technique to assist the children in their meaning-making with nonfiction texts. In the following example, Leslie has just read Christmas Time by Gail Gibbons.

Leslie: "Now, why do we give presents on Christmas?"

Sari: "We give them to people we love."

Leslie: "Yes, but remember what we just read about the Three Wise Men and the Kings bringing gifts to the Baby Jesus long ago? So, that's why we still do it today, to remember what they did on the first Christmas."

In the following example, Leslie is reading about how to find a person's own heart beat.

Leslie (reading): "When I put my hand here I can feel my heart beating."
Leslie demonstrates by placing her hand on her chest in the same manner as described in the book.

Leslie: "And we tried to do that, remember? It's like when you're saying the pledge. You put your hand in the same spot."

Leslie reminds the children that finding one's own heartbeat is like an activity that the children are very familiar with, the act of placing a hand over the heart, "like when you're saying the pledge."

In the next example, Leslie has just read portions of a book about nutrition. After reading about the four food groups, a discussion occurred about the four food groups. As Leslie recounted the four food groups, she used her fingers as a counter to help remind the children of the four groups.

Leslie (holds up fingers to count as she names off the groups): "So, we have the milk group, the meat group...what else?"

Children call out the names of various foods.

Leslie: "Well, Travis was reading a book about pretzels and bagels the other day..."

Brandy: "Inside them they have, um, inside they have bread."

Leslie (adds a third finger): "Right, the bread group...so we have the milk group, the meat group, the bread and cereal...and the last one is, which one?"

Myron: "Vegetable."

Leslie (adds the fourth finger): "And that goes with fruits and vegetables. Raise your hand if you can think of something that might be in that group."

In the above segment, Leslie used the types of assistance
mentioned by Griffin & Cole (1984). She directed the children's attention ("Well, Travis was reading a book about pretzels and bagels the other day"), she held important information in memory for the children which freed up their cognitive capacity for thinking and remembering ("So we have the milk group, the meat group, the bread and cereal and the last one is, which one?") and she offered simple encouragement ("Right, the bread group"). These were all important scaffolding techniques that assisted the children in jointly constructing meaning from text.

4. Modelling The Use Of Illustrations

As argued earlier, the use of the illustrations to make meaning with picture books is inherent in the definition of picture books, which are defined as having an interplay of text and illustration. However, just as children do not "naturally" know how to make sense of the text, they also do not "naturally" know how to use the illustrations to help them understand what is read. The fourth technique that Leslie modelled with nonfiction was using the illustrations to help the children make meaning of the text, as she did with fiction. To draw the children's attention to the correlation of the text and the illustrations, Leslie utilized the simple technique of pointing to part of the illustration mentioned in the
text, as she did in the following examples while reading from nonfiction books about the human body.

Leslie (reading): "Here are my lungs."

Leslie (pointing to a portion of the illustration): "The blue part."

...

Leslie (reading): "Put your hand on your chest."

Leslie (pointing to the illustration): "Like in the picture, here."

...

Leslie reads about the heart.

Vince (looking at the illustration): "I see the heart. The heart’s in the middle."

Leslie (pointing to the heart): "Uh-huh. There’s the heart. It has a big job to do pumping all that blood to the, to all the parts of the body."

The simple procedure of pointing drew the children’s attention to the illustration and taught them about the interconnectedness of text and illustration. Leslie also drew the children’s attention to the diagrams scattered throughout the nonfiction literature that she read to them.

In this next segment, Leslie is reading about the amount of blood that the human body contains.

Leslie (reading): "A child who weighs about fifty pounds has about one and a half quarts of blood in its body. But when that child becomes an adult its body will hold about five to six quarts of blood."

Leslie (pointing to the diagram): "See there? There’s a comparison. See the little jugs there? That’s one quart and a half compared to the grown man who has...six quarts."
In the following example, Leslie is reading about the heart. The accompanying diagram shows the human heart with each of the major parts of the heart numbered. On the side of the page is a chart that has the corresponding names for the numbered portions of the diagram. This captures Andrew’s attention.

Leslie (reading): "What does your heart look like?"

Leslie (pointing to the diagram): "Well, we know what our heart looks like. There’s another picture..."

Andrew: "What are the numbers?"

Leslie: "That’s because all of those little parts have names. See all of these little arrows pointing to the names?"

Andrew: "Tell us the names."

Leslie (reading and pointing to the diagram): "Aortic arch, that’s the red one...superior vena cava, that’s the blue one..."

Leslie read to the children in a manner that allowed her to cooperatively read, search the illustrations, question and learn with the children. Through these cooperative story reading sessions, the children were able to engage in activities quite beyond their individual levels of achievement. Their involvement in such activities is, according to Vygotsky (1986), true development and learning.

In addition to the four aforementioned techniques that Leslie used with both fiction and nonfiction texts, intense immersion and analysis of transcripts of her
reading aloud to the children revealed the use of three techniques unique to nonfiction texts. These techniques are: 5) questioning the children about the content of the book; 6) physically involving the children in the book; and, 7) skipping and not reading portions of the book. By using these techniques, Leslie taught the children how to take and make meaning from texts.

5) Questioning Children About Content

As discussed previously, questioning was noticeably absent from Leslie's reading of fiction. However, Leslie consistently questioned the children when she read nonfiction literature. In the following examples, Leslie has just finished reading portions of What's Inside? My Body.

Leslie (pointing to the illustration): "Here's a picture of the head. Like we were saying, its protected by...what's this hard thing called?"

Several children: "Brain."

Leslie: "No, skull...and it protects your...what does it protect?"

Several children: "Brain."

Leslie: "Right. And there's a picture of the brain, see?"

... 

Leslie: "Who can remember what your ribs are for?"

Cindy: "To hold your heart."

Leslie: "Yeah, to hold your heart safe in there..."
(Several pages later) Leslie: "How about your skull. What does that hold?"

Children (in unison): "Your brain."

Leslie: "Your brain, right."

The next example comes from a discussion during the reading of *Hear Your Heart* by Paul Showers.

Leslie (reading): "The valves keep the blood moving in the right direction - in from the veins, out through the arteries."

Leslie: "When the blood goes out, where does it go to? It goes out of the artery, where does it go to?"

Sari: "Around to your body."

Leslie: "Yes, all around through your body..."

In this excerpt, Leslie seemed to be using questions to monitor the children’s comprehension and to review important concepts read about in the text. Questioning provided a way for her to find out what the children are understanding from the reading. In the following examples, Leslie is reading *Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris. Through the discussion which accompanies Leslie’s reading of this text, Leslie probed the children’s background knowledge about yeast and bread-baking. She then built upon this knowledge by explaining the process of baking bread.

Leslie: "...breaking bread together...do you know what that means?"

No response.

Leslie: "That means having bread together at dinner time."
Leslie: "Do you know why bread rises when it bakes? Do you know what yeast does?"

No response.

Leslie: "Because it has yeast in it. Here's a picture of yeast" (she points to the illustration) "You have to put yeast in and it makes the bread rise. Then after putting all of the ingredients in the bowl... cover it up, keep it warm and it expands and gets higher, rises up before you put it in the oven to bake."

Leslie, pointing to an illustration: "Here's a little girl carrying bread on her head and it looks to me like she's carrying pita bread. Does anybody know anything about pita bread?"

Travis: "I've had it."

Josh: "Me, too."

Leslie: "You've had it? Well, pita bread is something that has a pocket on the side. See how there's like a little hole in there? A pocket that you can make a sandwich with..."

Leslie also questioned the students to find out what they knew about nutrition as she read a book about the four food groups.

Leslie (reading): "Other foods such as fats and sweets give the body extra calories for more energy."

Leslie: "Is it okay to eat a cookie every once in awhile? Or should you just never eat one?"

Brandy: "Like, yeah, after you're done eating your lunch and dinner, like that, but not for breakfast, no, that would be bad."

Leslie: "Well, yeah, it's okay once in awhile to have, because it gives you some energy, but not all the time. If you didn't eat healthy foods from the four food groups and you just kept eating junk foods, you really wouldn't be healthy, would you?"
Leslie also used questioning in a manner which served as a preview of upcoming concepts. Before reading about the comparison of an adult’s heart rate and a child’s, Leslie asked several questions to get the children thinking about possible reasons for this anomaly.

Leslie (reading): "My father’s heart is slower."

Leslie: "Does anybody have an idea why the father’s heart would be slower?"

Andrew: "’Cause he’s gonna die sooner."

Leslie (giggling): "Well, let’s hope he’s not gonna die. But he’s... what?"

Some children say "bigger", some children say "older".

Leslie: "Yeah, he’s older and the older you are probably the harder time your heart has beating..."

These types of questioning techniques were virtually non-existent in Leslie’s reading of fiction. However, they seemed to serve an important role during the reading and discussion of nonfiction. Leslie’s questions provided a way for her to monitor the children’s understanding and comprehension and provided a way for her to encourage the children to think about the text and what she was reading. Modelling these types of questioning strategies also encouraged the children to ask questions of the text and encouraged them to read to find out, to get those questions answered.
6. Involving Children in the Book

A sixth technique that Leslie modelled while reading nonfiction, one technique that she did not use when reading fiction, was her involvement of the children in the reading. The subject matter of the nonfiction books she read, the human body and nutrition, certainly had a great influence on Leslie’s involvement of the children. Each child had his/her body right there as a quick reference point for many of the concepts Leslie read about. Another factor that played into her use of this technique was the fact that one of the children had a father who was a cardiologist. Upon request, he sent in a large model of the heart that had removable parts. This stimulated a great deal of interest among the children and provided a wealth of information for Leslie and the children. All of these factors combined provided for story reading that was always full of action and movement. This seemed to help the children as they struggled to understand the silent and invisible workings of their bodies. The following examples, taken from Leslie’s reading of What’s Inside? My Body (Royston), are typical of the interactions and physical involvement that occurred during her reading of nonfiction.

Leslie (reading): "I know how my body looks on the outside, but I wonder what is inside? My skin and flesh are soft and under them I can feel hard, knobby bone."

Leslie (tapping the bones in her hand): "Go like
this. Can you feel hard bones?"

Children: "Yeah."

Leslie: "Touch your knuckles. These are your knuckles. They’re kinda knobby, aren’t they? That’s what he’s talking about."

...

Leslie (reading): "I can feel bones all over my body."

Leslie (feeling her own ribs): "Feel for your ribs. Feel your ribs?"

...

Leslie (reading): "Hundreds of small, fine hairs grow all over my skin. They help to keep me warm."

Leslie: "See if you can look on your arm and see small, tiny hairs growing. If you can’t see them, you might be able to feel them. Run your finger along your arm. Do you see them and feel them?"

...

Leslie (reading): "This is your backbone..."

Leslie: "Everybody stand up. Now lean over and feel in the middle of your back. That’s your backbone."

Another vivid example of her involvement of the children in the reading was when she read about the heart. After reading about the heart, Leslie had a stethoscope and several long, cardboard paper towel tubes which the children used to listen to each other’s heart. Leslie then had the children jump up and down for sixty seconds and then listen again to a friend’s heart rate. Reading about the heart and then immediately involving the children by encouraging them to listen to the heart rate, reinforced the children’s learning by making them active
constructors of their own knowledge. In addition, it again demonstrated for the children how to use their newfound knowledge of the world to make sense of the text.

Another way Leslie involved the children was by using the model of the heart sent in by the cardiologist. She used the model in conjunction with nonfiction books about the heart. Typically, she read a portion of the text, related this information to the accompanying illustration, and then related all of this information to the model of the heart. This complex orchestration of media provided rich learning experiences for the children. They saw the two-dimensional drawing symbolizing the human heart, and a three-dimensional model of the human heart which they related to the sound and feel of their own hearts. Leslie comfortably combined information from all three sources.

Leslie (reading): "Your heart has tubes attached to it. Blood flows in and out of your heart through these tubes."

Leslie (pointing to the tubes in the illustration): "Do you see those tubes?"

Children: "Yeah."

Leslie: "Those are called arteries and veins. You might have heard those words before."

(Leslie explains that Cindy's dad is a heart doctor and he sent the model of the heart in for the children to see.)

Leslie (pointing to the model): "But do you see the tubes there?"

Children: "Yeah."
Leslie: "That's what this book is talking about when it says (reading) 'The blood flows in and out of your heart through these tubes'. Some are called...well, let's read on. some are called veins and some are called arteries."

... 

Leslie (reading): "All day long, all night long, these valves open and close, open and close. When the black valves open..."

Leslie (pointing to the valves on the model): "That's these ones."

Leslie (reading): "...the red valves close."

Leslie (pointing to the illustration): "You can see the picture, there, see the black one and the red one?"

Cook-Gumperz (1986) argues that children's literacy learning "takes place in a social environment through interactional exchanges in which what is to be learned is to some extent a joint construction of teacher and student" (p. 8). Social interaction is an integral part of a child's literacy learning. Through the conversational exchanges, comments, links between text, illustration, and model, Leslie provided just such a rich interactional environment.

7. Omitting Portions of the Text

Finally, the last technique unique to Leslie's reading of nonfiction was the manner in which she skipped and omitted portions of the text. This pattern was seen with virtually every nonfiction book that she read. She skipped paragraphs, pages, and topics, as seen in the
following example.

Leslie (reading): "You feel and remember with your brain. My eyes, ears, mouth, nose and skin tell my brain what is happening in the outside world."

Leslie (turns the page): "We won’t talk about the eyes today. We’ll talk about them another day."

Leslie (flipping through the book): "Here, this is the page I wanted to talk about..." (begins to read).

I asked Leslie if she was aware that she read fiction and nonfiction books differently.

Leslie: "Yeah, I read picture books with more expression and an informational book I read and discuss more about things, experiences that they [children] could tie in that they are familiar with."

Brenda: "I notice with nonfiction that you skip around when you read."

Leslie: "Oh, yeah. You don’t read the whole book from front to back. It’s not like a story."

Leslie modelled to the children that a nonfiction book, indeed, is "not like a story." In order for story books to make sense, they must be read front to back cover. However, the layout of many nonfiction books is such that they can be read in isolated portions and still make sense. Indeed, one of the ways nonfiction texts can be used is for reference, as a source of information. Therefore, Leslie modelled how expert readers use nonfiction texts - as a way to find out as much or as little as one wants to know on a given topic.
Summary

It is apparent that Leslie modelled many appropriate strategies for helping children learn how to learn from nonfiction texts. Noticeably absent was a technique that Leslie used heavily with fiction, that of involving the children in predicting and reading the text. Only twice did I observe her asking the children to read, and both times she requested that the children attempt to read the title of a book. I asked Leslie about this and she replied:

Leslie: "I guess maybe I just didn't feel as comfortable with the nonfiction illustrations. I felt maybe the children wouldn't be able to use them to predict because there often isn't a strong correlation between the illustrations and the text."

Except for the customary practice of reading the title, author and illustrator, Leslie also made very little mention of any conventions of the nonfiction books she read. However, from the presentation of data, it is apparent that Leslie created a very rich interactional environment for young children to learn the ways of literacy in our culture. Her techniques provided a scaffolding for the children as they learned to make meaning from nonfiction literature. Wood (1988) argues:

The procedures, practices and concepts that we attempt to inculcate in children, and these include expertise in certain ways of thinking and learning, are not simple natural products of the mind or the sole creations of children. Rather, they are cultural inventions that have to be learned and perfected in interaction with those who already possess and practice them (p. 213).
Leslie modelled ways of making meaning with literature and she involved the children in conversations and interactions related to the literature she was reading. Through her teaching techniques, she provided scaffolding for the children which allowed them to be successful with tasks they could not accomplish alone. Through these processes, the young children in her classroom learned not only local knowledge of the given task, they learned how to regulate their own reading with fiction and nonfiction. They learned how to learn.

The techniques that Leslie modelled to support children's meaning-making with nonfiction literature are summarized in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

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<th>THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER: SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING WITH NONFICTION TEXTS</th>
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SUPPORTING CHILDREN’S GROWTH AS WRITERS: TEACHER AS MODEL

Despite my separation of reading and writing in discussing the ways in which Leslie facilitated children’s learning in these two areas, it is important to remember that children’s learning in reading and writing cannot be so easily divided. In fact, the two processes are intricately interconnected. Children learn to read by reading and to write by writing. But they also learn to read by writing and to write by reading. Researchers argue that both reading and writing are acts of composing (Tierney & Pearson, 1984). Readers use their background knowledge and prior experiences to compose meaning from texts just as writers use their background knowledge and prior experiences to compose meaning through texts.

Techniques Used to Support Children’s Written Language Learning

The children in Leslie’s classroom seemed to learn just as much about writing from their own reading and Leslie’s reading as they did from the writing strategies that she modelled. In the following discussion of the techniques that Leslie modelled for children’s written language learning, it is important to note that as she was modelling writing techniques, she was also teaching the children important concepts about reading. In fact, Leslie and the children naturally read what they wrote and
wrote what they could read, which reflected the intricate, interrelated nature of reading and writing.

Leslie wrote with the children every day. As discussed previously, this occurred primarily during the literacy event she termed the News. Leslie wrote on large chart paper, which allowed all of the children to clearly see the print. This was a time when Leslie wrote the date, daily classroom happenings, and any special notes regarding children’s birthdays, upcoming field trips, lost teeth, new brothers and/or sisters or new pets. Routman (1991) calls this technique "writing aloud" and argues that it is a powerful modelling technique for demonstrating thinking, format, layout, spacing, spelling, punctuation and various other aspects of writing. In addition to writing the News, Leslie frequently modelled writing as part of a literature extension related to the theme study. In either setting, Leslie verbalized the letters and words as she wrote, discussed vocabulary, beginning and/or ending consonant sounds and rhyming words. She also involved the children by encouraging them to predict and read along with her as she wrote and by inviting them to find words and letters after the text was composed.

Also, almost without exception, the children in Leslie’s classroom had the opportunity to write every day and to use the strategies that Leslie had modelled. This
occurred during the literacy event Leslie termed journal writing in which the children had the opportunity to write in their own personal journals. These journals were made out of construction paper or wallpaper covers and contained blank pages inside. Initially, Leslie gave the children broad parameters in which to choose their topics for journal writing. For example, after a discussion of family Christmas traditions, Leslie asked the children to write about a family tradition that their family celebrates during the holidays. However, upon my request, during the majority of my time in the classroom, Leslie allowed the children to write and/or draw about any topic of their choosing. These writing sessions, whether it was the News, theme-related literature extensions, or journal writing, always occurred in the typical, non-threatening, collaborative environment that Leslie had created as the climate of the classroom. The non-threatening, supportive atmosphere of the classroom encouraged the children to take risks with their reading and writing. It also fostered collaboration among the children, as evidenced in the following segments which were recorded during Leslie’s writing of the News.

Leslie:  "Who can come up and circle the name of the month?"

The children’s hands go up. Leslie calls on Brandy. Brandy walks up to the chart and looks and looks.

Sari: "It’s big". (Referring to the fact that the word begins with a capital letter).
children as they learned about written language. Again, she accomplished this by imposing structure and organization as she modelled writing and then involved the children in finding isolated words, letters and other features of print. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and Bruner (1966, 1984) argue that direct instruction and scaffolding for children who cannot yet accomplish a task on their own are the raw materials of learning. As I recount the ways that Leslie provided a scaffold for the children’s written language learning, I draw again upon the work of Wood (1988) who argues the importance of scaffolding for children’s learning.

By helping the child to structure his activities, we are helping him to perform things he could not do alone until such time as he becomes familiar enough with the demands of the task at hand to develop local expertise and to try things alone (p. 77).

Leslie utilized the following techniques as she instructed the children about written language: 1) questioning; 2) instructional conversations; and, 3) linking writing and reading.

1. **Questioning**

Questioning was a technique that Leslie used every day, without exception, as she wrote the News. One of the main ways she used questioning was as a prompt or a reminder. Questioning also provided a way for Leslie to keep the children’s attention on what she was writing and
a way to involve them in the writing process. In the following examples, Leslie used questioning to draw the children’s attention to various aspects of print, punctuation and the writing process.

Leslie writes the date "Tuesday, December 8, 1992".

Leslie: "Why does 'December' start with a capital 'D'?"

Travis: "Because it makes a better sound."

Leslie explains that it is because "December" is the name of a month.

... 

Leslie writes: "Hello!"

The children read: "Hello."

Leslie, pointing to the exclamation mark: "There’s one of those marks again. So how do you read that word?"

The children read the word again, this time with louder voices and excitement.

...

In this segment, Leslie models for the group the writing of Sari’s New Year’s resolution. She writes "I will wash my face."

Leslie: "Let’s write that, okay? What’s the first word?"

Children in unison: "'I'."

Leslie: "'I', capital 'I'...'will', how do I spell 'will'?"

Sari and Erica spell: "W-I-L-L."

Leslie (pointing first to the left of the paper, then to the right): "Right, 'W-I-L-L'...Look how I’m starting over here and I’m gonna finish over here."
In January, Leslie told me that she wanted to focus more on the children's use of consonant sounds in their writing because when assessing the children she found that many of the children knew most of the sound-letter correspondences. Therefore, she wanted to emphasize sound-letter relationships as she modelled writing to encourage children to use more consonant sounds, especially beginning consonant sounds, in their own journal writing. Questioning was a key technique that Leslie used to help the children make the connection between letters and the sounds they make.

Leslie is writing: "We will have library today."
Leslie: "What letter does 'library' start with?"
Children: "'L'."
Leslie: "'L', right."
...
Leslie is writing: "We will paint a snowman."
Tiffany makes an important connection.
Leslie: "What letter does 'paint' start with?"
Children: "'P'."
Tiffany: "Like in 'pink'."
Leslie: "Right, they both start with a 'P'."

At the beginning of the school year, Leslie provided the spelling for all of the words that she wrote in the News. Mid-year, Leslie began to place some of the spelling work on the children as she expected them to
provide at least the beginning consonant sounds for the words she was writing. Toward the end of the school year, as more children began to learn conventional spelling, Leslie placed even more of the spelling task upon the children. She especially seemed to focus on expecting the children to spell high frequency words, words that they came across frequently in their own reading and words that she wrote frequently in the News. In the following example, taken in February, Andrew makes an important discovery about spelling.

Leslie writes: "Peter Catalanotto is coming to our school."

Leslie: "'To'...how do I spell 'to'?"

Many of the children: "T-O."

Andrew: "You can also spell it 'T-W-O'."

Leslie: "You're right, Andrew, that is another way to spell 'to'. That's the number..."

...

Leslie writes: "Today we have gym."

Leslie: "How do I write 'gym'?"

Erica spells: "G-Y-M."

...

Leslie is writing "Today is Thursday, February 4, 1993."

Leslie: "How do I spell 'today'?"

Sari, Erica and Monica join in: "T-O-D-A-Y."

Leslie: "Right..."
Wood (1988) argues that simply modelling learning strategies for children does not necessarily mean that children will in turn use these same strategies for their own learning. Instead, the task must be taught, by scaffolding the child's role in the learning task. Scaffolding does not involve simplifying the task. Instead, Greenfield (1984) argues that scaffolding involves holding the difficulty of the task constant while the child's role is simplified by means of graduated assistance from a more capable adult and/or peer. By using the technique of questioning, Leslie provided just such a scaffold for the children's learning about various aspects of written language.

2. Instructional Conversations

Tharp & Gallimore (1988) argue that instructional conversations are "the medium, the occasion, the instrument for rousing minds to life" (p. 109). They argue that the task of schooling, at any age level, is one of "creating and supporting instructional conversations" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 111). Tharp & Gallimore (1988) define instructional conversations as a language text created through largely informal teacher-child exchanges. These conversations involve the weaving of new, unfamiliar schooled concepts into the child's existing mental structure, thus linking new information
with existing information. Leslie accomplished this through largely informal conversations about print.

Throughout the research project, Leslie masterfully and continually mentioned letters, sounds, punctuation, directionality and other important concepts necessary to the writing process. She never attempted to lecture or drill the concepts into the children’s minds. Instead, she casually mentioned and mentioned and mentioned again. Instructional conversations allowed Leslie to meet all of the children’s needs. For those children who were struggling with letter names and sounds, she mentioned letters and their accompanying sounds. For children who were experimenting with spacing in their own writing, she drew their attention to the white spaces in between words. This type of teaching allowed each child to learn and grow at his/her own pace. The following sample of casual conversations were captured at various stages of the research project, but they are representative of the instructional conversations that occurred throughout the school year.

Leslie writes: "It is Monday, December 14, 1992."

Leslie, pointing to the period: "There’s my period. Remember, it tells the reader to stop."

...

Leslie has just written her New Year’s resolution.

Leslie: "Look how I left a space between each of the words. ‘I’ and then I left a space and then I wrote
the next word 'will', left a space and wrote 'wear',
left a space and wrote 'my' and then left a space and
wrote 'seat belt'. And I even remembered to put a
period at the end."

...

Leslie writes the date, Wednesday, January 27, 1993.

Leslie (as she writes): "I think I'll abbreviate
Wednesday..."

Leslie writes "W-E-D."

Leslie: "An abbreviation is a short way to write a
word. Usually we abbreviate the names of the days
and the months."

Leslie writes the name of the month "J-A-N."

Leslie: "I think I'll abbreviate 'January' too."

...

Leslie has written the News and is having the
children find specific words.

Leslie: "Who can find the word 'my'?

Leslie calls on Myron.

Leslie: "Myron...Myron's starts with the same sound
and letter as 'my'. 'Myron', 'my'...what letter do
they start with?"

The children answer in unison: "M." Meanwhile,
Myron has circled the word 'my'.

Leslie: "Good job...except Myron's name starts with
a capital 'M', doesn't it?"

Like the caregiver who talks about topics and objects
that are within the child's immediate focus of attention,
Leslie discussed various features of print that were in
her children's immediate focus of attention. Bruner
(1966, 1984) places great emphasis on the role of language
and communication for children's mental development.
Instructional conversations are one more means of assisted performance which relies solely on communication from the more knowledgeable member of a culture to the less knowledgeable member of that culture. Instructional conversations also provide one more technique that Leslie uses to instruct her children in cultural ways of knowing.

3. **Linking Writing With Reading**

Leslie engaged the children in several activities during her modelling of writing that encouraged the children to make the link between reading and writing. In particular, she involved the children in: a) collaborative reading experiences; b) individual reading experiences; and, c) decontextualized print experiences.

**Collaborative Reading Experiences.** Just as Leslie expected the children to predict and read as she shared fiction with them, she also had this expectation as she taught the children about written language. Holdaway (1979) argues that corporate learning, reading and learning as a group have always been powerful modes of learning for cultures around the world. He argues that these same collaborative learning experiences can be used in the classroom to facilitate children's learning from the teacher and from each other. Holdaway warns, however, that "truly corporate activities are concerned with ego-sharing and not with ego-uppance" (1979, p. 64).
The warm, collaborative environment that Leslie created in the classroom was well-suited for these group learning experiences. As Leslie wrote, the children predicted and read along with her as she wrote. This routine, created at the beginning of the school year, was so firmly established by the time I arrived in December that, for the most part, the children no longer needed prompts. They had come to know the routine and that they were expected to predict and read along. Occasionally, when the children’s attention would wander and only a few children were participating in the reading, Leslie would gently remind them with "I can’t hear you reading," at which time the children eagerly rejoined the group reading. The following excerpt is taken from a transcript from January 20, 1993. However, it is typical of the involvement and reading work that occurred as the children read the News.

Leslie writes:  "H-E..."

The children predict/read:  "Hello."

Leslie:  "What letter does 'hello' start with?"

Children:  "H."

Leslie:  "Right..."

Leslie finishes writing:  "Hello!"

Leslie (pointing to the exclamation mark):  "What’s that mark called?"

Children (in unison):  "Exclamation mark."
Leslie: "Right, let me hear you read it with an exclamation mark."

Children re-read the word with louder voices and excitement.
...

(Later in the same session)

Leslie writes: "W-..."

The children predict/read: "We."

Leslie reads: "We."

Leslie writes: "W-I-...."

Children predict/read: "Will."

Leslie: "What's that word?"

Children: "Will."

Leslie: "Good...'will'. It starts like 'we'."

Leslie writes: "L-E..."

Several children predict: "Have."

Several children predict: "Learn."

Leslie finishes writing: "L-E-A-R-N...what’s that word? It starts with a /l/ sound..."

Children: "Learn."

Leslie: "Good, 'learn'..."

(The session continues in the same manner).

Through the collaborative reading and writing sessions, Leslie taught the children to "read" the punctuation as she prompted them to read with expression upon sight of the exclamation mark. Leslie developed the children’s writing strategies, and she also developed the children’s reading strategies as she modelled writing.
Through her questions, comments and prompts (instructional conversations), she helped the children check their expectation of language and meaning against their growing knowledge of visual cues. Guiding the children in their reading were two important factors, their expectation that the sentence will make sense and their knowledge of the classroom routines. Leslie’s messages were highly predictable. She always wrote a greeting ("Hello" or "Good afternoon"), she always wrote the day of the week, the month, the date and the year next. The third sentence usually informed the children of their related arts schedule, and this always started with "We will have..." (art, music, gym, library). Finally, the last sentence or two was about current events ("We have a new President"), classroom events ("We will paint today") or children’s personal events ("Kelly’s mom is going to have a baby"). Therefore, the structure of Leslie’s writing was highly predictable. This was crucial for the children’s reading success.

Holdaway (1979) argues that "there is no more powerful strategy for decoding than this predictive search of the available verbal inventory - in reading, it is at the heart of word-solving skill" (p. 53). Through these collaborative reading and learning experiences, the children in Leslie’s classroom learned a variety of strategies for tackling print and for reading and writing
unknown words. As the children participated in these writing/reading sessions, they began to learn the significance of initial consonants as a clue to reading words and as a way of confirming their predictions. They also began to recognize high frequency words that regularly occurred in the News and in their own reading and writing. These collaborative reading experiences helped the children learn to use meaning cues, context cues, structural cues, syntax, and letter/sound relationships as they made connections between the reading and writing of print.

In addition, through these reading and writing experiences, Leslie implicitly taught the children about the interrelatedness of reading and writing. Collaborative learning encouraged risk-taking among all of the children, because the atmosphere was positive and accepting and approximations or were drowned out by the other voices. Therefore, children who were less experienced with print learned from those who were more experienced with print. As they read the News, the children engaged in approximation, self-correction and repetitive practice as they participated in real reading work (Clay, 1972; Holdaway, 1979; McKenzie, 1986).

**Individual Reading Experiences.** A second way that Leslie demonstrated the interrelatedness of reading and writing was through individual reading experiences.
During this time, children were given the opportunity to come up to the chart, point to the words, and read the News to the group. Leslie modelled finger-pointing as she read her written text with the children and she also expected the children to point to the words as they read individually to the group. Clay (1972) argues that finger-pointing during reading is a crucial technique for beginning readers. Pointing helps young children recognize the one-to-one relationship between spoken and written words. It also helps children understand the directionality of print (left to right, return sweep, left to right).

Judging from the manner in which the children clamored to be chosen to read individually, reading in front of the group always seemed to be a positive experience for the children. Leslie only chose those children who volunteered to read. And, at any time the reader had difficulty, the other children and/or Leslie were quick to come to that child’s assistance. There was always warm applause after the reading was completed. In addition, the experience seemed to build the reader’s confidence in his/her own abilities. The following excerpt was taken from January 12, 1993, and is illustrative of the manner in which the children read alone in front of the group.

Leslie: "Would anyone like to come up and read?"
The children's hands go up. Leslie chooses John.

John (reading and finger-pointing): "It is Tuesday, January 12, 1993. We will not go..."

John stops reading. He has noticed a discrepancy between his spoken word and the word to which he is pointing.

Leslie: "Whoops, there. Try again." (Leslie points to the beginning of the sentence in which John noticed the discrepancy).

John (reading and finger-pointing): "We will have art."

Leslie: "Good..."

John (reading and finger-pointing): "We will listen to our heart beat."

Leslie: "Good job. I like the way you pointed to the words." (The children clap for John).

Through these experiences, the children learned that what was written could be read. They also learned to expect print to be meaningful.

Decontextualized Print Experiences. The third and final way that Leslie modelled the interrelationship between reading and writing was by asking the children to pull letters and words out of context. Reading is a strongly visual task; therefore, in order to help children make further discoveries about specific aspects of the visual cues of letters and words, Leslie invited the children to pull these words and letters out of context. For those children who could read conventionally, this was a relatively simple task, because often these words were already a part of their repertoire of words known
instantly by sight. However, to the majority of the children, those who were in varying stages of emergence as readers, this task required real reading work. Individual reading experiences also gave Leslie an opportunity to draw the children’s attention to various features of print. The following example occurred at the end of January and illustrates the great deal of learning that occurred during these short reading experiences.

Leslie has just finished writing the News. The children have read it twice as a group.

Leslie: "Okay, let’s see who can come up to the News and point to the word ‘will’.

The children’s hands go up. Leslie chooses Anna.

Anna walks up to the chart, looks at the words for several seconds, and points to the word ‘healthy’.

Several of the children read the word ‘healthy’.

Leslie: "That word is ‘healthy’. What letter does ‘will’ start with?"

Anna: "W."

Leslie: "Right. Like ‘Wednesday’. Do you know what a ‘W’ looks like?"

Anna shakes her head "no."

Tiffany: "An upside-down M." (This seems to be a favorite description for her. She’s made this comment several times).

Anna looks at the print, finds the word "will" and circles it with a marker.

Leslie: "There you go...W-I-L-L. That’s ‘will’.

The children clap for Anna.

Implicitly in the strategies she modelled and in her
teaching, Leslie made connections between reading and writing. This helped the children become aware of significant features of print, and it also gave them strategies to use in their own writing. Leslie modelled writing and at the same time demonstrated to the children the function of print. Through various collaborative, individual and decontextualized reading experiences, she demonstrated that graphics not only represent meaning, but that they can also mediate the reading of a specific spoken message. This powerful message carried over into the children’s own writing as they learned that what is spoken can be written and what is written can be read.

**Summary**

Leslie did a great deal to support children’s written language learning. From the beginning, she treated the children as competent readers and writers, accepting their approximations as purposeful and meaningful. She provided scaffolds for the children’s written language discoveries by modelling, questioning, instructing, reminding, prompting and praising. All of this teaching and learning occurred in a warm, supportive and cooperative atmosphere where the children were respected for the literacy knowledge that they brought to school.

Table 3 summarizes the techniques that Leslie modelled to support children’s written language learning.
TABLE 3

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER:
SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S GROWTH AS WRITERS

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

After spending several months deeply immersed in the classroom culture and Leslie's teaching, I recognized that her quality teaching consisted of intricate orchestration. Leslie was not only knowledgeable about the subject areas, such as Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science, she was also knowledgeable about children and their thinking. She had firmly rooted beliefs in the ways that children think and learn and she was able to orchestrate the entire classroom environment in order to put her theories about children, thinking, learning, language learning, reading and writing into practice. She organized the classroom space as well as the school day to allow for collaboration and learning among the children. Leslie's organization of time and space all reflected her philosophy of learning
and teaching. She also masterfully orchestrated reading and writing sessions to help the children learn strategies for meaning-making with fiction, nonfiction and written language.

Social learning theory provides a framework for examining the literacy and literary interactions that occurred in Leslie’s classroom. Vygotsky (1978) argues that what children can do with assistance from others is more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone. Through social interaction and negotiation while reading both fiction and nonfiction literature, Leslie engaged the children in processes that they could not accomplish alone. By modelling the culture-specific ways of taking from texts, the children in Leslie’s classroom gradually learned to direct and regulate their own thinking and learning. Simultaneously, Leslie orchestrated the supportive environment, classroom time and space, and perhaps most importantly, the expectation that the children in her classroom would learn.
Notes

1. See Appendix D for a diagram of Leslie’s classroom.

2. All children’s books cited in this report are listed alphabetically in the Bibliography. Other literature that was available in the room for the children to read during the theme-based unit is listed in Appendix E.

3. See Appendix F for a list of the conventions I have used for the presentation of transcripts.
CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF PEERS FOR CHILDREN'S
MEANING-MAKING WITH FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS

"Children are remarkable for their intelligence and ardor, for their curiosity, their intolerance of shams, the clarity of their vision."

Aldous Huxley

INTRODUCTION

As reported in Chapter IV, Leslie's philosophy of teaching and learning had a powerful influence over the classroom context and the techniques she modelled for making sense of fiction and nonfiction texts. Leslie's reading of fiction and nonfiction texts occurred exclusively within the context of whole group instruction and these interactions provided numerous, rich and varied learning opportunities for the children of her classroom. However, these whole group literacy events occurred approximately 30 minutes each day, leaving over two hours every day when the children were actively interacting with each other. Because of the number of children in her classroom and the structure of the classroom time and space which encouraged collaborative learning, Leslie interacted individually with each child less than one minute each day. However, a tremendous amount of learning
occurred within the classroom. How is it that the children learned so much but spent such little time alone with the teacher? This can best be explained by the powerful influence of peer learning.

Vygotsky (1978) argues:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level...all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individual (p. 57).

Therefore, the peer culture of a classroom has a highly influential effect on children's learning. Bruner (1985), Forman and Cazden (1985), Vygotsky (1978, 1986), Wertsch & Stone (1985) and other social learning theorists all argue the importance of peers for children's learning. Peers can provide the same type of scaffolding as adults in terms of providing support for other children's learning. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) argue that "effective teaching does not require authority. The assistance of performance can sometimes be provided more effectively in its absence" (p. 84). The more experienced child provides the scaffolding for the less-experienced child and in essence, acts as "consciousness for two" (Bruner, 1985, p. 29) by using speech to structure the activity in which the children are engaged. In this manner, the less-experienced child internalizes not only local knowledge of the task, but also the strategies that their peer-tutor utilizes as they work collaboratively to solve problems. Forman and
Cazden (1985) argue that in peer-supported learning environments "each child learns to use speech to guide the actions of her or his partner and, in turn, to be guided by the partner’s speech" (p. 343). Therefore, peer culture can play an important role not only in what the children learn, but in how they learn.

I will begin a discussion of peer culture and children’s meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction literature by examining one way that four little boys made meaning with nonfiction. I will discuss the talk and peer learning that surrounded a recurring literacy event which I have termed "storying about pictures." Next, in addition to the powerful influence that these four particular boys had on each other’s learning, the vast majority of the other children’s reading also occurred in very social contexts. The data confirms that the children learned a great deal from other children. Therefore, I will discuss how friends helped friends learn important literacy lessons. Although children learned from each other, not all children’s learning occurred as a result of other-mediation (teacher or peer). Some children made meaning with fiction and nonfiction texts through their own personal engagement with books. Therefore, I will examine the disconfirming evidence to peer-mediation as I discuss data confirming children making meaning through "private lessons" (Meek, 1988, p. 7). Finally, just as the peer
culture of the classroom influenced children's meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction literature, peers also provided support for other children's written language learning. Data will be examined that supports the influence of social interaction as well as the influence of literature on children's learning about printed language.

CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING WITH FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS: STORYING ABOUT PICTURES

When I was in Leslie's classroom, I made a conscious effort to see and experience the classroom culture as the children were seeing and experiencing it. I tried, as much as possible, to become a part of their world. The longer I was in the classroom, the more the children got used to me and the more they let me into their world. This acclimation process lasted for several weeks. Yet, as I became a part of the classroom culture, I began to see and experience things that even Leslie was unaware of. In this manner, I discovered that Jesse, Josh, John and Justin were engaged in an elaborate routine which I have termed "storying about pictures."

Jesse, Josh, John and Justin not only sat together at the same table, but they were also best friends. They played together, sat together during Circle, read together and wrote together. They met after school and on weekends to play with one another. I noticed this pattern of
togetherness the second week in the classroom. Intrigued by their camaraderie, I decided to follow the boys and their learning more closely. As I focused in on their talk, their reading and their writing, I began to notice the powerful influence that the boys had upon each other's learning. I began to see how the more expert members of this micro-culture were providing scaffolding and support for the less experienced members of the group.

Upon closer examination, the basic structure of the boys' reading routine became clear. At any point during the day when the children were not engaged in a teacher directed activity, Jesse, Josh, Justin and John (one, or any combination of the four boys) headed for the classroom library. Once there, they chose a book. They almost always chose one of the *Childcraft* encyclopedias, although a pop-up book of the human body was also a favorite. Sometimes they took the book back to their table, sometimes the boys read on the floor, cuddled up in the pillows. But anytime one of the boys had a book, the other three were always there reading, too. Although these four boys did not have control over the orchestration of space and time within the classroom, they did have control over their personal relationships. They used their personal relationships with each other to create their own contexts that supported their learning and meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction texts.
Academically, three of the four boys were fairly close in their experience with books and print. John was beginning to read, but certainly could not read the complex text of the Childcraft encyclopedias or the pop-up book. Josh and Justin were at similar stages of emergent reading. However, it was clear that Jesse came to kindergarten with less experience with books and concepts about print than the other three boys. He struggled with letter identification and letter sounds while both Justin and Josh were beginning to read some high frequency words and environmental print. As mentioned, none of the boys was able to "read" the text of the books they shared together. Instead the boys storied about the pictures.

As I became immersed in their reading routine, it became evident that each boy had a clearly defined role within the group. Josh almost always held the book and turned the pages. He seemed to be "in charge". Any time one of the other boys tried to turn a page, Josh usually shoved his hand off of the page. John frequently added his knowledge about print by picking words out of the text and reading them to the group. The boys jointly decided which pictures would be storied about by pointing to a picture and/or illustration and exclaiming, "That's serious!" However, more times than not, the pictures that Josh and Justin pointed to were the ones storied about. Justin and Josh were the most verbal of the four boys.
They both equally initiated story talk and frequently interrupted each other to be the first to make a comment or turn a page. Both Josh and Justin had vivid imaginations and they used these imaginations often when storytelling. John was more quiet and shy. He was the rational one of the four. When a story got too exaggerated, he was the one to bring the other four back into reality by saying, "that couldn't really happen." Jesse rarely, if ever, initiated any of the story talk or conversations. He seemed content to watch and listen, occasionally adding comments or asking questions. If he tried to initiate a story by pointing to a picture and saying "that's serious," it was only through the consensus of another (usually John or Justin) that the picture was indeed storied about. Often Josh would say "Huh-uh" and turn the page. Many times, Jesse followed the lead of one of the other boys, repeating the story phrase that another boy had just said. The following excerpt is illustrative of the typical routine in which Jesse, Josh, Justin and John engaged as they read books.

Josh has gone to the classroom library and has brought a Childcraft encyclopedia back to his table. The other three boys clamor around him. He randomly opens the book to a page which shows an illustration of a bow and arrow and a bulls-eye. The opposite page shows an illustration of knights in battle. One of the knights is carrying a red and white flag.

Josh: "Look at this, you guys. This looks serious! Bulls-eye! Bulls-eye!"
Justin (pointing to the man in the illustration): "He's gonna make a bulls-eye."

John: "Bulls-eye!"

Josh: "Oh, yeah? This one's gonna go..." (He makes explosion sounds and dramatizes the explosion)

The other boys join in, making airplane and explosion noises. All of them are yelling: "Bulls-eye!"

Josh (pointing to the illustration of knights in battle): "Oh, this is serious!"

Justin: "Look! It IS serious!"

Josh: "Yeah."

Justin: "Blood and guts!"

Josh (pointing to the red and white flag. He thinks that the red portion of the flag is blood): "I'm not talking about THAT!"

Jesse: "Oh, I see that white stuff. But that white stuff is a flag. It's a flag."

Justin: "Yeah, the white stuff is the flag, but the red stuff is BLOOD!"

Jesse: "Huh-uh."

Justin: "Because they're having a fight. They were fighting up there and they squirted blood all over!"

Jesse, Josh, John: "Yeah! Ugh!"

Josh: "Yeah, that IS serious!"

Jesse: "Yeah."

Justin: "Definitely."

John: "Yeah, definitely, Josh."

... 

The boys are looking at a *Childcraft* encyclopedia. They are looking at a picture of a large statue of Hans Christian Anderson. They think it is George Washington.
Josh: "WHOA! Oh my gosh! George Washington!"

Jesse: "Let me see. Who is he?"

Justin: "Oh my gosh! He's been sitting there a long time!"

John: "No he hasn't. He isn't real."

The more I focused on their reading routines, it also became evident that the boys had rules for interacting with books. One of the rules for this interactional routine was the rule that only pictures and/or illustrations deemed "serious" could be storied about. The boys did briefly discuss other illustrations, but their elaborate stories occurred around pictures they had deemed "serious." In late April, after I had left the classroom, I returned to talk to Jesse, Josh, Justin and John. I interviewed the boys and asked them how they decided which pictures were "serious."

Brenda: "Why is it that when you guys read sometimes things are serious and sometimes they aren't? How do you decide if they're serious or not?"

Justin: "Because if they look, um..."

Josh: "Dangerous."

Justin: "...we say 'that's serious'."

Brenda: "Oh, I see. Justin, did you tell John and Josh and Jesse that when they see things that are dangerous that means it's serious? How did they know what serious meant?"

Justin: "Well, they just knew what serious meant."

Josh, Jesse and John agree.
Justin is correct. Josh, John and Jesse did know what serious meant. They knew, not because Justin explicitly told them, but because they implicitly learned it as one of the rules for their book reading routine. They learned by repeatedly engaging in the routine. It became a group norm. Earlier in the year, Jesse struggled to define the exact criteria for "seriousness".

The boys are looking at an illustration of bows and arrows.

Jesse (pointing to one of the arrows): "Oh, THIS is serious!"

Josh: "No, it isn't."

Jesse: "It's got arrows?!"

Josh: "Those are not arrows."

It is unclear whether the illustration was not dangerous enough to warrant being "serious", or whether Josh wanted to maintain the implicit rule that only he or Justin were able to decide what was serious. In either case, Jesse wrestled with learning ways of taking from these texts and the rules for participating in the routine with Josh, Justin and John.

These interactional routines are reminiscent of the language-learning routines typical of mothers and infants (Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Snow, 1977; Whitehead, 1985). In language-learning sequences, the mother talks about objects in the child's shared field of focus. The mother names the object, the young child takes his/her turn in
the conversation by cooing or babbling. Collaboratively, mother and child build a narrative, a conversation in which the mother (the more expert language-user) regulates and supports the young child's language learning. This type of interactional sequence also characterizes the routines commonly centered around parent/child book reading (Doake, 1985).

Many of these same features can be found in the boys' storying about pictures. Their playful, interactional exchanges clearly involve turn-taking routines and they discuss only photographs and/or illustrations that have been jointly agreed upon as "serious" and are therefore in each participating member's focus. Collaboratively, the four boys create a narrative from the illustrations they see. Consequently, the boys learn important rules about making meaning from texts. They learn that illustrations are important for making meaning and they learn that one learns from books by being actively involved. Through the sounds and rhythms of their language, through the colorful and interesting illustrations, through the use of their imaginations and the re-enactment of events in the pages of books, the boys learn to have high expectations for print. They direct their own learning, using their knowledge of narrative, books, characters and language to do so.
Another rule Justin, Josh, Jesse and John employed as they storyboarded about pictures was a rule involving topic relevance. After following the stories of these four boys for several months, it became clear that they definitely had favorite topics to story about. Two of their favorite topics involved Ninja Turtles and dinosaurs.

The boys are looking at a *Childcraft* encyclopedia. They have randomly opened the book to a double-page spread showing various costumes.

Josh (pointing to the illustrations): "This is costumes. And there's that guy's costume. And that's that guy's... and that is that guy's...."

Justin (pointing to a court jester costume): "The Ninja Turtles can get that guy."

Josh (pointing to a cowboy costume): "The Ninja Turtles could get THAT guy!"

Justin: "Yeah, he's crazy!"

John: "Let me see. WHOA!"

Josh: "Oh, yeah? I'm Leonardo. I'm the leader of all you guys. I'm Leonardo."

...

The four boys are looking at a *Childcraft* encyclopedia about space. They immediately go into their Ninja Turtle story. They are looking at an illustration showing the Earth and the Sun from Space. Shredder is a "bad guy" in the Ninja Turtle cartoon.

Josh: "Whoa! This is serious!"

John: "Maybe Shredder lives at the center of the Earth."

Josh: "Yeah, he does. Because I seen a show and I have, I seen Shredder and he's in a place where it's awful!"

Jesse: "How do you know?"
Josh: "Because I saw!"

Josh turns the page. The illustration shows icicles and snow.

Justin (pointing to the sharp icicles): "THIS is serious!"

Jesse: "Those are just icicles."

Josh: "Yeah, icicles."

Justin (using his hands to exaggerate the size of the icicles): "No, it might, so...Shredder made them! DON'T YOU SEE? Those are really sharp! They could, if you touched those bottoms of them your finger would be blooded! Shredder made that!"

Josh: "Yeah."

Justin: "Do you know how? With his, um, brain. He is so cool! He just did that!"

...

The boys are again looking at a Childcraft encyclopedia. Josh has opened the book to a double-page spread which shows various directional arrows and symbols. The boys think the arrows are Indian arrows.

Josh (pondering the arrows): "Hum...dinosaurs."

Justin: "No! Indians..."

Josh: "It'll help us find the dinosaur."

Justin: "NO! INDIANS! INDIANS! INDIANS!"

Josh (pointing emphatically to an arrow): "NO! THIS thing can help us find the dinosaur...This thing can help us find the dinosaur, right here. It's [the dinosaur] still real alive."

Jesse: "Huh-uh...are you sure?"

Justin: "Yeah, we're sure."

Josh: "I'm sure."

Jesse: "Because, because my mom says that dinosaurs ain't real."
John: "Yeah. They're not real."

One of the most fascinating features of their storying is the manner in which they collaboratively created a story and then repeatedly returned to this same story line day after day. In fact, the Ninja Turtle story line and the dinosaur story line lasted throughout the four months that I was in the classroom. Upon my return in late April, they were still storying about these same themes. The following brief examples are just a sampling of much longer and more intricate tales about Ninja Turtles and dinosaurs. However, they do demonstrate how Jesse, Josh, Justin and John came back to the same story theme again and again.

January 13, 1993. The four boys are looking at a pop-up book of the human body. They are looking at an illustration of the brain and head.

Jesse (pointing to the brain): "You guys, what is this stuff?"

John: "I don't know. It's blood..."

Jesse: "Oh, I see. It's the blood drops. What is it doing?"

John: "It's the brain."

Jesse: "Yeah, but what is it doing?"

Justin: "That's the brain, it's thinking. It's thinking 'I'm gonna get that dinosaur! I'm gonna get that dinosaur!'"

Josh: "Yeah. And it's gonna kill it."

...

February 17, 1993. Jesse, Josh, Justin and John are looking at a Childcraft encyclopedia. The
illustration on the left page shows an archaeologist re-creating a museum dinosaur model out of bones. The illustration on the right page shows a dinosaur.

Josh (pointing to the left page): "You guys, LOOK!"

Jesse: "Look!"

Josh (pointing to the right page): "Those are just skeletons. This is a real, live dinosaur. It still lives somewhere."

Jesse: "And we're going to find it."

Josh turns the page. The illustration shows various machine engines.

Josh (pointing to the illustration): "Yeah. We need one of these devices! We need one of these devices to find it."

Justin (pointing to one of the engines in the illustration): "Yeah, let's take this one."

Jesse: "Yeah."

Josh: "Okay, but we need the belt."

...

March 11, 1993. Josh has a Childcraft encyclopedia. They are looking at an illustration that shows a silhouette of an old gnarled tree. The illustration also shows a stone hedge.

Justin (pointing to the tree): "That is serious!"

Josh: "Let me see."

Justin (pointing to the tree): Spooky tree! That's how the dinosaur got killed! It got killed by that tree!"

Josh (pointing to the stone hedge): "Those things, that's the stones."

Justin: "They're trying to break the stones up, hoping to get us in trouble!"

Josh turns the page. This page shows various types of keys.
Justin (pointing to the keys): "The secret key to the dinosaur!"

These topics, dinosaurs and Ninja Turtles, were both very familiar to each one of the four boys. They knew the story about the Turtles from watching Saturday morning cartoons. Justin also frequently brought plastic Ninja Turtle action figures to school. The four boys played with these and dramatized fighting and action scenes both with the toys and with their bodies during playtime and during recess. Therefore, they had prior experience and knowledge about the Ninja Turtle story. They used this pre-existing story frame to help them mediate their meaning-making with unfamiliar text and illustrations in the Childcraft books. Collaboratively, the four boys created their own imaginary story world, full of dinosaurs and Ninja Turtles, good guys and bad guys.

Another interesting feature of the boys' storying was the game-like structure of their interactions. It is difficult for me to recreate on paper the joy and exuberance surrounding each of these interactional routines. The boys seemed to use the book almost as a toy or a prop to prompt their storying. The interactions surrounding this prop were always game-like. The four boys had fun. Their voices ranged in pitch from high to low, loud to whispers. They used facial features, hands, and entire bodies to dramatize the stories they told. Their storying was always full of loud explosions,
laughing and giggling, mock fighting, exaggerated voice inflections and pushing and shoving to get the best view of the illustrations in the book. I asked the boys why they liked to look at books and tell stories about the pictures. The following responses are very revealing.

Justin: "It's fun to just look. It's not fun to just read."
Brenda: "How come?"
Justin: "Well, because it's..."
Josh: "Boring."
Brenda: "Why?"
Josh: "Because we can't really read all the words."
Justin: "Yeah. We just like to play with the book."
Josh: "Because when we play we don't have to read all those words that are in the book. There's too many words and it would get our voice tired."

Clearly, the four boys engaged in storying because they enjoyed each other's company and it was just plain fun. They viewed this time together as play and their interactions revealed the fun they had. In addition to physical play, Jesse, Josh, Justin and John also played with language as part of their storying. These examples of language play are just one way that the boys played within their storying.

The boys are looking at a pop-up book of the human body. They are on the page showing the stomach.

Justin (pointing to the intestines in the picture and then patting his own stomach): "My stomach. Okay, my stomach. Ho, Ho, Ho! Merry Christmas!"
In this example, the boys are again looking at the human body pop-up book. They are entranced with a particular aspect of the male anatomy. This reminds them of a song that Leslie has just taught the class.

Justin: "Look! The pee-pee! The pee-pee!"
Lots of giggles.

Josh (jumping around): "Pee-pee! Pee-pee!"

Justin (singing): "Pee-pee butter, pee-pee butter, jelly, jelly!"

Josh: "Mee-mee mutter, mee-mee mutter, melly, melly!"

John: "Wee-wee wutter, wee-wee wutter, welly, welly!"

As each boy starts a new verse, the others join in and sing. The boy are laughing uproariously and jumping around. This continues for several verses.

...

The boys are looking at a Childcraft book about animals.

Justin: "Wanna see a peacock?"

Josh: "Where? Where?"

Justin: "Wanna see the picture of a peacock?...Wanna see the mumbo jumbo?"

Jesse: "What's a mumbo jumbo?"

Justin (jumping up and down): "Mumbo Jumbo! Mumbo Jumbo!"

The game-like structure of these interactional routines actually served important functions for the boys’ learning. Meek (1982) argues that all important learning begins as play. She goes on to argue:

[Play] flourishes best when [children] are free from the restraints of having to do what other people want them to do...the child is free to enter into these other worlds on his own terms. (Meek, 1982, pp. 36-37).
Play involving imagination and make-believe allows the child to take risks in discovering how the real world works by playing and comparing the real to their made-up nonsense and fantasy (Chukovsky, 1968). In addition, the child who disassociates the pretend object from the real object (such as when a child uses a broom for a horse) is learning how to operate within symbol systems by detaching thought from action (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky argues that "the old adage that child's play is imagination in action must be reversed: we can say that imagination in...children is play without action" (1978, p. 93). This has important ramifications for children as they learn to read. By linking the imaginative world to the real world, children are learning about symbol systems. Children also learn that a book offers them a world for play. Meek argues:

Successful early readers discover that the story happens like play. They enjoy a story and feel quite safe even with giants and witches, because they know that a story, like...[play] is a game with rules. (1982, p. 37).

The stories that Jesse, John, Josh and Justin told about the pictures in books were short, manageable chunks of language that were small enough for the boys to play with and control. They took great delight in playing with language and creating their own story world filled with an evil Shredder, fighting Ninja Turtles and giant dinosaurs.
Vygotsky (1978, 1986) argues that cognitive and communicative functions first appear on the social plane, and only later appear on the psychological plane. The boys' engagement in storying and language interactions actually assists in the structuring of their thought processes and concept formation. Tharp & Gallimore clarify: "Through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture and 'scaffold' them" (1988, p. 7). Therefore, social interaction is the vehicle for Jesse, Josh, Justin and John to internalize not only thought processes and concept formation, but also story structure. The process by which the social becomes the psychological is termed "internalization". This is when external, social activities (storying) are gradually internalized as the child learns to regulate his own thinking (Wood, 1988). Collaboratively, the four boys create their own stories in their own story world. Their stories are joint productions in which each member plays an important role. Together, with the assistance of each other, (and through the regulating speech and action of each other) the boys create an elaborate tale. This tale is greater and more elaborate than any story a single child could have created. Consequently, Jesse, Josh, Justin and John collaboratively perform at developmental levels beyond
their individual level of achievement. The four boys use the structure of narrative to story about pictures, thus mediating each other's learning.

A final fascinating feature of this interactional routine was the gradual shifting of roles which took place the final weeks of the study. As discussed previously, Jesse was definitely the follower. He took his lead from Josh and Justin, repeating phrases they had said or asking questions. He seemed to understand that by repeating someone's previous statement or by asking a question he had taken his turn and fulfilled his interactional role (Lindfors, 1987). Another technique he used to maintain his interactional role was through the use of pointing and questioning.

The boys are looking at a book about various types of insect, animal and human skeletons. Each skeleton has an accompanying illustration of the live insect, animal or human.

Jesse: "Guys, looky. What's that?"

Josh: "A beetle."

Justin: "Look at the scorpion!"

John: "There's a tarantula!"

Justin (dramatizing pinching): "There's a harmless beetle. That beetle doesn't do very much. But THIS beetle...OUCH! He pinch, pinch, pinches! OUCH! Blood gets, blood starts flooding out of you AAOO-WWW!"

Jesse (pointing to an insect): "What's that?"

Josh: "That's a bad bug. He pees on you!"

(Squeals of laughter)
Jesse (pointing to another insect): "What's this?"

Justin: "Oh, that bug is REALLY bad!"

Jesse (pointing to another insect): "What is it? What does it do?"

Justin (squealing with delight): "It pees, too!"

Jesse (pointing to another insect): "But, what is...this? What is this?"

(The other three boys are pretending to pinch each other and temporarily ignore Jesse's questions.)

Jesse (trying to get their attention. He's pointing to an octopus): "HEY! What IS this?"

Justin (dramatizing poking and pinching): "It's an octopus poker. Once it touches you...OUCH! BLOOD!"

Jesse: "So, what does this do?"

(Routine continues.)

However, the last week that I was in the classroom, I saw a gradual shifting of roles within the routine. It was as if Jesse had learned the ways to story. In March, Josh no longer held the book, Jesse did. He also took a more active role in determining what was "serious" and what would be storied about. Jesse used the dinosaur theme to become a more active member of the group story.

Jesse has gone to the classroom library and has a Childcraft encyclopedia. He brings it back to his table and the other three boys gather around him.

Jesse: "I'm looking for the dinosaur."

Jesse turns the page to the page of the knights in battle carrying the red and white flag.

Josh and Jesse simultaneously point to the illustration and exclaim: "That's serious!"
Josh: "That's just a white flag and then blood got splattered on it."

Jesse turns the page. The illustration shows an ancient stone which has letters carved in it.

Jesse (pointing): "That's serious!"

Josh (protesting): "THAT is NOT serious!" (He looks again at the illustration). "Oh, yeah it is!"

Jesse: "Told you."

Josh: "Yeah, that's the writing the war people left."

Justin: "Huh-uh. THIS is the writing that the war people left to get up to the...LOOK!" (He points to a portion of the rock that looks as if someone has scraped off the writing). "Now we'll never know where it is. They took it off and buried it. We'll never know where it is."

Jesse: "You guys. We have to find the dinosaur. Maybe the rock can help us. The writing tells us where it (dinosaur) is."

In April, when I returned to interview the four boys, I asked them about this shift in roles and how they decided who got to hold the book. We have just viewed a videotape of the boys' storying.

Brenda: "Notice in the tape how Jesse's holding the book? Usually Josh always holds the book. How come Jesse's holding the book now? How do you decide who gets to hold it?"

John: "Josh used to hog the book."

Justin: "Yeah."

Josh: "And now Jesse just took it!"

Clearly, Jesse has gained a great deal by being a part of the foursome. He has learned not only ways of storying and taking from texts, but he has grown in confidence as well.
Finally, all throughout the boys' storying, they dealt repeatedly with the issue of real versus pretend. Meek (1982) argues that children do not separate fact and fiction as we do. Instead, they relate the events happening within a story to what actually happens in his/her own daily life. Chukovsky (1968) argues that only through fantasy and nonsense can a child "strengthen in his mind a sense of the real" (p. 90). He also argues that every child has the need for nonsense. I saw Jesse, Josh, Justin and John wrestling with this issue all throughout the study. In the following example, the four boys are in the classroom library reading on the floor amongst the pillows. Vince attempts to join them, but he is not welcomed. Therefore, perhaps out of spite, Vince attempts to foil their story.

Jesse, Josh, Justin and John are looking at a Childcraft. They are storying about various types of old boats.

Josh (pointing to a pirate boat): "THAT is really serious!"

Vince (attempting to join the group): "That is really NOT serious. They're just making up stuff. They're making it up."

John: "Huh-uh!"

Vince: "Yes-huh!"

John: "You don't even know."

Vince: "The words are just writed. The pictures are just pretend."

Jesse, Josh, Justin and John ignore Vince's comments.
Vince (loudly): "You know, in books, only the fun dogs are real!"

During my interview with the four boys, we watched a tape of this segment with Vince. I asked them about Vince's comments and about the realness of their stories. John, still the rational one of the group, was eager for me to understand that he may go along with the stories, but he knows that the characters are pretend. I asked probing questions to get at the boys' notions of real and pretend.

Brenda: "Vince said that you guys always make stuff up. He said it's not really serious and that you just make stuff up. Why do you think he said that?"

Josh: "We don't."

John (pointing to Justin and Josh): "Because they always do!"

Justin: "We don't make stuff up."

John: "Yes you do. Like they always say 'That's serious! That's serious!'"

Brenda (to Justin and Josh): "So, you guys don't make things up?"

Justin: "We make some things up."

Brenda: "What are the things you don't make up?"

Josh: "Shredder."

Justin: "Ninja Turtles."

Brenda: "So, Shredder and the Turtles aren't made up?"

Justin and Josh: "No."

Brenda: "Because...?"
Justin: "They live in New York City. New York City is real."

Josh: "Underground."

John: "No, sir! They aren't real. They live only in cartoon-land!"

Josh (indignant): "NO! They don't live in cartoon-land. They live in New York City. They really live in New York City."

Brenda: "So, are the Turtles real or pretend?"

John: "Pretend."

Josh and Justin: "REAL! REAL! REAL!"

Brenda: "Well, there's a disagreement. What are they?"

Justin: "Well, they're mutants. They got transformed."

Josh: "The Shredder... at first they were just plain ordinary turtles, baby turtles crawling around in the sewers and then somebody dropped a canister of ooze down the sewer..."

Justin: "It was Shredder."

Josh: "...Yeah, Shredder dropped a canister of ooze down the sewer and the Turtles, they didn't know it was right there and they started crawling in it and they became mutants."

John: "They're pretend!"

Josh: "REAL! How do you think they made the movie if they weren't real?"

This argument continued for several minutes. Josh and Justin maintained that the Ninja Turtles are real. John maintained that they are pretend. Jesse listened, seemingly trying to make up his mind.
Applebee (1978) argues that it takes several years for a child to understand that stories are not real. Initially, most children think that stories are an historical account of something that happened long ago. Applebee (1978) found that 73 percent of the six-year-olds in his study were uncertain whether story characters and events were real. Young children are still developing their sense of genre and differentiation between fact and fiction. Applebee argues that "the child's gradual mastery of the formal characteristics of a story is paralleled by a gradual development of understanding of conventions related to story content" (p. 38). Therefore, as children learn about story structures, they also learn about story content.

**Summary**

Jesse, Josh, Justin and John learned a tremendous amount from their storying. Meek (1988) argues that illustrations in books are "icons to be contemplated, narrated, explicated by the viewer. It holds the story until there is a telling" (p. 12). These boys took hold of this notion and through collaborative interactions, they supported each other's learning about books and print. Interestingly, they storied exclusively about photographs and/or illustrations in nonfiction books - books that were beyond their reading level. However,
they were familiar with narrative structure and they used this structure to help them make sense of nonfiction texts and illustrations. They engaged in interactional routines which they used to create their own story world—a world where there were rules and guidelines to follow, a world full of Ninja Turtles and dinosaurs, a world where they could delight in the joy and pleasure of language and in each other's company. Because Leslie allowed the children time and space to interact with books, Jesse, Justin, Josh and John were free to create this elaborate format to support their own learning and ways of taking from books. However, this was but one of the ways that the children in Leslie's classroom responded to and made sense from fiction and nonfiction literature as they learned from each other.

CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING WITH FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS: FRIENDS HELPING FRIENDS

The vast majority of the children's reading occurred in a highly social environment in which the children were free to read what they wanted, where they wanted and with whom they wanted. As argued in the previous chapter, Leslie played an important role for the children's literacy learning and meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction texts. A teacher like Leslie, who is attuned to each child's abilities, can erect scaffolds that support each child as he/she learns new reading tasks. As
the expert reader, Leslie helped the children gradually internalize thought processes crucial to literacy learning. Leslie created a classroom environment where the children were free to interact and learn from each other. In addition, Leslie managed time and space within the classroom to create activity settings which best supported children's collaboration and learning. There was no longer just one teacher in the classroom. Rather, each child had the potential to be the teacher for the other children in the classroom. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) argue that teaching must be redefined as "assisted performance" (p. 21) because true teaching occurs when children are able to perform with assistance from others. The more knowledgeable other, whether it is an adult or a peer, acts as "consciousness for two" (Bruner, 1985, p. 29) by using language to provide assistance for the learner.

I found numerous examples in the data of children learning from each other. I have termed this notion "friends helping friends." The children did not have control over time and space within the classroom. However, they did have control over which peers would be their teachers. The children used their personal relationships with friends to scaffold their own learning and meaning-making with literature. I found evidence of children helping each other in four specific ways:
1) friends helping friends learn to read; 2) friends helping friends for the enjoyment of being with others; 3) friends helping friends in the zone of proximal development; and, 4) friends helping friends learn about written language.

**Friends Helping Friends: Learning to Read**

Cazden (1985) argues that "learning to read is a very social activity, deeply embedded in interactions with teachers and peers" (p. 595). Research in the field of early literacy has demonstrated time and time again the powerful influence that social interactions can have for young children learning to read (Bruner, 1985; Clay, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1985; Rowe, 1989).

In this particular study, Leslie's arrangement of time and space for the children's learning created the freedom of movement that allowed the children to learn from each other. As mentioned earlier, Leslie encouraged the children to ask each other for help with writing. Although she did not directly tell the children to ask each other for help with reading, the children seemed to know that collaboration was encouraged and expected. Children helped each other in two specific ways. Friends helped each other learn about print (such as unknown words and phrases), and they helped each other learn information about specific topics and/or subjects.
During reading time, the children were free to choose where they read and with whom they read. Some children chose to read at their desks, others chose to read on the floor of the library corner. No matter where they read, children constantly interacted and talked about books and print. It was common for children to ask each other for help with unknown words as they read. In the following segment, Heather is reading in the library corner. Heather typically read with Cindy, but on this particular day, Cindy was absent.

Heather is reading *School Bus* (Crews). She comes to a word that she does not know and she leans over to ask Kelly.

Heather: "Kelly, what does this say?"

Kelly (reading): "Right on time."

Heather (pointing to the words and reading): "Right on time."

Heather knew who to go to for help. Not only was Kelly in close proximity, but Kelly was also a friend. Leslie had instilled into the children this obligation to help other children learn, and I saw evidence of children happily helping each other as they read.

In the next example, Andrew is reading a Mother Goose book. He has recited the first verse of "Little Bo-Peep," sweeping his finger under the print as he reads. However, he encounters difficulty when he finds that there is still print left on the page (a second and third verse of the rhyme), even though he believes that he has recited
all of the verse. He leans over and asks Kelly for help.

Andrew (pointing to the remaining text on the page): "What's this one called?"

Kelly: "It's Little Bo-Peep."

Andrew goes back to the beginning of the verse. Again, he recites the rhyme "Little Bo-Peep", sweeping his finger under the print as he reads.

Again, he encounters print left after he has recited what he knows of the verse.

Andrew (to Kelly): "What's this one?"

Kelly: "It's still Little Bo-Peep...all of it is Little Bo-Peep."

Andrew, not knowing the other verses of the rhyme, points to the words of the second verse and reads: "Wittle Wo-Weep, was wost wer weep...."

Andrew was struggling with matching spoken words to the printed text. Kelly assisted Andrew by trying to help him understand that all of the print on the page was "still Little Bo-Peep." She taught him important lessons about the consistency of print and the matching of print to spoken words. Since Andrew did not know the remaining verses to the rhyme, he improvised and made up his own verses to complete the rhyme.

In this last example, Myron and Vince are reading a nonfiction book What's Inside? My Body. Myron has figured out how the book works, and he explains this to Vince.

Vince (pointing to a photograph): "What's that?"

Myron (pointing to the large black type that is the heading for the page): "Well, look what it says up there...that says 'My Body'.'
Vince turns the page. The heading reads "My Head."

Myron (pointing to the brain): "LOOK!"

Vince (squealing in disgust): "OH! YOUR BRAIN!"

Myron (pointing to the text next to the illustration): "See, look. That talks about your brain."

Myron had discovered that the large, bold-face black type was the heading and descriptor for the illustrations on the page. He had also discovered that the text accompanying the illustration "talks about" that illustration. He shared this information with Vince, in effect teaching him how to take information and make meaning from a nonfiction text.

A second way that children helped each other was through discussions about specific topics. Children learned a lot of information from each other. Often, children requested that another child read for them. Children seemed to know who was a good reader and they went to those children when they wanted specific information read from a text.

Andrew and Myron have a Childcraft encyclopedia. They have found a three photograph sequence of a snake eating a large egg. They are intrigued with this photograph and they ask Travis to read the text to them.

Andrew: "Travis, what's this say?"

Travis (engrossed in his own book): "You just read it."

Andrew: "Read it! I don't know how to read."
Travis (looking at the snake in the photograph): "Oh, man! He gets fat, doesn't he?"

Myron: "Yeah, that's because that's his egg."

Travis (explaining): "See, that isn't a really egg. That is not an egg...a snake egg. That is a different animal egg."

Myron: "It is?"

Travis (pointing to the snake in the photograph): "He's killed the mama. Now he's gonna eat the egg. Look how fat he gets."

Travis reads the captions under each of the three illustrations of the snake eating the egg.

Myron (amazed and excited and wanting Travis to read more): "Turn the page! Read about that!"

Travis reads one more caption and then goes back to his own book.

As the expert reader, Travis modelled how to take from texts. By pointing to and reading the captions, he demonstrated for Andrew and Myron that information about an illustration is conveyed in the captions accompanying the photographs. He also cleared up confusion about the information in the text. Myron mistakenly believed that the snake was eating his own egg. Travis explained that the snake had "killed the mama" and "now he's gonna eat the egg." These one-on-one reading lessons were valuable learning times for the children in the classroom. Instead of having only one teacher in the classroom, each child became a teacher for the other children. Travis taught Andrew and Myron local knowledge about the egg-eating snake. But more importantly, Travis also demonstrated how
to learn, reason and regulate his own learning, lessons
that Andrew and Myron will eventually internalize.

In this segment, Vince, Michael and Andrew are having
a discussion about castles.

Vince (looking at an illustration of a castle in a
book): "That's a huge castle!"

Michael: "That looks like a building."

Vince (pointing to one of the turrets in the
illustration): "NO! This top is this castle...
sometimes they make a castle top like this."

Andrew: "That is not a castle. That is a church."

Michael: "There's no such thing as castles."

Vince (getting upset): "WELL! Have you ever seen a
castle? I HAVE saw a castle. They put houses
around..."

Michael (interrupting): "There's no such thing as
castles!"

Vince: "YES THERE ARE! In many countries there used
to be castles."

Vince shows Andrew and Michael the illustration of
the castle in the book as proof that castles do
exist.

Not only did children help each other by reading text
and demonstrating how to take from texts, they also helped
each other by explaining and discussing unknown or
unfamiliar concepts. According to Vygotsky, learning can
only occur in interaction with others. Through
conversations and discussions with others, children learn
to listen to other children's experiences and to evaluate
these experiences based upon their own knowledge of the
world. In the aforementioned segment, Michael's notion of
castles ("There's no such thing as castles!") was challenged by Vince's insistence that castles exist. Interestingly, Vince had learned that there is power in print. He offered the book as evidence that castles do exist. Collaborative conversations encouraged children to explore their understandings of a topic and also gave them an opportunity to state their thoughts and understandings.

**Summary**

Research has supported the importance of allowing children to have conversations about what they read (Eeds & Wells, 1989; Galda, 1983; Hickman, 1979; Hepler, 1982). Children do not learn in isolation. Instead, learning is a social activity and one that occurs in the midst of others. Smith (1981, 1988, 1989) argues that learning is in part a consequence of the company one keeps. In Leslie's classroom, the children intuitively turned to other children for assistance. Although Leslie never told the children to use their peers for help with reading, from the very beginning, they understood that collaboration was an accepted and expected norm within the classroom. In essence, the children scaffolded their own learning by using social relationships within the classroom to support their reading. They turned to other children to do for them what they could not do alone. Leslie's organization of time, space and activity settings
(literacy events) within the classroom was the key to the children's use of others as scaffolds for their own learning. She created the learning environment which facilitated and encouraged the children to use each other as resources for their own learning.

**Friends Helping Friends: Reading for the Enjoyment of Being With Others**

One of the strongest patterns that emerged from the data was the preponderance of children interacting with each other around books and print.Constantly, throughout the school day, children talked with each other - about books, about print, about story characters, about story lines, about anything and everything. The overriding feeling of these literacy events was that the children genuinely enjoyed each other's company. They had fun together. This was evident in their voices. The children talked excitedly to each other, frequently changing their voice volume and pitch. They also giggled and laughed at aspects of the book, at each other and at themselves. Finally, the children were active. When the children in Leslie's classroom read together, they always responded with their entire bodies. The children responded with motor activity, dramatizing bits of the story, adding action and hand movements to their talk. Their nonverbal response and behavior revealed an extremely high level of engagement and affect with the story and with each other.
Other researchers have noted these same characteristics of young children's responses to literature. Hickman (1979, 1981), Hepler (1982), and Hepler and Hickman (1982) argue that young children in grades K-1 are most likely to use their bodies as they respond to literature. They noted children clapping, bouncing, scooting up close to the story reader, and acting out portions of the story. Hepler and Hickman (1982) write that "the literary transaction, the one-to-one conversation between author and audience, is frequently surrounded by other voices" (p. 279).

I also found evidence to support this claim. In the following example, Cindy, Sari and Erica are looking at *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons* by Tomie dePaola. They are fascinated with the illustration of the story's main character, Anthony, dressed up as a girl.

Sari is reading *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons*. Cindy is reading another book. She looks over as Sari begins to laugh and giggle.

Cindy: "What's so funny?"

Sari: "It's a boy's private part!"

Cindy: "It's his nose! It's his nose!"

Erica (overhearing the laughter and joining in): "Do you know who that is? It's Anthony! She [Strega Nona] put lipstick on him! ANTHONY PUT LIPSTICK ON!"

The girls laugh and jump up and down.

Sari: "Oh! This is Big Anthony! He put lipstick!!"

More giggling and jumping.
Cindy: "I can tell it's Anthony because look at his shoes...AND HIS HAIR!! IT'S ANTHONY!"

Sari: "I can tell."

Cindy: "It's Anthony going back to Strega Nona's house."

Sari (with an exaggerated yell): "AH! THAT'S ANTHONY!"

This causes another round of loud laughing and jumping. All of the laughter and noise has attracted Vince's attention. He comes over to see what is going on.

Cindy (to Vince): "That's what you'd look like if YOU put lipstick on!"

Vince (using a high-pitched voice and acting out spraying hair spray): "Ah! I'm a boy! Someone spray my hair! I was a boy and my mother combed my whole hair out!"

They all laugh uproariously at the thought of Vince dressed up as a girl.

Cindy (to the group): "I'll read it to you. Do you want me to read it to you?"

The children agree, and Cindy begins to read the book to the group.

Initially, Sari was reading this book. She was silently looking at the pictures and reading to herself. However, once she began to giggle, it attracted the attention of other children who came over to see the illustration. Cindy and Erica were familiar with this book because they had read it. When they came over to Sari, they helped her understand that the illustration really showed Big Anthony dressed as a girl. All of the children were familiar with Big Anthony from the book *Strega Nona*, which Leslie had read to them. However, only
Cindy and Erica had actually read *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons*. Using the illustration, the children discussed the silliness of Big Anthony's lipstick, hair and shoes. Then, when Vince came over, they delighted in imagining Vince dressed as a girl. Vince responded through the dramatization of being a girl and spraying hair spray.

In the following segment, Sari and Monica are sitting side by side. They each have a copy of the same book, *Sing a Song* (Melser).

Monica and Sari (singing the words): "Come, come, come to tea, come to tea together; Come, come, come to tea, come to tea together."

As they sing the words, they act out the motions of drinking tea. They continue to act out the motions for the verses "In the bath", "Splash about", "Out we jump", "Off to bed" and "Read a book."

There are many other examples of children reading for the pleasure and joy of being with others.

- Erica and Kelly frequently read multiple copies of the same book. Favorite books for their collaborative reading included *The Lady With the Alligator Purse* (Westcott), *School Bus* (Crews) and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle). They usually sat side by side in the library corner, cuddled up amongst the pillows.

- Heather and Cindy read together every single day. They also read multiple copies of the same book. They almost always read books such as *The Farm Concert* and *Sing a Song* from the Story Box/Wright Group collection.

- Monica and Sari both have a copy of *Sing a Song*. They sit side by side at their table, singing the words and turning the pages at the same time. After they finish their first reading, Monica says: "Let's do that again." They go through the book two more times.
- Travis is in the library corner quietly reading a book of Jack Prelutsky poetry out loud. Andrew comes back and quietly sits down beside him. He listens through several poems. After Travis reads a poem entitled "Oh, No," Andrew comments, "Read 'Oh, No' again." Travis obliges.

- Sarah and Vince are both in the library corner reading. Sarah has a *Childcraft* encyclopedia book showing photographs of children with various childhood diseases. Vince puts his book down and scoots over close to Sarah. They spend the next 25 minutes engrossed in the book. They pour over each illustration, look at the photographs and discussing which diseases they have had.

- Erica and Kelly are sitting side-by-side. They are taking turns reading Jan Pienkowski's *Dinnertime*. Kelly reads a page, then Erica reads a page. When they finish, Erica says (pointing to the first page of the book): "Next time I want to read this first."

The children's pleasure and delight in reading were constantly reaffirmed as they continually engaged in reading lessons with friends. I asked Leslie what she hoped to teach children about books. She replied that the main thing she wanted to teach children in her classroom was to "just enjoy books and have fun with them."

**Summary**

Consistent with her philosophy, Leslie gave the children ample time and space to read. In addition, and just as important, she encouraged the children to read with friends. She allowed the children to talk, to laugh, to dramatize, to jump up and down, and, at times, to scream and yell. She said that she enjoys seeing the children so excited about books.
Hickman (1979, 1981) and Hepler and Hickman (1982) have used the term "community of readers" to describe classrooms where children read quality children's books and work together to learn to read, to explore possible meanings and to share interpretations. Leslie's classroom is truly a community of readers. Leslie encouraged the children to use the social network of the classroom to enhance and facilitate their meaning-making and enjoyment of books.

_Friends Helping Friends: Operating Within the Zone of Proximal Development_

As discussed, children constantly read and responded to books together with friends. However, I also collected evidence of children helping each other and through that help, actually working in the friends' zone of proximal development. Children seemed to intuitively recognize the zone of proximal development within other children. They then provided assistance to that child by operating within that zone so the less capable child could be successful. As argued earlier, Vygotsky has proposed this notion of the zone of proximal development as being the distance between the child's actual development (what he/she can do alone) and the child's proximal development (what he/she can do with assistance) (Vygotsky, 1978). Social learning theorists agree that the activities which form the basis of a child's understanding arise out of social interaction...
with a more capable other. I saw evidence of this assistance coming from peers who competently erected scaffolds for their less capable friend so that child could be successful. The following examples demonstrate the powerful influence that children can have on each other's learning when they are encouraged to interact with each other as they read.

Michael, (who is struggling to learn letter names and sounds) has joined Travis (who reads at approximately a third grade reading level) in the library corner. Travis is reading a book about the human body. When Michael sits down, Travis puts the book in the middle of their laps.

Travis: "Okay, show me what you can read, okay? You read and then I'll read."

Michael (leaning over and speaking softly into Travis' ear): "I don't know how to read."

Travis: "Okay..."

Travis opens the book. He points to the eye of the skeleton in the illustration.

Travis: "Guess what? That's your....?"

Travis pauses expectantly.

Michael: "Eyeball, eyeball."

Travis (pointing to the eye): "Right, wanna talk about that? I'm gonna read about the, the top of the head and you can talk about that. Okay?"

Travis begins to read.

Travis, as the more expert reader, quickly assessed the reading situation with his less competent friend. Instead of excluding Michael from the reading task, Travis restructured the task so that Michael could be successful.
He did this by inviting Michael to "talk about the eyeball." Interestingly, Travis restructured the task by engaging Michael in a format typical of parents as they read to their young children. Travis did this by asking: "Guess what? That's your...?" This question/answer format continued for several pages of the book. Like parent/child book reading routines (Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Snow, 1977), Travis adjusted the demands of the reading task to meet Michael's needs. Travis provided the scaffold, the support for Michael so he could accomplish the reading task and feel successful. Thus, Travis worked within Michael's zone of proximal development.

In the next segment, Jesse, Justin, Josh and John are looking at a nonfiction pop-up book about the human body. Each body part is numbered and the corresponding number can be found in the text in which a short paragraph is written about each body part. Leslie has not taught this system to the children, but Justin has figured it out and he teaches Josh, Jesse and John how to use it.

John (pointing to the illustration of the brain): "Hey, guys! Look at this brain! This is really serious!"

Justin: "All right, the brain...right here, number nine."

Justin finds the number nine in the text.

Josh: "Number nine, number nine."

Justin: "Six...."
He points first to the number in the illustration and then finds the corresponding number in the text.

Justin: "...the thing that holds the eyeball."

Josh seems to understand the system.

Josh: "Ok, thirteen..."

He points first to the number in the illustration and then finds the corresponding number in the text.

Josh: "...the teeth. Ribs. Hey, there's your ribs. They keep your heart safe."

Justin: "The ribs keep the body inside, 'cause if you didn't have any ribs, POP! All your stuff from your liver would come out!"

He expresses this quite dramatically by pretending to explode.

Not only did Justin share local knowledge, knowledge specific to the task of identifying and reading about number nine (the brain), but he also taught the boys procedural knowledge, the process of how to identify the body parts by number within the text (Wood, 1988). Through Justin's regulating speech, he taught Josh, John and Jesse the process. Subsequently Josh, at least, was soon able to function independently. This assisted performance was true teaching. Additionally, the boys also shared knowledge about the body parts they identified. Josh commented that the ribs "keep the heart safe." Justin elaborated on this with a dramatic demonstration of what would happen if the body did not have ribs ("All your stuff from your liver would come out!"). Thus, by operating within the boys' zone of
proximal development, Justin was able to teach them how to use this unique way of knowing.

On-going teaching/learning within the zone of proximal development also occurred with Cindy and Heather. Cindy and Heather were very good friends. They sat beside each other at school, and they also lived near each other. They played together at school, after school and on weekends. As mentioned previously, Cindy and Heather read together everyday. However, Cindy came into kindergarten an avid reader. She was reading at approximately a 2nd-grade reading level while Heather struggled, much like Jesse, with letter names and sounds. Interestingly, during their reading times together, the girls always chose to read multiple copies of the same book. The books they chose were not story or short chapter books, which Cindy was capable of reading (and did read at home). Instead, they always read books with very brief and repetitive texts, books that were highly predictable and books with a strong correlation between text and illustrations. Their favorite books included: The Farm Concert (Cowley), Sing a Song (Melser), A Monster Sandwich (Cowley), Freight Train (Crews) and School Bus (Crews). Rarely did the two girls read anything other than these five books. Throughout the research project, Heather and Cindy read these books over and over and over again. On one particular day, they read Sing a Song four times in a
row, then they read *The Farm Concert* three times in a row. Unlike other children who read together and took turns, alternately reading first one page and then the other, Cindy and Heather always read the text simultaneously. Occasionally, Heather would glance over at Cindy's book to make sure she was on the same page. Cindy proved to be an important model for Heather's reading. Cindy modelled important aspects of the reading process: directionality, using voice inflections, page-turning and one-to-one correspondence between the spoken word and the printed word.

On a particular day in March, Cindy was absent from school. That day, Heather followed their same routine during reading time. She went to the library corner and got their usual books, *Sing A Song*, *School Bus* and *The Farm Concert*. She snuggled into their usual place on the floor amongst the pillows, and she began to read. She followed the same routine and read in the same manner as when she read with Cindy. Although she pointed to the words, as she had done with Cindy, she was not always pointing to the word she was reading. And as she read *School Bus*, she approximated the text because Cindy was not there to provide the support of reading unknown words. However, through the year, Heather had learned a great deal about books, concepts of print and the reading process. Cindy had set up supports, scaffolds, for
Heather's learning. Through their simultaneous activity, Cindy was able to support Heather's reading by reading for her when Heather came upon words that she did not know. Cindy seemed to instinctively know that Heather would not be successful reading books that Cindy typically read. Instead, Cindy and Heather read books with brief, predictable and repetitive texts. Day after day, Cindy happily read with Heather. She never objected to reading the same five books over and over again. Cindy provided a very powerful role model for Heather and she provided important scaffolds for Heather's learning. Cindy provided such successful scaffolds that Heather was able to function quite successfully independent of Cindy's direct assistance.

This example illustrates how capably Cindy was able to provide a scaffold for Heather's reading. It is also a vivid example of Heather's progression through the varying stages within her zone of proximal development. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) argue that the "transition from assisted performance to unassisted performance is not abrupt" (p. 32). Instead, the learner gradually takes on more and more of the responsibility of the task. During the first stage of learning a task, there is a steady decline in the expert's responsibility within the task and a steady increase in the learner's responsibility. Bruner (1983a) calls this the "hand-over principle" (p. 60). This is a
point in time when the learner, who was initially a spectator, now becomes an active participant within the learning task. Heather and Cindy operated within this stage for most of the school year. The second stage within the zone of proximal development is described as occurring when the learner is able to carry out the task without assistance from others. This became evident when Cindy was not present, and Heather was able to continue to read. At this stage, the learner's performance may not yet be fully internalized or automatic, but the learner is able to provide assistance for himself or herself, through self-instruction (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Summary

Bruner (1986) argues that learning "is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture" (p. 127). In all of the aforementioned segments, social interaction provided the vehicle for the learner's internalization of thought processes and subsequent learning. In each example, the more competent child erected a scaffold which supported the less competent child as he/she learned a new task. Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1983b, 1986) argue that the intellectual tools and activities which form the basis of understanding arise out of social interaction and largely informal teaching. These informal teaching situations which so naturally occurred between friends were vital
because the more competent child actually demonstrated thought processes and strategies for the less competent child. Wells (1986) provides the metaphor of a teacher as a "master providing guidance to an apprentice, who utilizes that guidance in the pursuit of his or her chosen goal" (p. 120). This process is best accomplished through mutual negotiation of meaning between student and teacher or, in the aforementioned examples, between a more expert student and a novice student. It is this collaborative approach that encouraged children to take risks in the safe environment that surrounded them as they learned and read with friends.

CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING WITH FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS: PRIVATE LESSONS

Meek (1988) argues that reading does not happen in a vacuum. She states that implied within the text are social instructions on how to read it. There are a multitude of things that successful readers learn without being taught. Meek argues that many children learn to read by engaging in what she calls "private lessons" and by becoming "involved in what [they] read" (Meek, 1988, p. 7).

While the vast majority of the reading and talking that surrounded books in Leslie's kindergarten occurred in a highly social and interactive context, this was not always the case. Some children, particularly Travis, and
to a lesser extent Vince and Andrew, made a habit of privately reading and talking about books. These private lessons proved to be just as important for Travis, Vince and Andrew's meaning-making as the highly social interactions were for Jesse, Josh, Justin and John's meaning-making.

**Travis' Private Lessons**

My first introduction to Travis was on my first day in Leslie's classroom. I happened to be sitting at his table during reading time and his reading immediately caught my attention. He had a *Childcraft* encyclopedia, and unlike the other children in the classroom who looked at the pictures and talked to friends about the illustrations, Travis set about the task of reading alone. I also immediately noticed that for Travis, reading was serious business. No laughing, no jumping around, no fantastic tales about the animals and beasts within the text. In fact, as I got to know Travis, I was continually amazed at his demeanor. He was a very happy and seemingly well-adjusted child. He had friends, he played, drew pictures, dramatized in the house area. He participated in the classroom life in a manner similar to the other children in Leslie's room. But no matter what Travis did in kindergarten, he approached the task seriously - for Travis, school and learning were serious business.
In February, Travis was playing with Jesse, Josh and John in the house. The four boys were pretending that they were in a restaurant. Immediately, Josh and John began dramatizing that the restaurant was being robbed. They began to yell, scream and throw around the play money. Disgusted, Travis yelled: "You guys aren't treating this place right!" And he proceeded to collect and organize the scattered money as the other three boys continued the drama, ignoring his pleas for calm and order. Later, after he had collected all of the money from the floor, Travis set about the task of organizing the money into like denominations. Then he meticulously put it in bottles, which they were using for a cash register. Travis remarked, to no one in particular, "This is hard work up here". For Travis, even play was hard work.

Similarly, on another occasion, Travis was listening to a story on tape at the listening center. Josh and Jesse were there with him. Jesse and Josh began playing with the headphones. Soon, they were pulling each other's headphones off, pretending to be air-traffic controllers by talking into the ear-piece, giggling, rolling around on the floor and generally wreaking havoc. Travis, who was sitting no more than a foot from them, continued to be deeply engrossed in the story. He did not even look at the boys as they yelled, giggled, and rolled around on the
floor. In fact, Leslie stepped in and asked Jesse and Josh to choose another play center and Travis did not even seem to notice their absence.

Therefore, as I got to know Travis, it seemed befitting of his personality and attitude toward schooling that he would engage himself in private lessons. He seemed most content when he was alone with a book. Although he was alone, Travis was never silent. He talked and talked about the pictures in the books, engaging in a conversation with himself about the book he was reading. He often read long stretches of text out loud to no one in particular. Sometimes other children joined him to listen to him read. He seemed to love books. Early in the study I asked Travis what kinds of books he liked to read.

Travis: "Well, everyday I read about stuff. I have two favorite topics that I like to read about, the Earth and volcanos. I like to read about something different, like about how it's [the Earth] made and how volcanos are made. I like to read books where I learn about stuff."

Travis had clear preferences for the types of books he liked to read and he did read nonfiction almost exclusively. When Travis engaged in his private lessons, he seemingly taught himself about the structure and features common to nonfiction. During my time in the classroom, I saw Travis using captions, labels and numbered illustrations to help him make meaning from the text and accompanying illustrations. Travis commonly read the labels and captions of diagrams and illustrations and
incorporated these into his talk about the books he was reading. He read in this manner frequently and he seemed very comfortable and adept at using the captions, illustrations and labels to help him understand the text.

In the following segments, Travis is reading the captions that accompany the illustrations in a Childcraft encyclopedia.

Travis (reading and pointing to the captions accompanying various illustrations): "This is a tiggerfish...A lady bug is an arthropod...cave salamander and cave cricket..."

...

Travis is reading about how mountains are formed. He is reading the captions accompanying two diagrams showing how mountains form.

Travis (reading and pointing to the illustration): "During the millions of years, mud, sand, and hot rock are mixed together and pushed up out of the sea bottom. This forms a long chain of wrinkled mountains."

Travis (talking): "See, and there's like half of it. And here...it's like..."

Travis (reading another caption): "...During many millions of years, wind and rain and snowy...snow slowly wear down mountains."

Travis (talking to no one in particular): "And volcanos are made when the sun goes down in the dirt and when its snowy and cold, rain comes down and mixes together and the hot forms; a hot stuff and then the Earth pushes it up and it comes out a volcano."

Travis also became very adept at using numbers for cross-referencing, a technique used in a pop-up book about the human body. In the following example, Travis is reading the pop-up book, which has tiny black numbers on
each body part in the illustrations. Corresponding to that number on the illustration is a number in the text which explains about that part. Travis is reading and talking about the eye.

Travis (pulling a tab that makes the eye muscle move): "Your eye is holded so they don't roll out...that little piece, number six..."

Travis searches the text for the number six.

Travis: "...see, you find that number. The eye is number five...That's it! Number six is the eye muscle..."

Travis (reading): "The eye muscles attach the elastic ball of the eye to the back of the socket. There is a set of six muscles in each socket. The two sets work in harmony so that both eyes look at the same thing. Otherwise, you would get double vision."

...

Travis is again looking at The Human Body, the pop-up book. He is reading and talking about the windpipe and the food pipe and how the windpipe is connected to the nose.

Travis: "Okay, the air pipe...Here's your air. I'll find the air part...number ten, number ten..."

Travis has found the number ten on the illustration and is searching the text for the number ten so he can read about the windpipe.

Travis (reading): "...the passage for the air we breathe and the food we eat. The food and air pass one another at the epi-lotts..." (sounding out the word 'epiglottis').

I asked Travis how he knew that the numbers on the illustrations corresponded to the numbers in the text. He responded: "I just, I just kinda like...'cause I knew." He seemed perplexed by the question. When I asked if he had
books with corresponding numbers at home, he said that he did not.

Meek (1988) argues that when children teach themselves to read, the reading lessons are not a part of any rigid course of study. Rather, they are a part of the "course we gave ourselves in our interactions with texts" (Meek, 1988, p. 7). Travis has taken part in these untaught lessons. He has taught himself, through frequent and repeated interactions with texts, how to use the structures and features that are commonly a part of nonfiction literature. Meek (1988) argues that through private lessons children learn how books work and how the story goes. Children also learn lessons in discourse and the nature and variety of written discourse. She also argues that children need the time and the occasions to read the same book over and over and over again because "that's when they pay attention to the words - after they've discovered what happens" (1988, p. 36). However, Travis learned not only local knowledge about the workings of books and the reading process. He also used language to structure his thinking.

The following excerpts illustrate not only Travis' interest and engagement with books, but they are vivid examples of his "collaboration with himself" (Wertsch & Stone, 1985, p. 173) as he gives himself private lessons in reading.
It is January. Travis is in the classroom library cuddled up in pillows, reading books alone. He has the Childcraft encyclopedia entitled World and Space. He opens up the book to a double-page spread showing a cross-section of the crust, the mantle, and the outer and inner core of the Earth. As Travis talks and reads, he is literally all over the illustration, touching it, feeling it, pointing to various parts of the diagram, pointing to the captions, etc. He engages in a combination of reading and talking about what he sees.

Travis: "The crust is like black up here...at, at, at the bottom of the black is...a little brown...And then, the mantle is like all, red, hot, orange, red-orange. The outer core is like yellow, a little. The inner core is really, really, really hot!"

He turns the page. The illustrations on these two pages show a view of the Earth from Space. White cloud masses can be seen swirling around the green and brown land masses.

Travis (pointing first to the clouds and then to the water): "I can tell what that is...it's that white...it's like the clouds kinda like...this is like the water."

Travis points to and reads the black words labelling the continents.

Travis (sounding out the words): "...Africa...Ant- ar-tica...Antarctica. Antarctica's a hard word to say...Antarctica...Antarctica."

As Travis mentioned earlier, he enjoys reading about the Earth and volcanos. In the following segment, he is reading and talking about volcanos.

Travis is reading Childcraft World and Space encyclopedia. He is looking at a diagram of the various parts of a volcano. He engages in a combination of talking and reading. Again, he is very tactile with the illustrations - pointing, rubbing, touching and feeling each part he talks about.

Travis: "I call this part, um...like the holder. The lava holder, I call that the lava holder. 'Cause that's the lava holder and it's really
called a magna tun-tle...tulle...tunnel, the magna tunnel which pops up, the cone and the lava. It says here..."

Travis (reading): "A volcano is a special kind of mountain that actually builds itself. It is made of hot rock that pours up out of the Earth in a mild earthquake..."

Travis reads the entire page. The illustration on the page shows an erupting volcano and a diagram of a volcano with the parts labelled.

Travis (pointing to the illustration and the diagram): "This is the cool lava, look what it looks like in the cool lava. Hot lava! Wow! Look at that stuff!! Hot lava. Cool lava. Cool lava. When you get up inside is sort of silvery. And when you touch it it's squishy, squishy. When it gets cool it'll be warm. A cool bath - hot lava. Huh-uh, that wouldn't be a good bath!"

Travis, deeply engaged with the book, acted as if he was carrying on a conversation with himself. He used voice inflections, he pointed to the illustrations and he commented upon what he saw and read. But, according to Vygotsky, he was doing more than merely talking to himself.

Humans...preserve the 'function of social interaction' even in their own individual behavior; they apply a social means of action to themselves...their individual functioning in essence represents a unique form of internal collaboration with oneself. (Vygotsky, 1960, pp. 450-451, quoted in Wertsch & Stone, 1985, p. 173).

Tharp & Gallimore (1988) call this using the self as a source of assistance. They add that this type of self-assistance accompanies internalization. Self-speech acts both as the "manifestation and the mechanism for internalization" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, p. 87). For
Vygotsky, the overt act of speaking provides the basis for inner speech which forms the processes of thinking. Vygotsky (1978, 1986) calls the types of talk in which Travis engages "egocentric speech." Egocentric speech serves very important intellectual functions for young children. These dialogues are evidence of the child's emerging linguistic control. Around the age of seven, egocentric speech goes underground and is internalized to form inner speech and verbal thinking. When the child talks to himself, he is using speech to plan and regulate his own activities. Therefore, speech comes to form what Vygotsky referred to as higher mental functions - the ability to plan, evaluate, memorize and reason (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986).

Upon examination of Travis' egocentric speech and dialogues with himself, one can see evidence of his planning, evaluation, memorization and reasoning as he engaged in self-regulation. In the aforementioned segments, Travis planned his dialogues with comments such as "I can tell what that is," "It says here..." and "Look at that stuff!" He also made evaluations of what he read and saw. After seeing the red-orange lava in the illustrations of the inner core of the Earth, he commented: "The inner core is really, really, really hot!" He also demonstrated his evaluation of his reading when he said: "And when you touch it, it's squashy,
squashy." In Travis' reading and conversation about Antarctica, he seemed to be practicing and attempting to memorize when he said: "Ant-ar-tica ... Antarctica. Antarctica's a hard word to say ... Antarctica ... Antarctica." And Travis' talk was full of his attempts to reason and make sense of what he was seeing and reading. In his discussion of hot and cool lava, he linked the cooling down process to a cooling that he was familiar with - the cooling of bath water from hot to warm. He added that it is a bath he would not want to take. Travis said: "When it [lava] gets cool it'll be warm. A cool bath - hot lava. Huh-uh, that wouldn't be a good bath!"

Travis, again, vividly displays his thinking processes in the following segment.

Travis is looking and reading about how the continents were all a part of one large land mass millions of years ago. The illustration shows three diagrams. The first is a drawing of how the continents looked 200 million years ago. The second shows how the continents looked 135 million years ago. The final drawing shows how the continents look today.

Travis (pointing to the three illustrations as he discusses them; he incorporates words from the labels into his talk): "Africa...you see? You know what happened? A-se-a..."

Travis (sounding out 'Eurasia'): "...Ase-a... and Antarctica, they came together and hooked together. Um...and then it sort of came apart a little bit more...and then it was, this is like today. Now this is like back in the dinosaur land..." (pointing to the first drawing).

Travis (pointing to the second and then third drawing): "...and I think this is when they were
still back in the dinosaur land but starting to die a little bit...but this is how it is today."

Again, one can see clear evidence of his self-regulation. He planned his thinking with statements such as "Africa...you see? You know what happened?" He also linked the time period to something else he knew a great deal about, the dinosaurs. "Now, this is like back in the dinosaur land...and I think this is when they were still back in the dinosaur land but starting to die a little bit...."

Travis' reading and talking about books serve very important functions. Meek (1988) would argue that Travis is giving himself private lessons. Travis' mother reported that he has been engaging with books in this manner from the time he was very small. She said that he likes to know how things work. She frequently finds him reading the encyclopedias and National Geographic. She notes: "Travis likes to thumb through [National Geographic] reading, you know, the captions under the pictures and pointing things out and just talking to himself about what's in there." Recently, Travis had become interested in reading ingredients. His mother said:

"One of his favorite things to read now, which I find real amusing, is recipes, like on the backs of the ketchup bottle. He reads the recipes. He reads the ingredients in everything, like in the A-1 Sauce. 'Mom, do you know there's vinegar in here? I like vinegar on french fries'. This is our dinner conversation."
It seems that Travis has been engaging in private lessons from the time he was young. Tharp & Gallimore (1988) would argue that Travis is using the self as a form of assistance. In addition, social learning theorists would argue that Travis' learning goes much deeper than just teaching himself how to read. Language used in the manner that Travis uses it actually directs and structures his processes of thinking and concept formation (Wood, 1988). Therefore, his self-speech actually serves the function of forming higher mental processes.

Other Private Lessons

As mentioned earlier, Travis typically read only nonfiction literature and he read alone almost exclusively. I did not encounter any other children who chose to read alone as often as Travis did. However, there were two other children, Vince and Andrew, who occasionally did read by themselves. Vince read both fiction and nonfiction, but he seemed to prefer fiction. Unlike Travis, Vince was not reading conventionally. However, he knew many concepts about print and he knew a great deal about books and reading. In the following example, Vince is reading a story about a little boy who had to go to the doctor. He has never heard this story read aloud.
Vince is looking at an illustration of the doctor looking inside the child's mouth.

Vince: "His tongue...it's part of his bones. God made the bones of our head. It's...he made his brain...and, I'm going to tell you about the thing...the brain, it looks like something good. The eyeball sticks out of a hole. Here's something I've never seen. Here's something..."

Vince turns the page. The illustration shows the doctor listening to the little boy's heart.

Vince: "...this, the heart. The heart makes, makes you healthy. And here's the ribs. The ribs make you more healthy. The stomach has a tube to the...privacy. And here's the hand going to your stomach and here's your, the ribs. The ribs is a cage to the thing and they cage it, like tubes come out and in..."

During Vince's private lessons, he seemed to be taking an inventory of what he knew about the human body. At the time I recorded this segment, Leslie had spent several weeks reading various fiction and nonfiction books about the body. The children often talked with each other about what they had learned. All during the aforementioned segment, Vince recounted what he has learned about the body.

In the next segment, Vince is reading about a man who makes pizza. Again, he has never heard this book read aloud. Instead, he draws upon his prior knowledge about baking and pizza-making to engage in this dialogue with himself. One of the most interesting features of this segment, unfortunately, one that I cannot relate in print, is Vince's use of an Italian-like accent. He used this accent all throughout his reading of the story. He also
used very dramatic voice inflections and hand movements as he relates the events of the story.

Vince: "AH-ah!! Pizz-ah! What do you say? Ooh-ooh! First, he gets his apron on...he puts flour, he puts water and he makes it and stirs and he stirs and he makes fat dough. This is how big the dough is...."

Vince uses his hands to demonstrate the huge size of the dough.

Vince: "This is gonna be heavy. Ooh-aa-ahh! And he SPLATS!!" (he slams his hand down on the table to emphasize this).

Vince: "...and he tastes the sauce and they give him dollars and make the pizza groosah-moosah!" (He continues making unintelligible comments in an Italian-type accent).

Vince: "...GLOOSAH! GLASSEEH! Oh, yummy! Glooseeh! The pizza man is the king!"

Meek (1988) writes that in order for young children to read a book, the child must become both the teller and the told. The child must interpret and understand the author's view and voice and must also be the recipient of the story. She argues that this symbolic interaction is an important literary competency that is never formally taught. Instead, young children quickly learn it as they interact with books. Vince taught himself and demonstrated important literacy lessons in the above encounter. He became the teller and the told. He used the illustrations as an "icon to be contemplated, narrated, explicated" (Meek, 1988, p. 12). He used language patterns to create his own story. He used voice inflections and accents to create a story character. He used dramatizations and
movement to help teach himself size relationships. He used his language to reconstruct, remake and extend his experiences with pizza. In turn, he used language to connect his prior experiences to the illustrations in the book. He took this information from his knowledge of the world and used it to make sense of the text. These are very important literacy lessons. Meek (1988) argues that "real books are good reading texts for learners" (p. 39). Like Travis, Vince used language to reflect concepts he already knew. In addition, he used it to direct his processes of thinking and to regulate his own activities. Clearly, Vince's engagement in his own private lessons provided a way for him to learn new literacy lessons and a way for him to practice previously learned literacy lessons.

Finally, Andrew also engaged in private lessons. Just as Travis' interactions with books differed from Vince's interactions, Andrew's interactions with books also differed. Andrew was not yet reading conventionally. When he read by himself, he typically engaged in language play. Like Vince, Andrew preferred to read fiction. He typically read nursery rhymes and other books of verse. The following examples were captured at various stages of the research inquiry.

Andrew is reading Tomie dePaola's Mother Goose.
Andrew (flipping through the book): "This is a lot of geese, geese, geese. This is a lot of mooses, mooses, mooses. This is a lot of rooses, rooses, rooses...."

Andrew finds the rhyme "Old King Cole". He recites the rhyme. Andrew then overhears Vince who is at the next table spelling 'M-O-M'.

Andrew (as he turns the pages in the book): "Old king mom was a very old bom and a very old mom was she...Old king mom was a very old bom and a very old bom was she...

...

Andrew is reading another collection of nursery rhymes. He comes to Little Bo-Peep. He recites the verse. The second time through the verse he plays with the words.

Andrew (in a sing-song voice): "Wittle Wo-Weep has wost her weep wand wasn't wo where wo wind whom...."

He continues in this manner throughout the verse.

...

In this example, Andrew is reading Peanut Butter and Jelly by Nadine Bernard Westcott.

Andrew: "...then you take the nuts and you crack them, crack them, peanut butter, peanut butter, jelly, jelly."

Andrew (turning the page): "Then you put them on the floor and smash them, smash them, peanut butter, peanut butter, jelly, jelly. Then you moosh them with your feet and smear them, smear them, peanut butter, peanut butter, jelly, jelly. Then you lick it with you tongue and kiss it, kiss it, peanut butter, peanut butter, jelly, jelly...."

Andrew does not turn the page, but instead continues improvising verses that are not a part of the original text.

It seems that children instinctively know what aspect of language and literacy learning to work on in their own private lessons. Andrew knew how to handle books, but he
was just beginning to pick out words in texts and words in the environment. He used his private lessons as a time to play with language. Unlike Travis and Vince, who used voice inflections and dramatization to enhance their reading, Andrew was very quiet and self-absorbed when he read by himself. Andrew used language as a toy (Garvey, 1977) as he played with various elements of sound. Lindfors (1987) argues that language play is an important "precursor to child's subsequent, more conscious understanding of language structure" (p. 73). In this vein, through language play, Andrew used sound sequences and word combinations to teach himself about the sounds of language and language structure. This language play also facilitated his categorization of speech sounds (Read, 1975) and his developing awareness of phonemes (Bryant, Bradley, Maclean & Crossland, 1990). Therefore, Andrew's language play laid important groundwork for his written language learning. Rich experiences with the oral language of rhymes and verses can help bridge a child's transition from oral to written language (McKenzie, 1986; Meek, 1988) and Andrew's private lessons are very rich language and literacy experiences. He provided for himself exactly what he needed to build and further his knowledge about books and print.
Summary

Implied within any text are social instructions on how to read it (Meek, 1988). Travis, Vince and Andrew engaged themselves in these private lessons and provided a type of self-assistance as they learned to read and make meaning with fiction and nonfiction texts. Language used in this way directs and structures the child's thinking as they learn the lessons that various types of literature have to teach them.

CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING WITH FICTION AND NONFICTION TEXTS: WRITTEN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Just as social learning theory provided the framework for analyzing children's growth as readers, social learning theory also provided the framework for discussing children's growth as writers. When examining children's development of writing as a symbolic tool, Vygotsky (1978) argues that the prehistory of children's writing lies in their use of gestures. He argues that young children's gestures are their first visual signs and that subsequent visual symbols (using objects to symbolize other objects during play and while drawing) derive their meanings first from gestures. Vygotsky (1978) calls gestures "writing in air" (p. 107). Through gesturing, children learn to "assign the function of sign to an object and subsequently give it meaning" (p. 108). Children's discovery and use of this first-order symbolism lays the foundation for
further discoveries about second-order symbolism, writing. Crucial to children's understanding of written language is their discovery that people draw not only things but they can also "draw" speech. Speech serves important functions for the child's written language learning. Speech helps children organize and give meaning to their early writings and drawings. Additionally, through social interaction children's writing can be given new meaning as they converse with others as they write and draw. Through interactions with others, children learn the functions of print. They learn that "graphics not only represent meaning but can mediate the reading or recall of a specific spoken message" (Dyson, 1989, p. 8).

Vygotsky (1978) argues that "all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (p. 57). Eventually, these functions are internalized and children are capable of functioning independently. Because learning in social situations is always in advance of independent activity, social interactions provide an important learning context for children's growth as writers, just as they provide an important context for children's growth as readers (Vygotsky, 1978).

Friends Helping Friends - Learning Written Language Through Social Interaction

As discussed, the children in Leslie's classroom surrounded themselves with friends who assisted them with
their own reading. I also saw an abundance of evidence to support this notion in relation to children's writing. Social interactions played an important role for children as they learned written language. I found that social interaction facilitated children's growth as writers in two major ways: 1) through talk, children gave each other ideas and topics to write about; and, 2) children assisted each other in the actual production of written texts.

Social interaction served as an important source of ideas for children to write about. Children spent a considerable amount of time discussing and providing information about the content of their writing as well as questioning others about their writing. Frequently, the classroom writing time began with children talking to their friends to get ideas for their own writing.

Sari: "I'm gonna write something about Christmas."

Monica: "I'm gonna make a gingerbread house."

Sari: "Again!? You did that yesterday."

Monica: "Well, then I don't know what to make. I don't know what to draw."

Heather: "I'm making a house."

Monica: "Okay, me too."

... 

Kelly (to Erica): "What are we, are we allowed to draw anything we want?"

Erica: "Yeah."

Kelly: "I don't know what I want to draw."
Erica: "I'm drawing a book."

Kelly: "I know. We can make a calendar. I can make a calendar. I can make it be today. I've got enough room."

These writers had meaningful conversations about their texts and the composing process. In the first segment, Sari reminded Monica that she had already written about gingerbread houses. This prompted Heather to tell Monica her topic. Through conversation, Sari and Heather assisted Monica in her writing by reminding her of what she had already written and by providing her with an idea for her own writing. In the second segment, Kelly did not have any topics in mind to write about. After talking with Erica, she got the idea to do a calendar. Erica provided assistance for Kelly by sharing her idea for a topic. This prompt freed Kelly's mind and gave her the novel idea to make a calendar. These writers discussed issues that "real" authors discuss. Graves (1983) writes that "writers who learn to choose topics well make the most significant growth in both information and skills" (p. 21). In Leslie's classroom, collaboration among friends facilitated the writing process by aiding children in topic selection. Children seemed to want to write about a topic identical to or similar to the topic their friends were writing about. Often, the children's conversation at their tables as they wrote not only provided an opportunity for children to get initial ideas
for what to write, but their discussions also allowed them
to link their texts to those of other authors.

Group discussions around a single topic also provided
children with additional knowledge and information that
could be included into their own texts. Initially, the
following conversation began with Sari and Monica trying
to decide what to draw and write. Monica decided to draw
a turkey. However, Sari reminded her that she had already
drawn a turkey. The ensuing conversation with friends
gave her another idea.

Sari (to Monica): "What should we draw?"

Monica: "I'm going to draw a turkey."

Sari: "Do we draw anything we want, or what?"

Monica (to Sari): "Yeah. I'm going to draw a
turkey... Did I already draw a turkey?"

Sari: "Yeah, yeah."

Monica: "Yeah, I did."

(Cindy is looking back at the writing and drawing
that she did on a previous day. Sari questions her
about this.)

Sari (to Cindy): "What are you drawing? What does
that say? Cindy, what does that say?"

Cindy (reading her writing): "'This is the fish we're
gonna get'. 'Cause we are gonna get one goldfish."

Heather: "Anyway, I'm gonna get a new fish."

Monica (starting to draw a dog): "I'm gonna get a
dog, a Golden Retriever."

Heather: "I might, I might get a guard dog."
Monica: "We're gonna get a dog. It's a guard dog but it, but it eats other animals and it doesn't listen to (inaudible). It's real big."

Sari: "I'm not getting a dog. I'm not getting a guard dog."

Cindy: "A German Shepherd dog is bigger."

Monica: "Nuh-uh. It was more bigger than a German Shepherd, it was...because, because that's super real guard dog."

(The conversation continues about the size and ferociousness of various guard dogs as well as about the life expectancy of goldfish "they die real quickly, like in three days.")

The aforementioned conversation provided important assistance for the writers who participated in the talk. Not only did Sari remind Monica of her previous texts, but through conversations with Cindy, the children began talking about pets and guard dogs. Of the four participants in the above discussion, three of the children did draw and write about pets. Cindy wrote about Kelly bringing her dog to school. Monica wrote about a dog, and Heather wrote about buying a goldfish.

These conversations provided a context and a means for the children's learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Interactions with friends encouraged children to activate their existing knowledge about a particular topic and frequently resulted in the inclusion of the topic of conversation into their own writing. Therefore, peers provided important resources for each other as they learned about written language.
Just as Jesse, Josh, Justin and John provided scaffolding for each other's learning as they storied about pictures, they also provided support for each other as they learned about written language. These four boys heavily influenced the topic of each other's writing. Although I did not capture their conversations as they wrote, their written products revealed that almost every time the boys wrote, they wrote about similar topics. In January, as Leslie taught a theme-based unit on Health, Nutrition and the Human Body, the four boys became particularly interested in writing and illustrating parts of the body. This trend continued for seven consecutive writing sessions (Appendix G. 1). The boys wrote and illustrated about the bones inside their hands, and about their brains, heads, stomachs, knees and feet.\textsuperscript{1} Clearly, these friends had a great deal of influence over each other's choice of topics. Additionally, they all seemed to feel secure about the topic of the body, and therefore they chose to write repeatedly about this same topic.

Graves (1983) argues that repeatedly writing about the same topic can be an important component of children's learning about written language. He argues that when a child chooses to write about the same topic, he/she achieves a sense of control and success from the writing task.
In January, I asked the boys about their similar choices in writing topics.

Jesse, Josh, Justin and John have just shown me their writing. Again, they have all written about parts of their bodies.

Brenda: "Are you guys all doing these same things together?"

Justin (pointing to the other three): "Yeah, we all are...but they keep copying over me when I think of a good idea, they copy me."

Brenda: "Oh, don't you like it when they copy?"

Justin: "I don't like it when they copy!"

John: "We don't copy!"

For Justin, there is a fine line between collaboration and copying. It seemed that he had become possessive of his good idea. However, throughout the research study, this was the only time that I observed Justin being disturbed about their collaborative learning. Whether these four boys jointly decided what to write or they "copied" each other, clearly they all had a great influence over what the other boys in their group wrote.

The collaborative atmosphere during writing time fostered the children's social interactions. These interactions provided the necessary support for children to activate their prior knowledge related to various topics and to get opinions from other children regarding the relevance and importance of various topics. Therefore, friends served as an important source of ideas for each other's texts which often resulted in obvious links
between the texts written by children participating in the same writing conversations.

In addition to providing a source for topic ideas, peers also served the important function of assisting their friends in the actual construction of texts. It was common for children to ask for and receive help with spelling, punctuation, and other aspects of the writing task. Interestingly, just as there was a connection between Jesse, Josh, John and Justin and their support for each other during reading and writing, I saw evidence that Cindy also supported Heather in her written language learning just as she had supported her during reading. As noted previously, these two girls frequently discussed writing topics. In addition, Cindy provided a scaffold for Heather's writing process by doing for her what Heather could not do alone. Cindy provided spelling for Heather and assisted her in the actual production of texts. In doing this, Cindy helped Heather construct texts which were beyond her ability to produce alone. This is true teaching within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). In the following example, Cindy and Heather are both drawing gingerbread houses.

Heather: "Cindy, can you help me write my words?"

Cindy: "Okay. What do you want to write?"

Heather: "/H/h/house."

Cindy: "/Hou/hou...I don't know how to write /hou/. Just make an 'H'."
Heather: "What does it look like?"

Cindy looks around the room for the letter 'H'. She finds it in the word "housekeeping" which is written on the bulletin board behind the girls' table.

Cindy (pointing to the letter): "It looks like this."

Heather copies it down.

Cindy then tells Heather to write an 'I' next. Again, Heather does not know what the letter looks like. Cindy finds an 'I' on another bulletin board and Heather copies it down.

Cindy then tells Heather to write a 'W'. Heather doesn't know what the letter looks like and Cindy cannot find one, so she takes Heather's paper and writes it for her.

This is a clear example of how language interaction with a more knowledgeable other allowed Heather to engage in thought processes and activities that she could not accomplish alone. Cindy provided varying means of assistance for Heather's writing. Cindy demonstrated for Heather how to sound out the word in order to hear the beginning consonant sound which is the first letter to be written. Cindy conceded that she did not know the /ou/ sound, and thus told Heather to skip this sound and to just put down the beginning sound of 'H'. This was a technique that Leslie had taught the children to use. This allowed the children to concentrate on the letters/sounds they knew and to continue to write without the interruption of struggling with unknown letters and/or sounds. Additionally, Cindy scaffolded Heather's learning by demonstrating for her how to use environmental print
for assistance. When Heather did not know how to form a specific letter, Cindy found one for her to copy. Finally, when there was not an available 'I' in the environment, Cindy took Heather's paper and simply wrote the letter for her. All of these techniques provided Heather with not only local knowledge about letters and sounds, but Cindy actually taught Heather about the process of writing. Throughout the year, Cindy consistently provided this same support for Heather's writing. At one point in January, when Heather asked Cindy how to write a word, Cindy proclaimed: "Take a guess. Just take a guess. That's how you learn."

Another well-known component of meaningful instruction is the connection of new knowledge to existing knowledge. Through social interaction during writing and drawing, Cindy tried to connect new knowledge to Heather's existing knowledge about shapes.

Heather and Cindy are drawing haunted houses.

Heather (to Cindy): "How do you spell 'boo'?"

Cindy: "B-O-O..."

Heather makes a 'B' and then asks: "What does a 'O' look like?"

Cindy: "Do you know what a circle looks like? Like this..."

Cindy finds an 'O' in the word 'Blocks' on the bulletin board behind their table.

Other examples of Cindy providing scaffolding for Heather's learning:
Heather and Cindy have both drawn the insides of a turkey. Cindy has told Heather what letters to write down, but Heather has gotten confused and Cindy is trying to help her fix the problem.

Cindy (sounding out): "'Inside a turkey'... '/in/side..."

Heather has written 'Innis' for 'Inside'.

Cindy (pointing to the 'S'): "Make this a 'D'. Right here. Cross out that letter."

Heather: "What?"

Cindy: "Like this..."

Cindy takes Heather's crayon and crosses out the 'S' and writes a 'D'.

Cindy (sounding out): "'/In/side...and that should be an 'S'." (She points to the second 'N').

...

Heather wants to write the word 'Playground'. She asks Cindy what a 'Y' looks like.

Cindy (leaning over and making one for her): "It looks like this, remember?"

Heather: "Oh..."

Cindy seemed to be the ideal teacher for Heather. She intuitively worked with Heather in her zone of proximal development, using varying scaffolding techniques to assist Heather in the task of writing. Thus, Heather was able to perform at developmental levels above what she could perform without assistance.

Cindy used a multitude of techniques for teaching Heather how to write. She used the following techniques as she provided scaffolds for Heather's written language learning: 1) modelling sounding out, to better hear
initial consonant sounds ("Hou/hou...just make an 'H'");
2) demonstrating how to use environmental print to aid in letter formation ("It looks like this..."); 3) encouraging risk-taking ("Take a guess...that's how you learn");
4) linking new to existing knowledge ("Do you know what a circle looks like?"); 5) instructing ("Make this a 'D' right here"); and finally, 6) prompting and reminding ("It looks like this, remember?") Social interaction and such experiences as modelling, demonstrating, encouraging risk-taking, linking new to existing knowledge, instructing, prompting and reminding provided structure for Heather's immediate activities. Also, Cindy actually helped Heather form the processes of reasoning and learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, 1988).

I talked to Cindy about her willingness to constantly help Heather. I asked her why she helped her and Cindy replied simply: "Because she doesn't know her letters." Cindy seemed to intuitively know that she had the knowledge to help Heather succeed in reading and writing. Because Heather was her friend, Cindy seemed willing to assist her in any way that she could. However, it seemed that Cindy, like many teachers, did have a limit to her willingness to help. In January, during a writing session, Cindy yelled: "Heather! DON'T COPY ME!" However, Kelly came to Heather's aid by saying: "You can copy me, then." Again, later in February, Cindy exclaimed:
"Heather, why do you always have to copy?" These were the only two times that I heard any kind of protest from Cindy. The vast majority of the time, she willingly helped Heather in any way that she could.

In addition to the assistance that Cindy gave Heather with the production of her texts, it was also very common for the other children to help each other with their text productions. Spelling seemed to be a major concern for many of the children. Despite Leslie's encouragement for the children to take risks and put down the sounds they heard, some children still wanted help from others. Travis was particularly insistent upon having the conventional spelling. He often enlisted help from anyone around him.

Travis has drawn an illustration of his spine and his heart. He wants to write 'My spine and my heart'. He is writing the word 'and'.

Travis (to any who is listening): "Hey! Does anyone know how to spell 'and'?"

Tiffany: "I know how to spell it. A-N..."

Travis: "You mean 'and'?"

Tiffany: "Do you want to spell 'Andy'?"

Travis: "'And'...just 'and'..."

Tiffany: "Okay. A-..."

Travis writes this down.

Tiffany: "Um...A-N-N-E."

Travis (sounding out 'and'): "No, no! /D/.../an/d. That's how you spell 'and'? /an-n/d...I don't hear an 'E'..."
Tiffany: "No, yeah, there is a 'E'.'"

Travis (getting upset): "I don't hear a 'E'. So..."

Tiffany (adamant): "I do! Because I know how to spell it!"

Travis (quietly to himself): "/A/n-n/d-d.../and/...I hear an 'N'."  

Travis writes 'ANNE', but then later, after much contemplation, crosses out the 'E'.

Through interaction with Tiffany, Travis worked to clear up confusions in his current hypotheses about the spelling of the high frequency word 'and'. Tiffany, whose mother's name is Anne, apparently did not recognize the difference between the words 'Anne' and 'and'. She adamantly insisted that she indeed did know how to spell 'and'. Travis, more confident in his own abilities than Tiffany's, decided to stay with the letters he heard.

It was common for children to rely on and learn from other children as they continually worked to refine their own hypotheses about written language. The following two segments highlight children's difficulties with the sounds of the letters 'C', 'S' and 'K'. They also demonstrate how children learn as they help each other with spelling and text production.

Monica has drawn a carrot and she is labelling it.

Monica (to herself): "/K/...'carrot' starts with 'K'."

Sari: "NO! 'C', remember? /CUH/CUH/CUH..."

Monica: "NO! 'K'."
Sari (adamant): "I know, but 'C' and 'K' make the same sound, remember? 'C' and 'K' make the same sound!"

...

Heather has written all of the names of the members of her family. Andrew tells her to write her cat's name, Sundae.

Andrew (telling her how to spell it): "/S/S/...'C'"

Erica: "No, not 'C'...'S'.'"

Andrew (to himself): "Oh, Sesame Street, that's 'S'.'"

Summary

Erica and Sari both "inform, explain and talk to" (Wood, 1988, p. 135) Monica and Andrew, respectively, to help Monica and Andrew clear up confusions in their hypotheses about the sounds of the letters 'C', 'S', and 'K'. In all of the examples, it is evident that social interaction is the key to children's literacy learning in Leslie's classroom. By talking to friends, children get ideas for their own writing and learn a multitude of techniques to assist in their own text production. In all of these segments, children worked as authors and surrounded themselves with other authors who could answer their questions and guide their writing. Children created their own activity settings, their own contexts for learning written language by using their relationships with friends as support for their own learning and meaning-making.
The Influence of Literature On Children's Writing

As argued earlier, reading and writing are both acts of composing (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Therefore, what children read affects their writing just as their writing affects how and what they read. Smith (1983) argues that children learn about writing mainly by reading quality children's literature. All writers, children included, freely use bits and pieces of the literature that they know (Temple, Nathan, Temple & Burris 1993).

During the research study, I collected evidence of the influence of literature on the children's writing. I saw the children's writing influenced by literature in three specific ways: a) there was an association between what the children read and what Leslie read during the classroom theme-based unit and the content/topic of the children's writing; b) there was evidence of the children using presentation and layout typical of nonfiction texts; and, c) Peter Catalanotto's books and visit influenced the children's writing.

One of the strongest patterns that emerged from the data in relation to the influence of literature on the children's writing was the children's choice of topics. There was an abundance of evidence linking the children's choice of writing topics to the literature that was available in the classroom and the literature that Leslie read during the classroom theme-based unit on Health and
Nutrition. Frequently, topics related to health, nutrition and the human body occurred in the children's writing.

As presented earlier, Jesse, Josh, Justin and John wrote for several weeks about parts of their bodies. They wrote and illustrated about their feet, heads, hands, brains, hearts, stomachs, knees and noses. Clearly, their writing was influenced by the fiction and nonfiction literature that they read and that Leslie read in the classroom.

Leslie also spent several days reading about and discussing healthy foods. This seemed to have influenced Brandy's and Travis' writing. In January, Brandy illustrated carrots and a watermelon. On this particular day, Leslie read The Very Hungry Caterpillar (Carle) to the class. There seemed to be a tie between the watermelon and other snacks that the caterpillar ate through and Brandy's choice of writing topics for the day. On this same day, Travis chose to write about and illustrate the four food groups, which the class also discussed (Appendix G.2). Travis' writing contained a picture of his version of the four food groups, (meat, vegetable, cereal, bread/fruit). He wrote only the names of the four groups, but as he read it to me he added:

Travis (pointing in turn to the four groups): "The bread gives you vitamins and minerals. The meat gives you vitamins. The cereal gives you nutrients, and so do the bread and fruit."
Similarly, on January 26, Leslie read several recipes to the children. Then, Leslie and the children collaboratively wrote a recipe for chocolate chip cookies. This same day, Travis chose to draw the process of how to make a vinegar condiment to accent French fries. Travis' illustration contained two containers of vinegar and "green stuff" and a grinder. Travis explained his writing and drawing to me.

Travis (pointing to his illustration as he talks): "I'm done with my recipe. I made a recipe for fries...to put on fries. This green is...I forgot what this stuff is called. But you pour them into the fries. These two get grinded up. That's vinegar. It gets squirted onto the fries and you eat it and you eat it and enjoy."

I ask Travis why he only wrote the words "Eat and enjoy."

Travis: "Um, I was gonna say, I was gonna spell there 'grinded', 'grind it up'. But since I knew how to make it, I made it. And this is 'eat and enjoy'."

Brenda: "So you drew a picture of grinding it up instead of writing the words?"

Travis: "Yeah. I was gonna say 'Grind', but instead I did it."

Travis' writing was clearly influenced by the recipes that Leslie read and by the shared writing of the recipe for chocolate chip cookies. Interestingly, Travis chose to draw a grinder to symbolize the words "grind it up." He also wrote in a register typical of recipes. The words "eat and enjoy" are a particularly appropriate register and conclusion for a recipe.
The second connection between texts and the children's writing was demonstrated in the children's use of textual features commonly found in nonfiction literature. I saw children experimenting with the presentation and layout of their writing, incorporating features commonly used in nonfiction texts. One of the books that Leslie read to the children, and one that they frequently fought over to read independently, was What's Inside? My Body (Royston). This book showed, for example, a photograph of the outside of a child's head and then a cross-sectional drawing of the inside of a child's head. This same technique was used to illustrate the inner workings of the skin, eyes, ears, chest, stomach, legs, arms and hands. After Leslie read this book to the children, several children began illustrating in this same manner. On three consecutive days, Travis illustrated the inside view of his spine, his heart inside his rib cage, and his "bones and brain" (Appendix G.3). Using this same technique, Travis twice drew the cross-section view of a house (Appendix G.4). In addition, Josh, Jesse, Justin and John frequently used this technique of drawing a cross-sectional view of the body in their "parts of the body" sequence (Appendix G.1). As evidenced, Josh and Justin became especially adept at drawing the bones of the hand.
Children also experimented with two other techniques commonly used in the layout of nonfiction texts - numbers and arrows. In January, Sarah used numbers to help explain the sequence of how plants grew (Appendix G.5). She wrote: "Plants grow by seeds". However, her illustrations demonstrated her knowledge about sequencing and about the growth of plants. She numbered the steps of plant growth one through five. Accompanying the numbered stages, she illustrated the growth of plants, from stage one (a seed in the ground) to stage five (a full grown plant). She also used numbers to help explain her recipe for brownies (Appendix G.5). Although Sarah did not included some of the graphics to accompany her recipe, she told me that her recipes read: "Number 1 - put in pan. Number 2 - put in oven. Number 3 - eat and enjoy."

Clearly, Sarah and Travis influenced each other in their use of the term "eat and enjoy."

In addition to Sarah’s use of numbers, Travis used arrows in his writing and illustration (Appendix G.2 and G.3). Many of the nonfiction Childcraft books that Travis commonly read used arrows to further define and illustrate specific topics.

The data revealed a third connection between books and the children’s writing. In late February, the author-illustrator Peter Catalanotto visited Parkview Elementary. Prior to his visit, Leslie read many of his books to the
children. The children also drew, painted and created art projects as extensions to his books. Many of the children in Leslie's class read and reread one of Catalanotto's books, *Dylan's Day Out*. This book is about a dalmatian who escapes from the house after his owner leaves for work. Throughout the day, the dog encounters various people and animals and eventually scores the winning goal in a soccer match between skunks and penguins. Another favorite book was *All I See* (Rylant) which was illustrated by Catalanotto. Bits and pieces of these two books were frequently a part of the children's writing.

In February, the day before Catalanotto's visit, Leslie reread *All I See*. That day during writing time, Kelly and Erica both made what they called the front page of the book. Their writing contained the title of the book centered on the top of the page, and then an illustration of a combination of various colors blended together. They seemed to be illustrating their own version of the front cover of the book.

Catalanotto's visit to the school seemed to have a noticeable effect on the children's writing and illustrating. When Catalanotto was at Parkview, he demonstrated for the children how he illustrated one of the pages in the book *Dylan's Day Out*. He discussed how he made one of Dylan's ears and one of Dylan's eyes looking up and the other ear and the other eye looking
down to make the dog appear dazed as the soccer ball hit him on the head. After Catalanotto's visit, Cindy, Monica and Heather all tried their hand at illustrating in the same manner (Appendix G.6). All three girls drew the illustration of the ball hitting Dylan as Catalanotto had described to the group. Like Catalanotto, Cindy, Monica and Heather also drew the dog's ears and eyes just as he had described during his presentation.

A final influence from Catalanotto and his books was demonstrated in Sari's writing. As part of his presentation, Catalanotto explained to the children the process he goes through as he writes. He told them that when he is writing a first draft, he writes anything that comes to mind. If he writes a word that he believes may be misspelled, he circles it, as a way to remind himself to check the spelling at a later time. This piece of advice became a part of Sari's writing. Just after Catalanotto's visit, Sari (like Monica, Heather and Cindy) illustrated a page from Dylan's Day Out. However, taking Catalanotto's advice, Sari circled several words that she thought might be misspelled (Appendix G.7). Earlier in the year, Sari had told me that she wanted to be a 1st-grade teacher and an artist when she grew up. Her wish to be an artist may have heightened her awareness of this professional artist's advice.
Summary

Smith (1983) argues that children who write and are surrounded with literature begin to "read like a writer" (p. 561). Martin (1975) argues that literature provides a storehouse of demonstrations of written language.

He writes:

Each of us has a linguistic storehouse into which we deposit patterns for stories and poems and sentences and words. These patterns enter through the ear and the eye and remain available throughout the course of a lifetime for reading and writing and speaking (p. 16).

Therefore, writing is an orchestration of meaningful chunks of language that are stored and used quite unconsciously by young writers. These chunks of language are learned intuitively as children read a variety of language patterns and genres. The children's exposure to a variety of quality children's literature is evident from their experimentation and incorporation of various writing elements and writing styles into their own writing.

There seemed to be a connection between what the children in Leslie's class read and the topics and/or features of their own writing and illustrating. Although the tie is invisible, there is strong evidence to suggest that the topics the children wrote about and the format, layout, and stylistic features of their texts and illustrations were strongly influenced by the literature that surrounded them.
Children's meaning-making and written language learning techniques are summarized in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE LEARNING</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Storying About Pictures</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Friends Helping Friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Learning to Read</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reading for the Enjoyment of Being With Others</td>
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<td>- Learning Written Language Through Social Interaction</td>
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**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The power of peers for children's learning was clearly evident in Leslie's classroom. The children were free to interact with each other the majority of the time they were in the classroom and this created a rich environment for children to learn from each other. When responding to the literature Leslie read aloud or to literature that they themselves had read, there was an abundance of talk and peer interaction. These
patterns of talk/response were most revealing about the techniques that children enlisted to facilitate meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction texts. Indeed, these response events were rich sources of literacy behaviors. This talk and social interaction was crucial for the children's learning and meaning-making. It allowed the children to take from texts in many varying contexts and formats. It is impossible to separate the children's responses to fiction and nonfiction literature from literacy events within the classroom or from children's learning to read and write. Indeed, children's literacy learning is tied to and a part of their responses to the literature they read. As the children responded to literature, they learned important literacy lessons.

In addition to the importance and power of peers for children's learning, the data also suggested that children did not differentiate between genres. Although children seemed to have genre preferences, the children seemed to engage in similar literacy behaviors as they read and responded to both genres. When reading and responding to fiction and nonfiction, children responded in very similar ways and engaged in very similar literacy behaviors.

Evidence from this study strongly indicates that literacy learning is a highly social activity. Whether children story about pictures or help each other learn to read and write, the learning occurs because of the rich
social context of the classroom. Children are truly shaped and influenced by the culture and context in which they live (Vygotsky, 1978). The children in Leslie's classroom were a part of a rich culture of literacy. Together, the children of the class created and supported each other as they learned literacy together. Vygotsky (1978) argues that social interaction does not lead to cognition, it actually forms the processes of cognition. Collaboratively, and with Leslie's support, the children facilitated each other's learning and created a culture all their own that provided a scaffold for each child's learning.
Notes

1. Appendix G.1 contains just one example of Josh, Justin, John and Jesse's influence upon each other during their phase of writing and illustrating parts of the body.
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

"The world rests on the breath of the children in the schoolhouse."

The Talmud

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Research in the area of emergent literacy has confirmed the importance of books and reading for young children's literacy development (Clay, 1972, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1984; Doake, 1985; Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Holdaway, 1979; Teale, 1981; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Wells, 1986). However, researchers have also documented that narrative or fiction is the genre most frequently shared with young children (Fisher & Hiebert, 1990; Hiebert & Fisher, 1990; Meyer & Rice, 1984; Pappas, 1991; Wells, 1986). In fact, many researchers and educators assume that fiction is the primary means by which young children acquire literacy (Bruner, 1986; Rosen, 1986; Wells, 1986).

However, there is contradictory research evidence regarding children's success with nonfiction. Newkirk (1987) and Pappas (1987, 1990) argue that young children are quite capable of reading and writing nonfiction.
Other researchers, however, argue that young children have less control over expository forms (Langer, 1985; McGee & Richgels, 1985; Taylor & Beach, 1984).

The purpose of this study was to describe and interpret the various ways that children make meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature. A second purpose was to describe and interpret the role of the teacher for children's meaningful transactions with fiction and nonfiction texts.

The educational community has traditionally separated the body of research investigating children's responses to literature and the body of research investigating children's emergent literacy behaviors. However, I argue that these two areas are interconnected and cannot be so easily defined and divided. For the purposes of this study, children's responses to literature were viewed as important literacy behaviors that were inherent in the children's meaning-making with fiction and nonfiction literature. Children responded to fiction and nonfiction literature in a variety of ways which included, but were not limited to: talk and/or social interaction, physical actions, artwork, drama and writing. These responses were important literacy behaviors which were critical for the children's understanding of the variety of techniques and features typical of the genres of fiction and nonfiction. By documenting and analyzing
these literacy behaviors/responses, I was able to determine some of the ways that the children in this kindergarten classroom made sense from the texts they read.

**METHODOLOGY**

A naturalistic, interpretive research approach was used to understand and describe patterns of children's meaning-making in a kindergarten classroom at Parkview Elementary School. Additionally, this research approach was used to determine the role of the teacher for facilitating children's understanding of fiction and nonfiction literature. The methods of study for this inquiry focused on a comparative description of children's interactions with fiction and nonfiction literature. Fieldwork consisted of a research cycle implemented in varying phases. Data were collected over the course of approximately four months through fieldnotes taken during classroom observations, audio recordings, video recordings, interviews with the teacher, the children and parents, and collections of children's writing and drawing. Data were analyzed using a constant-comparative method through the identification of literacy events, also termed "activity settings" (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). These literacy events or activity settings consisted of times and contexts in which the children and/or Leslie
were engaged in the reading and/or writing of print. These literacy events/activity settings provided the unit of analysis for this study. The classroom teacher, Leslie, was involved in each phase of fieldwork. She made suggestions for data collection in terms of which children to watch and when to watch them. She and I collaboratively planned the theme-based unit which was implemented during the study and, perhaps most importantly, she openly discussed children's daily literacy discoveries. Additionally, Leslie read through rough drafts of this report. She provided comments and suggestions and answered lingering questions regarding the findings.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Leslie created a rich context for literacy learning within her classroom. She accomplished this through her orchestration of time and space which encouraged movement and collaboration among the children. The space of the classroom was organized into various activity centers which fostered the children's creative and imaginative play and literacy learning. These centers included: housekeeping, art, painting, writing, big and little blocks, shelf toys, library, listening and math. Time within the classroom community was organized around opening Circle, Related Arts, playtime and theme-based units of literature study. Time, as well as space and
classroom materials, was organized in such a way that the children were free to interact with each other as they used reading and writing to fulfill the tasks of classroom life. Leslie modelled collaborative learning and encouraged collaborative learning among the children. She continually focused on what the children could do as emerging readers and writers. Therefore, she supported and provided scaffolding for children's literacy learning by creating literacy events/activity settings in which the children could interact and learn from her and from each other.

In addition to orchestrating time and space to create literacy events/activity settings to support the children's literacy learning, Leslie also engaged in specific techniques as she modelled meaning-making with fictional texts. When reading fictional texts aloud to the children, Leslie facilitated the children's meaning-making through the use of the following six techniques:

1. **Relating the Reading to the Children's Prior Experiences.**

   When reading fiction, Leslie consistently related the content of the book to the children's prior experiences and background knowledge. Leslie took time to let the children discuss the story and she gave the children ample time to share their own experiences and stories related to the text.
2. **Explaining, Defining and/or Extending Terms, Concepts and Relationships Within the Text.**

   Leslie was constantly cognizant of terms, concepts and/or relationships within the text that the children might not understand. She routinely stopped reading to discuss unfamiliar concepts, thus supplying crucial information for the children. This provided a link of understanding so the children could better make sense of words, concepts and relationships within the text.

3. **Reviewing/Reminding Children of Previously Read Text.**

   Another technique Leslie used was that of providing the children a brief summary of what had previously been read. This one to two sentence summation was commonly inserted midway through the text. By providing this structure, Leslie mediated the children's learning by imposing organization on important aspects of the story that were crucial for the children's understanding.

4. **Modelling the Use of Illustrations.**

   Leslie stressed the interplay of text and illustration by modelling and explicitly instructing the children how to use the illustrations to deepen and/or further the story line. Thus, Leslie demonstrated rules for taking from texts and illustrations.

5. **Encouraging Children to Predict and Read.**

   Leslie fostered the children's prediction strategies by encouraging the children to predict and read along with her as she read aloud. She did this by explicitly asking
the children to predict a word, phrase and/or upcoming event or by simply pausing. The children knew that this pause signalled their involvement.

6. **Teaching Conventions of Books.**

The final technique Leslie used to help children make sense from fiction was that of teaching the children the conventions of books. This broad category included teaching the children about the author, illustrator, title, dedication page and awards the book has won. By discussing the physical features of books as well as how books are made, it de-mystified the writing and illustrating process for the children. It also served as another way to encourage the children to view themselves as authors and artists.

In addition to these techniques that Leslie modelled as she read fiction, Leslie also modelled specific techniques as she read nonfiction. When she read nonfiction, Leslie used four of the same techniques she used when she read fiction. However, she also employed three different techniques. Leslie facilitated children's meaning-making through the use of the following seven techniques:

1. **Relating the Reading to the Children's Prior Experiences.**

As she did with fiction, Leslie allowed the children the time and opportunity to share their own personal stories related to the nonfiction text she was reading.
This encouraged the children to draw on their own experiences to assist their meaning-making with unknown texts.

2. **Explaining, Defining and/or Extending Terms, Concepts and Relationships Within the Text.**

Leslie also paused frequently during the reading of nonfiction to discuss and define unfamiliar concepts or terms within the text. To facilitate the children's comprehension, Leslie used analogies and explanations to extend concepts within the text.

3. **Reviewing/Reminding Children of Previously Read Text.**

A third technique Leslie used while reading both fiction and nonfiction literature was reviewing and/or reminding the children of information read previously in the text. Thus, Leslie assisted the children's meaning-making with nonfiction literature by holding information constant for the children so they could better concentrate on the new information presented in the text.

4. **Modelling the Use of Illustrations.**

The fourth technique that Leslie used with both fiction and nonfiction literature was modelling how to use the illustrations to foster meaning-making and understanding. To accomplish this, she used the simple technique of pointing to specific aspects of the illustration and/or diagram. In doing this, she provided a link between the words of the text and the illustration.
5. **Questioning the Children About Content.**

Leslie consistently questioned the children about the content of the nonfiction books she read. Questioning provided a way for her to monitor the children's understanding. It also encouraged the children to think about and ask questions of the text.

6. **Involving Children in the Book.**

When reading nonfiction literature about nutrition and the human body, Leslie typically involved the children in the reading by encouraging them to make the link between the text and their own body. She accomplished this by using models, illustrations, and by encouraging the children to move their bodies and to interact with each other and the books.

7. **Omitting Portions of the Text.**

Finally, with virtually every nonfiction book that Leslie read, she omitted portions of the text. She skipped paragraphs, pages and topics. By reading in this manner, Leslie modelled how adult readers use the layout and format of nonfiction texts to meet their needs as a reader.

The two processes of reading and writing are intricately linked together. Leslie encouraged the children's growth as readers as she taught the children about written language. Leslie wrote with the children every day in the form of writing the daily News. As she
modelled writing, she used three specific techniques to facilitate the children's understanding of written language.

1. **Questioning.** Leslie used questioning in several ways as she wrote the News. She used it to prompt or remind the children about a specific aspect of print. She also questioned the children about spelling and punctuation as a means to keep them actively involved in the writing process.

2. **Instructional Conversations.** A second technique Leslie used was the instructional conversation. She engaged in these instructional conversations by casually mentioning letters, sounds, punctuation, directionality and/or other concepts crucial to the writing process. This means of assisted performance provided one more way that Leslie instructed the children in ways of making meaning with print.

3. **Linking Writing with Reading.** Leslie consistently linked writing and reading. This was accomplished through collaborative reading experiences in which the children were encouraged to read a text together, through individual reading experiences in which the children were encouraged to read alone and through decontextualized print experiences in which the children were encouraged to read words and sentences out of context.
Finally, the peer culture of the classroom had a profound impact on children's learning. Researchers and social learning theorists argue the importance of peers for children's learning (Bruner, 1985; Forman & Cazden, 1985, Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch & Stone, 1985). Peers can provide scaffolding to support other children's learning. Through language and interaction the less-experienced child internalizes local knowledge of a specific task in addition to the strategies that their peers model as they work together. Friends and peer culture provided a rich and highly significant learning environment for the children in Leslie's classroom. A summary follows of the varied ways that children provided support for each other's literacy learning.

1. **Friends Helping Friends: Storying About Pictures**

   Jesse, Josh, John and Justin engaged in a reading routine that I have termed storying about pictures. The four boys had specific rules for interacting with each other and nonfiction books. One rule was their insistence that only illustrations deemed "serious" could be storied about. Illustrations were defined as "serious" if the boys thought the pictures contained an element of danger. In addition, they often used pre-existing story frames about Ninja Turtles or dinosaurs to mediate their meaning-making with the unfamiliar text and illustrations of
nonfiction books. These interactions had a game-like structure to them. The boys utilized language play and their interactions were full of laughter and frivolity as they responded to the literature with their bodies and their voices. Together, through the regulating speech and actions of each other, the boys created stories and therefore meaning from illustrations in nonfiction books.

2. **Friends Helping Friends**

Although a few children chose to read by themselves, the vast majority of reading occurred in a rich, highly social environment. Children used their personal relations with friends to create their own activity settings. Friends helped each other learn to read by assisting each other with unknown words, by discussing books with each other and by explaining and discussing unfamiliar concepts. Children also helped each other learn to enjoy reading by simply being together to share good books. As children responded to books with each other, they laughed at the illustrations and story line, they dramatized bits and pieces of the story and they talked excitedly about the characters and their actions. A final way that children helped each other was by assisting friends in the zone of proximal development. Travis, Justin, Josh, John and Cindy all helped other children by providing scaffolding for the less-competent child so that child could be successful.
3. **Private Lessons**

Not all children spent so much time learning through social interaction. Some children, specifically Travis, Andrew and Vince, made meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature through their own personal engagement with books. I have termed this private lessons, based upon Meek's notion of children teaching themselves to read by becoming personally involved in books. Travis routinely engaged in these private reading lessons. Although he typically read books alone, he often engaged in elaborate dialogues with himself. Travis preferred to read *Childcraft* encyclopedias about the earth, animals and the human body. Through these dialogues with himself, Travis used speech to plan and regulate his activities. Language used in this manner actually directed and structured his processes of thought and concept formation.

Vince and Andrew also engaged in private lessons. Vince seemed to prefer reading fiction. He used illustrations from books to create his own story. Andrew, on the other hand, seemed to prefer books of nursery rhymes. He typically engaged in language play. Travis, Vince and Andrew all used language as a way to direct and structure their thinking as they learned to read and make meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature through private lessons.
Finally, reading and writing are intricately interrelated. Therefore, as the children learned about reading they also learned about writing. Because learning in social situations is always in advance of independent activity (Bruner, 1984, 1985; Clay, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch & Stone, 1985), social interactions provided an important learning context for children's growth as writers.

1. Learning Written Language Through Social Interaction

Just as social interaction was crucial for children's meaning-making with literature, it was also critical for children's written language learning. Through talk, children gave each other ideas and topics to write about. In addition, children assisted each other in the actual production of written texts.

2. Influence of Literature on Children's Writing

Children's writing was influenced by literature in three specific ways. There was an association between what the children read and what Leslie read during the classroom theme-based unit and the content/topic of the children's writing. Second, there was also evidence of the children using presentation and layout typical of nonfiction literature read in the classroom. Third, the visit of author/illustrator Peter Catalanotto influenced the children's artwork and writing.
In summary, Leslie supported children's literacy learning by organizing time and space and by creating a context for collaboration. Her creation of this activity setting provided a rich environment which helped facilitate children's learning. When reading books of fiction and nonfiction, she modelled crucial techniques for making-meaning. However, children also created their own activity settings. Children relied on other friends and on themselves as they collaboratively learned written language and ways of making-meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Although the findings of this study are bound to the specific context in which the research was conducted, teachers of young children may find connections between the literacy events and the children's literacy behaviors that occurred in Leslie's classroom and the events that occur in their own classrooms.

The purpose of this study was to describe and interpret the various ways that children make meaning with fiction and nonfiction literature. A second purpose was to describe and interpret the role of the teacher and the role of texts for children's meaningful transactions with fiction and nonfiction texts. Based upon the findings of this study, I have confirmed in this classroom setting
what other researchers (Burton, 1985; Clay, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1984; DeFord, 1981; Hickman, 1979; Meek, 1982, 1988; Newkirk, 1987; Wells, 1986) have confirmed in various other settings about the importance of the following aspects of a child's learning environment.

The Classroom Context

When children learned to read in Leslie's classroom, they were not subjected to skill and drill work sheets. Instead, they were given books. Leslie's literacy instruction was based upon theory-based notions of how children learn. She treated children as readers and writers and she gave them ample time and opportunity to read and write. In addition, Leslie was a strong role model. She read quality children's books and modelled writing daily. Leslie's beliefs about the importance of a variety of quality literature and her beliefs about how children learn were all evidenced in her creation of a rich learning environment within the classroom. Her organization of time and space, her encouragement of collaboration, her frequent modelling of reading and writing, her view of the children as readers and writers all worked together to create an environment that enhanced and facilitated children's learning.

Time and Opportunity

Children in Leslie's kindergarten classroom had ample time and opportunity to interact with print and with each
other. Her reading curriculum was not separate from the rest of the curriculum. Instead, children learned to read and write by engaging in purposeful reading and writing activities throughout their day. The children had multiple opportunities to read a variety of quality children's literature. They had time to respond to these books and to interact with each other. The children had the opportunity to make choices about where to read, when to read, what to read and who to read with.

Social Interaction

Perhaps most importantly, the children in this study were encouraged to read, to talk, to move and to respond to literature with other children. These shared exchanges of meanings in conversation allowed Leslie and the children to build a shared understanding of the content, processes and purposes of reading and writing. It was through social interaction in child-created activity settings that children negotiated their own ways of making sense of fiction and nonfiction literature. Classrooms with a teacher-controlled environment would necessarily define and limit social interaction and therefore children's discoveries of how to make sense of written language and literature.

Multiple Paths

Findings seem to indicate that there is not just one way to make meaning with fiction or nonfiction literature.
Children in this study "picked their way to literacy" (Meek, 1985) using a variety of techniques and strategies. Children read and responded to books with others, by themselves, in pairs and in groups. Other children made connections between fiction and nonfiction literature and their own writing. Some did not. Some children dramatized bits and ideas from books. Other children engaged in language play and drawing. Kantor, Miller and Fernie (1991) found in their study of preschool children's literacy learning that there are multiple paths to literacy. In the classroom they studied, as in Leslie's classroom, children were free to interact with each other and with books. Therefore, literacy became an important part of the social fabric of both classrooms.

**Read to Children**

A large body of research supports the importance of reading to young children. This study supports the importance of reading both fiction and nonfiction literature to young children. Findings reported in Chapter IV are clearly one more argument for the importance of reading to children and also for the importance of being cognizant of how one reads to children. The process that the teacher/adult models may be critical for how children learn to make sense from texts.
In addition to the aforementioned points, this study uniquely highlighted several important issues about children's interactions with fiction and nonfiction literature.

Difficulty with Exposition?

As cited in Chapter II, some researchers argue that children are not competent with nonfiction forms. They argue that fiction is primary and that children cannot learn nonfiction forms until the middle elementary years. As evidenced in this study, given the time and opportunity to engage with books and with each other, children can learn to make meaning with nonfiction just as they learn to make meaning with fiction. When older children have difficulty with expository texts, it may be because they have never had the opportunity to engage with nonfiction in a rich literature environment that supports their literacy learning. Newkirk (1987) argues:

One might look at these early years not as a time when exposition is difficult but as a time when, if given the opportunity, children make considerable advances in understanding and making-meaning with nonfiction as well as fiction (p. 141-2).

This study brought to the fore the importance of creating a literature-rich environment in which children have the opportunities to learn from a variety of sources - fiction and nonfiction books, the teacher and each other.

I saw provocative behaviors surrounding children's interactions with texts in Leslie's classroom. Josh,
Jesse, Justin and John storied about pictures as they engaged in transactions with nonfiction literature. They taught each other about captions, labelling and numbering systems within some nonfiction texts. They also shared their thoughts about issues of reality and make-believe. They supported each other's learning within a game-like structure of responding to nonfiction literature. Their responses were full of rich, colorful language and exuberant movements. Travis, on the other hand, a self-admitted reader of nonfiction ("I like to read books about stuff, like volcanos and space") furthered his own knowledge about expository structures as well as helped his fellow classmates.

These behaviors seem to contradict the research arguing that children are not competent with nonfiction structures. Findings from this study may help to redefine how the research community looks at children and what researchers count as success with nonfiction.

**Differences Between Fiction and Nonfiction**

Many researchers argue that only fiction should be used with young children learning to read (Hidi & Hildyard, 1983; Langer, 1985; McGee & Richgels, 1985; Taylor & Beach, 1984; Wells, 1986). However, the line of demarcation between fiction and nonfiction is an adult notion that, at best, is arbitrary and difficult to define. Pappas (1991) argues that there is little reason
to believe that children cannot learn about nonfiction structures. The findings of this report support Pappas' claims. As evidenced in the manner in which children interacted with both fiction and nonfiction literature, children in this study did not seem to perceive a difference in the two genres. When confronted with two books, one from each genre, none of the children I interviewed could clearly define any differences in the two genres. In addition, there was a marked lack of differentiation between the children's meaning-making and use of fiction and nonfiction literature. Therefore, what evidence suggests that young children are not successful with nonfiction texts? Findings from research studies conducted with older children (Hidi & Hildyard, 1983; Langer, 1985; Taylor & Beach, 1984) do show evidence that these children have difficulties with expository text structure. However, what opportunities and experiences have these children had throughout their schooling with nonfiction texts? Have they been in classrooms where the teacher models reading aloud of both types of texts? Have they had the opportunities to read and respond with peers to a variety of genres? These research studies do not address these issues. Based upon findings from this study, I argue that these issues are central to our understanding of how children learn to make sense from a variety of genres. Findings from this study suggest that
the role of the teacher in orchestrating time and space within the classroom as well as modelling the reading of fiction and nonfiction is crucial for children learning to make meaning from texts. Findings from this study also suggest that having the time and opportunity to read and respond with peers is very important for children’s meaning-making.

Therefore, findings from this study, in addition to the findings from other studies (Newkirk, 1987; Pappas, 1990, 1991) seem to conclude that narrative does not necessarily have to be primary. The adult notion of genre divisions is not relevant for young children learning to read. Children in this study did not use books of fiction and nonfiction differently.

These findings have important implications for the educational community. Children should not be limited to books of fiction as they learn to read. There does not seem to be anything magical about fictional forms that make it easier for children to learn to read. Rather, from a very young age, children should be introduced to a variety of genres. Like adult readers, they seem to have genre preferences. Sharing a variety of genres with young children and allowing children to read books from genres they prefer may be a beginning to understanding the fiction/nonfiction controversy.
Genre Preferences

Despite the children's lack of inclination to distinguish between the two genres in the manner in which they used the books, clearly the children in this study had defined preferences for one genre or the other. For example, Travis preferred nonfiction and according to his mother, he has had this preference from the time he first began to pick up books. On the other hand, Sari, Cindy and Heather all preferred fiction. Rarely, if ever, did I see any of these girls reading nonfiction. In addition, Sari's mother said that Sari has always preferred fiction. She added that at home, Sari frequently drew pictures related to the fiction books she read and acted out the stories from her books. She also wrote songs related to her fictional story books.

While children did gravitate toward either fiction or nonfiction, they did not or could not make a differentiation in the two genres either in the manner in which they used the books or in their success making meaning with either of the genres. As argued earlier, this adult line of demarcation between the two genres does not seem to be important for children. When given the time and opportunity to make their own reading choices, children, like adults, read the types of texts that they prefer. Therefore, it seems that children learning to
read could best be served by allowing them to learn about a variety of genres from adult models and from each other.

While the focus of this study was not on genre preferences as it relates to gender, it was difficult to ignore the clear pattern that emerged in the classroom related to this issue. It was clearly evident that the boys in the room preferred nonfiction and the girls preferred fiction. I searched the data for disconfirming evidence, but rarely did I see evidence of boys reading fiction or girls reading nonfiction. I talked to many parents about this issue and they told me that their child has had a clear genre preference from the time the child was very young. Research suggests that gender-related genre preferences do not emerge until around the third grade. However, evidence from this study suggests that perhaps these patterns emerge much earlier.

Responses and Literacy

Chapter V provided a detailed examination of the varied ways that children responded to books. Some children relied heavily upon social interaction while other children engaged in private lessons with themselves as they worked to make sense of fiction and nonfiction. Children provided rich literacy experiences for their peers and they learned a great deal from each other about how to take from texts. For example, Jesse, Josh, Justin and John used their pre-existing Ninja Turtle and dinosaur
story frames to help them make sense of nonfiction texts. These four boys took their knowledge of the Ninja Turtle or dinosaur story structure and jointly constructed their own, new text based upon their own prior knowledge about the topic, the illustrations and the text in the books they were using. This new, socially constructed text provided these four boys with a vehicle for their meaning-making. The dialogic nature of their interactions with the text and with each other provided the means for their understanding of the highly complex structures of nonfiction books.

It seems that this study uniquely highlights an important issue for researchers investigating response and researchers investigating emergent literacy behaviors. There seems to be a recognizable overlap in what has traditionally been defined as response and what has traditionally been defined as literacy behaviors. To define the complex, dialogic interactions created by Jesse, John, Josh and Justin using descriptions only from the field of response or only from the field of emergent literacy would limit the scope and significance of these important learning occasions. I argue that descriptions, research and terminology from both fields are needed to explain how children construct a dialogic, relationship between the text and themselves that serves as the impetus for their meaning-making with books. For example, Josh,
Justin, John and Jesse learned more from each other about literacy through their dramatic responses than they could have ever learned from the teacher. Furthermore, children collaboratively responding to the humor and illustrations of Big Anthony dressed like a woman in *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons* (dePaola) learned important literacy lessons without reading or even attempting to read a word. However, research and theories from the field of response and from the field of emergent literacy allowed me to more fully describe and explain the complex behaviors I documented in Leslie's classroom. Findings from this study underscore that learning to read involves a variety of motor, verbal, interactional and conversational skills, in addition to those behaviors such as reading re-enactment which have traditionally been recognized as emergent reading behaviors. Perhaps this study will broaden what counts as response and what counts as literacy behaviors and will encourage researchers to use the knowledge base from both fields to explain the complex nature of children's interactions with books.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It used to be that nonfiction books for children were written in a dry, abstract tone and were filled with black and white illustrations. Recently, however, authors, illustrators and publishers of children's books have been
creating nonfiction literature that excites the senses. Nonfiction literature for children is written in a variety of tones and styles and accompanying illustrations are bright, colorful and interesting. In addition, increasingly nonfiction books are being targeted to younger and younger audiences. However, researchers have not kept up with this publishing trend. Very little research has been conducted investigating children’s success with and responses to nonfiction literature. It seems that further research in the following areas is warranted.

This study was conducted in a single kindergarten classroom. The advantage of studying a single classroom was that I could spend more time and investigate more deeply than if I was trying to conduct research in two or more classroom simultaneously. The disadvantage to studying a single context is that the findings are limited to the described research setting. However, a much richer and more descriptive study could be conducted by replicating this study in more than one classroom. By investigating several teachers and several classrooms of children, a broad range of meaning-making strategies and techniques could be documented. These findings would greatly contribute to the description of the variety of ways that children make meaning with both fiction and nonfiction literature.
The social context of Leslie's kindergarten was unique to this group of children and provided the foundation for all learning that occurred. However, this study needs to be replicated across a variety of classrooms in order to better understand the various social contexts that support children's learning. The children in Leslie's classroom were, for the most part, from white, middle to upper-middle class families. Perhaps children from varying cultural backgrounds learn to make meaning with literature in modes not captured in this study. Children of different cultural backgrounds should be studied in order to better understand how teachers can best meet the needs of all children.

It would be interesting to replicate this study with older children. Children's responses and meaning-making strategies grow out of their prior experiences with print and with others. Perhaps children best learn the processes of taking from texts when they are young. It would be interesting to note how older children make sense from fiction and nonfiction and then compare these strategies with those used by younger children.

At the age of five, children in this study already had clear genre preferences. Parents of the children reported that their child had this preference from the time they began picking up books. It seemed that those children who preferred nonfiction were always boys. It
would be interesting to investigate the influence of nature and nurture upon young children's genre preferences. How do literature preferences grow? Are children born with a predisposition for one genre or another? Answers to these questions would provide valuable information for parents and teachers.

There is a trend and growing use of literature in the classroom. Increasingly, researchers are investigating children's responses to literature. However, few studies have been done investigating children's responses to a variety of genres. Observing children and their responses to a variety of genres could yield knowledge about how genre affects response.

Finally, as argued, the social context provided support for the readers and writers in this kindergarten classroom. Indeed, learning to read and write were highly social activities. However, adults typically read and write in solitude. Despite the wealth of research done in the field of reading, the process of becoming a reader is quite mysterious. What is the process that children go through on the road from reading and writing as social activities to reading and writing as solitary activities? Longitudinal studies need to be done to investigate how children mature as readers and writers.
APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO PARENTS
December 10, 1992

Dear Parents:

I am a doctoral candidate in Education at Ohio State University. My focus and main interest is Reading, Children's Literature and Language Arts. Before I began my doctoral work full-time, I taught 2 years at ----and 3 years at -----. Therefore, I am familiar with the joys and struggles of being a kindergarten teacher. I am fascinated by children's learning and I love working with five and six year olds.

As part of my Ph.D program, I will be conducting a research study in Mrs. Miller's afternoon kindergarten class. I am interested in how kindergarten children make meaning with both fiction and nonfiction literature as they learn to read and write.

As a researcher, I will be observing what typically happens in the classroom over a period of six to eight weeks. I will be in the classroom four days a week for approximately 2 1/2 hours each day. My method of research calls for me to be as non-disruptive in the room as possible. I will be observing, tape-recording and video-recording the children as they normally interact with each other. I would also like to conduct a few, short tape-recorded interviews with children to find out why they choose the books they do, what they like best about specific books, etc. These brief interviews will be done at the convenience of the students and Mrs. Miller. I will also collect writing, drawing and art samples from the children. These will be copied and promptly returned to the children.

Only the children, Mrs. Miller and I will hear or see the audio and/or videotapes. Upon publication of this report, I will not identify your child and personal information will remain anonymous. Names of the children and the name and location of the school will be disguised in the reporting of this study. I will not interview or tape any child without his/her consent and the consent of his/her parents. All participation in this research is strictly voluntary. There is no consequence for your child if he/she or you choose not to participate in this study. You or your child are free to withdraw from this research study at any time.

Mrs. Miller and (school principal) have approved this study and have given my permission to conduct it at (school name). However, I must also have your written permission in order to include your child in my
study. Please complete the enclosed permission form and return it to Mrs. Miller by December 17. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (phone number).

I am excited to be back in a kindergarten classroom! I know that I will learn a great deal from your child. Thank you very much for considering my request for participation.

Sincerely,

Brenda Harvey
Doctoral Candidate

Dr. Janet Hickman
OSU Faculty Adviser
APPENDIX B

DEFINITION OF TERMS
DEFINITION OF TERMS

Activity Setting - Contexts in which collaborative interaction and learning occur (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Classroom theme-based unit - These terms refer to an extended classroom study concentrated on a specific teacher and/or student selected topic. In this type of study, the teacher and the children read quality fiction and nonfiction children's literature related to the selected theme. This literature also acts as a springboard for various language arts activities.

Fiction, narrative, story - These terms will be used interchangeably to refer to those texts which are written in a narrative, story format for the purpose of entertaining the reader. It is acknowledged, however, that a reader may also gain information from this type of book (Adapted from Rosenblatt, 1978). These are books which have not been assigned a Dewey decimal system number and are located in the picture book section of the library.

Higher Order/Psychological Functions - Culturally constructed and historically developed activities which originate as actual relations between humans and are then gradually internalized by the child. These include: reading, writing, voluntary attention, logical memory and the formation of concepts (Vygotsky, 1978).

Instructional Conversations - A language text created through largely informal teacher-child exchanges which involves the weaving of new information into existing mental structures (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

Literacy Behaviors - These terms will be used to refer to any type of verbal and/or nonverbal behavior that children exhibit that can be directly related to the reading of print. This includes but is not limited to: children's talk, children's writing, children's reading and children's voluntary/free response to literature read in the classroom.

Literacy Event - A time and/or a context in which children or a teacher and children make sense of print. This definition includes, but is not limited to, the ways children organize print to meet their needs, the kinds of talk that accompany uses of print and the nature and extent of social interaction related to print (Adapted from Cochran-Smith, 1984).
Nonfiction, information, expository text - These terms will be used interchangeably to refer to those texts which are written in a variety of formats, including narrative, with the main purpose of providing information for the reader. It is acknowledged, however, that a reader may read an informational book, not to gain knowledge, but for entertainment (Adapted from Rosenblatt, 1978). These are books which have been assigned a Dewey decimal system number, and are located in the nonfiction section of the library.

Reading Behaviors - These terms will be used to refer to the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that children exhibit as they interact with a book in which the child has the belief or intent to make meaning (Adapted from Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984).

Voluntary/Free Response - These terms will refer to a broad range of non-teacher directed verbal and nonverbal behaviors that reveal a connection between children and literature (Adapted from Hickman, 1979).

Writing Behaviors - These terms will be used to refer to children's marks on paper in which the child has the belief or intent to make meaning (Adapted from Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984).
APPENDIX C

SAMPLE FIELDNOTES AND AUDIONOTES
11:57 L picks up the book of *Strega Nona* by Tomie dePaola and walks over and sits in her chair.

L: "THE NAME OF THIS STORY IS CALLED STREGA NONA. HAVE YOU HEARD IT BEFORE?"

Brandy, Tiffany and several other say "yeh"

L: "I HAVE IT ON TAPE SO AFTER WE LISTEN TO IT I'LL PUT IT IN OUR LISTENING CENTER"

Sari adds: "We read it on a filmstrip in the library"

[note: Interesting quote...'we read it on a filmstrip..."

**TIFFANY ADDS: "WE REMEMBER STREGA NONA FROM THE LIBRARY"

As L gets situated, Erica is singing to herself, the same tune that she was singing earlier in the month when she herself read *Strega Nona*. "...Strega Nona...Strega Nona..."

11:59 L holds up the front cover of the book for the children to see and then tells them that she has a tape of the book that she is going to put in.

The children notice the silver medal on the front cover and a discussion ensues.

L HOLDS UP THE COVER AND ASKS: "WHAT'S ON THERE?"

**ANDREW: "A SILVER AWARD"

L asks the children: "SILVER CALDECOTT HONOR..."

**ANDREW: "GUESS WHAT, ONE OF THE BOOKS YOU GAVE ME HAS ONE OF THOSE..."

L: "UH-HUH, WHAT ABOUT THE GOLD ONE, WHAT IS THE GOLD ONE?"

CHILDREN DO NOT KNOW AND DO NOT ANSWER

L ADDS: "THE GOLD ONE IS FIRST PLACE..."

A CHILD ADDS: "SILVER ONE IS SECOND PLACE"

L: "THE SILVER, YEH, SILVER IS LIKE GETTING SECOND PLACE AND IT'S THE CALDECOTT HONOR SO WHAT IS THAT FOR?"

NO ONE ANSWERS; L ADDS: "BEAUTIFUL...?"
APPENDIX D

DIAGRAM OF LESLIE'S CLASSROOM
APPENDIX D

LESLIE'S CLASSROOM

- Art Center
- Cabinet
- Storage Room
- Tile Area
- Door to Hallway
- Writing Center
- Rest Room
- Chart for News
- Group Sink
- Housekeeping Area
- Shelves
- Shelf Toy Area
- Big Block Area
- Tables
- Little Block Area
- Library Corner
- Books
- Big Books
- Sink
- Cabinets

bulletin boards/movable wall to Jann Olenick's room
APPENDIX E

LIST OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM LIBRARY
DURING THE THEME-BASED UNIT


Crews, Donald. **Freight Train**. *Greenwillow*, 1978.


APPENDIX F

CONVENTIONS USED FOR THE PRESENTATION OF TRANSCRIPTIONS
CONVENTIONS USED IN THE PRESENTATION OF TRANSCRIPTS
(Adapted from Dyson, 1989)

( ) Parentheses around a portion of the text contain explanatory information and/or notes about the context or nonverbal information; e.g. (sighs, stops reading)

Y-E-S Capitalized letters separated by hyphens indicate that the letters were spoken or the words were spelled aloud

YES Capitalized words without hyphens indicate an increased volume as the words were spoken

/s/ Parallel slashed lines indicate that the speaker made the sound of the enclosed letter or letters

... Ellipsis points inserted in the middle of a blank line indicates the end of a segment.

... Ellipsis points inserted within a sentence indicates an elongated pause

When words within a child's utterance are inaudible, this will be noted as (inaudible) within the utterance
APPENDIX G

FACSIMILES OF CHILDREN’S WRITING REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT
APPENDIX G.1
EXAMPLE FROM JOSH, JESSE, JOHN AND JUSTIN’S "PARTS OF THE BODY" SERIES

Just one day’s writing from Josh, Jesse, John and Justin’s "Parts of the Body" series. The writings read (top to bottom, left to right): "My Hand" (Josh), "My Hand" (Jesse), Inside My Hand" (John) and "This is My Fist" (Justin).
APPENDIX G.2
TRAVIS' FOUR FOOD GROUPS

Note Travis' use of arrows. His writing reads: "The bread gives you vitamins and minerals. The meat gives you vitamins. The cereal gives you nutrients and so do the bread and fruit."
APPENDIX G.3
TRAVIS’ CROSS-SECTIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PARTS OF HIS BODY

Travis’ writing reads (top to bottom): "My Spine", "My Spine and My Heart" and "My Bones and My Brain".
APPENDIX G.4

TRAVIS' INSIDE VIEWS OF A HOUSE

Travis' writing reads: "Inside a House".
APPENDIX G.5

SARAH'S USE OF NUMBERS FOR SEQUENCING

The top writing and accompanying illustration is a recipe. Note the numbered steps. Her recipe reads: "1 - Put in Pan. 2 - Put in Oven. 3 - Eat and Enjoy". The bottom writing and accompanying illustration is a plant growth sequence. The steps (from seed to grown plant) are numbered. Her writing reads: "Plants Grow By Seeds".
APPENDIX G.6
MONICA, CINDY AND HEATHER’S VERSION OF DYLAN’S DAY OUT

Monica, Cindy and Heather illustrate (top to bottom, left to right) a page from Dylan’s Day Out in a manner described by author/illustrator Peter Catalanotto. All three girls wrote: "When The Ball Hit Dylan".
The ball comes to Buns' head

APPENDIX G.7
EXAMPLE OF SARI'S TECHNIQUE OF CIRCLING MISSPENTED WORDS

Sari's writing and drawing from Dylan's Day Out (Catalanotto). Note how she circled words that she believes are misspelled, a technique suggested by author/illustrator, Peter Catalanotto. Sari's writing reads: "The Ball Comes To Bounce Off Dylan's Head".
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