Children’s Responses to Global Literature Read Alouds in a Second Grade Classroom

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

The purpose of this three month long case study was to explore five children’s responses to global children’s literature in one second grade classroom. Qualitative methods including participant observation, audio recording, research journaling, informal interviewing and artifact collection were used to answer the following questions: (1) In one second grade classroom, how does a focus group of children respond to global children’s literature shared in picturebook read alouds? (2) What evidence of global learning do children offer? I wanted to see how these responses might affirm the call for using global children’s literature as an instructional tool, specifically to introduce children to cultures they might not otherwise come into contact with. Also, as an instructional tool, how might these children’s responses and evidence of global learning shed light on using global children’s literature to meet curricular learning objectives?

Over the course of the study I found that children used response styles similar to those response styles described in research about children’s responses to culturally generic books. In their responses, the children in this study expressed global understandings, misunderstandings, showed evidence of global learning, and responded with empathy toward the global characters. Within the children’s responses there was also evidence of learning that met curricular goals in social studies and language arts.

Keywords: global children’s literature, elementary students, reader response
Dedication

Dedicated to all people from south of the Ohio River
Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank Dr. Jeane Copenhaver-Johnson for including me in her work with responses to read alouds. She has provided me with help, encouragement, and support with all of my graduate school endeavors. She is the reason I ever pursued a graduate degree and quite possibly is the reason I ever remained in the teaching profession.

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Publications


Field of Study

Major Field: Education
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Nature of the Problem

The demographics of the United States classrooms are changing rapidly reflecting our changing population. Traditionally, the oldest historical groups that have in large part made up the United States population were identified as non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, American Indians, and Native Alaskans (Grieco, 2009). These populations maintained a natural increase, i.e. not through immigration, up until the 1970s. The population in the United States self-identifying as White non-Hispanic was 76 percent in 1970. By 2007 the percentage identifying as White non-Hispanic in the United States was 66 percent of the total population (Grieco, 2009). Grieco cites changing immigration laws for the change in demographics. She notes that, “New waves of immigrants began arriving in the United States following amendments to the Immigration Act in 1965 that abolished the national origins quota system…” (pp. 1-2). Greico further explains that the abolishment of the quota resulted in a change from the traditionally large number of European immigrants to a large number of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. Greico (2009) argues that statistically, “In 2007, there were 38.1 million foreign born people in the United States, representing 1 in 8 residents” (p. 9). Of the 38.1 million foreign born, 80 percent were born in Latin America or Asia.
Although the faces of the student population continue to change, the way children are instructed and the content that they are learning does not appear to be keeping up with that pace. Cochran-Smith (2004) estimates that students of color will make up fifty-seven percent of the student population in the United States by the year 2050. I have taught for ten years and despite these changes in population have seen very little change in our state-mandated curriculum other than the shuffling of content between grade levels (e.g., matter being taught at first grade is now taught at the third grade level).

The changing face of our population warrants a need to examine what educators are doing in the classroom to affirm and accommodate our students as well as to educate our students about global cultures. In addition to meeting the needs of our diverse learners, the beliefs and perspectives about diverse populations that are held by our native born students also need to be examined. There is a need in the educational community to recognize that our changing demographics call for an increased emphasis on cultural diversity in our educational tools while delivering curriculum that enables our students to be successful learners and cooperative citizens in the broader world outside of their classrooms.

Although the goals of global education are evolving, some consistent themes are in the field. Bourke (2009) states that, “The five learning emphases that reflect recurring themes in global education are interdependence and globalism; identity and cultural diversity; social justice and human rights; peace building and conflict resolution; and sustainable futures” (p. 34). These learning emphases are relevant considering our
growing connectedness with the world and our growing interdependence with people outside of our national borders.

Students will be able to move globally through travel or virtually through technology with greater ease. Populations will continue to shift. Transportation, the creation of the worldwide web, and refugee movements due to global wars have all contributed to our increasingly global society. The faces found in our school districts are shifting. Bainbridge, Pantaleo and Ellis (1999) explain that globalization “...is seen in the high incidence of refugees, immigration statistics, and the changing face of almost every urban neighborhood in the Western world” (p. 183). The Somali population in the Columbus, Ohio area is a prime example of a population change that speaks to the need for global education in our classrooms. There is no ignoring the interdependence we have with the world around us. We are becoming a “global village” (Brewster, 2008).

Early childhood education has the unique advantage of influencing a child’s ability to function with people outside of his or her immediate family units. Children’s literature is a powerful instructional tool that can be used to reach the goals of global education as well as everyday classroom curriculum. Kurkjian and Livingston (2007) describe the potential of children’s literature to introduce children to global cultures in their early years to help them begin to understand more fully the many people who share their world. They assert that global literature can “...serve to enhance our understanding of one another, promote respect for different ways of being and seeing our world, and help us discover bonds of humanity that unite us” (p. 594). Literature that contains
diverse characters can also provide students with critical encounters (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006) with other cultures that may begin to disrupt their thinking, challenge their views, or whet their appetites to learn more. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) note that critical encounters “…are pivotal moments that have transformative possibilities for students’ discussion and learning” (p. 157).

Global books can be affirming to our international students and can be enlightening to U.S. born students. Some scholars have referred to these books as functioning like windows and mirrors. Bishop (1994) used the metaphors of windows and mirrors to describe the power of books to affirm and educate. She spoke of windows for people to look through or cross through to experience others, and mirrors for people to see themselves for self-affirmation or self-reflection. Cox and Galda (1990) assert in speaking about books with diverse characters that “For minority and immigrant children, these books can be a mirror, reflecting and validating familiar cultures and experiences” (p. 582). They go on to add “For mainstream children, these books can be a window, revealing a multicultural vista that juxtaposes the familiar and the less familiar” (p. 582).

Students can have virtual experiences through books. Landt (2006) laments, “Because I was living in an isolated rural neighborhood in the days before television arrived, reading was my window to the world” (p. 690).

Authentic exposure to global cultures is important in the development of children’s ability to empathize with others who do not share their cultural values and belief systems. Louie (2005) explains that “Stories tend to present characters as living
and breathing individuals, not as faceless masses of people” (p. 566). Children often step into stories and personally attempt to engage with the characters through transparent and personal responses to literature (Sipe, 2008). The ability to empathize is important to a child’s future ability to function in a global society. Without empathy, people live with misunderstanding, mistrust, and a lack of desire to care for one another. Bieger (1995/1996) asserts that “Children cannot be sensitized to the existence of people who are not like them by merely being told to like others” (p. 308). There is a real need for children to personally connect with others.

Although quality global literature can be at the heart of a lesson, it is not enough for the elementary teacher simply to read literature that is global or multicultural to students in order to foster empathy in the students’ thinking. In addition to fictional literature with relatable characters, the teacher must also provide the students with additional information on the characters’ cultures through informational texts. Maduram (2000) asserts that “information books create real worlds by presenting facts on topics such as animals, places, things, people, and so forth” (p. 391). The use of informational texts with fiction is important. Louie (2005) cautions that, “Students, usually limited by their background knowledge about the multicultural texts they read, tend to interpret these texts on the basis of their self-centered worldviews and experiences” (p. 567). She urges teachers to add cultural information through additional informational texts, “…simulation, artwork, research, film, discussion, lecture, and other informational group work” (p. 567).
Duthie (1996), in a discussion about maximizing experience with informational
texts, contends that, “in current language instruction there is consensus: the teacher’s role
is to do more and better listening, and children’s to engage in more talk about their
thinking and learning” (p. 10). Without listening on the part of the teacher, and
discussions between students and teachers, students may be left with misunderstandings.
In her study of children’s responses to global literature, Buck (2009) described a lack of
background knowledge as being a potential barrier to students’ literary interpretations
and cultural understandings of the text. The students in Buck’s study frequently
expressed cultural misunderstandings about the Middle Eastern characters. The
misunderstandings expressed by the students in the study were never completely
clarified. Varelas and Pappas (2006) describe the teacher’s role in a literature discussion
as being more of a mediator. Teachers are there to facilitate, not dominate, but also, as the
expert ready to provide accurate information when needed.

Purpose of the Study

My interest in global children’s literature and the use of it in the classroom began
because of my desire to understand children’s responses to this body of literature and my
interest in what this literature can potentially do to introduce children, who might not
otherwise have an authentic experience with people outside of their own cultural group,
to diverse populations and settings. Children will naturally come into contact with other
people outside of their own cultural group as they navigate through society. We have
many cultures in the United States. The students I work with are mostly White and are
generationally from a Midwestern family. On occasion I hear the word “hillbilly” come from these students. This word is a pejorative term used to label southerners from the hills. I am one of two teachers in the building who is the child of Appalachian parents. These students by virtue of being in the school have exposure to our cultures. The “hillbilly” stereotype is an easy one for the other teacher and I to disrupt since we do not fit with the descriptions these students express. Although these children will come into contact with other cultures within the United States, they may not be exposed to people from other countries. How might coming into contact with other global cultures via children’s literature benefit them or disrupt any stereotypes or misunderstandings that they hold?

As an educator, I am interested in how this body of literature could be used to meet instructional needs in the classroom since many of our curricular goals in social studies deal with learning about cultures on different continents. This entire study is written with an audience of elementary classroom teachers in mind. After studying children’s responses to picturebook read alouds for three years, I began to wonder how my students might respond to global picturebooks. Would they engage with global literature in the same observable ways that children respond to literature set in the United States? The first purpose of the current study is to see how children respond to international children’s picturebooks. Louie (2005) explains that although there have been many claims about the benefits of using literature with children that presents cultures outside of the familiar U.S. culture, there have been very few studies that
consider the nature of students’ responses to those texts. In my own review of the
literature, at the time of this study, I was only able to find four studies that looked at the
responses of children inside the United States to books set in locations outside of the
United States (Buck, 2009; Keis, 2006; Louie, 1995; Massey, Weeks, & Druin, 2005).
None of the four studies focused on students in the primary grades or occurred in the
classroom context. In this study, I chose to look at how a focus group of second grade
students responded to global literature to add to this body of research.

The second purpose of this study is to explore the kinds of questions or curiosities
that a focus group of children might express about global cultures in response to reading
global literature. What are they wondering about? What do they know? What do they
understand and misunderstand? In the end, what evidence of global learning do the
children offer? As part of the state-mandated curriculum for social studies, second grade
students are required to study the cultures of the seven continents. The first time I told my
students that we would be studying the continent of Africa one student raised her hand
and asked, “Do we get to dress up like Africans?” This question has been consistent over
the last two years of introducing the unit about Africa. The first time I taught a unit on
Asia, several female students brought in pictures from Halloween informing me that they
dressed up like Japanese women. Will students’ comments move beyond “dressing up
like Africans” to cultural inquiries? Will students see traditional dress as being used for
special occasions and not as Halloween costumes?
By learning more about the ways my second grade students respond to global literature, and the kinds of questions they have, I hope to contribute to the field of education information that will benefit the instructional planning of elementary educators to help our children function in a global society. The task of developing curriculum for global understanding can be overwhelming for many educators. Would some insight into students’ understandings and misunderstandings make teachers more comfortable with using global literature? I hope that this type of research will be pertinent to teachers’ educational decision making process.

I also hope that this work will be influential on the individuals who author the social studies curriculum for our students. Perhaps they will see a need for global education in the elementary social studies curriculum beyond the small portion in the strand people and societies in the primary grades which asks educators to teach about the cultures on the seven continents. The weak implementation of social studies in the elementary classroom is a concern. Fry (2009) describes the national social studies curriculum in the United States as weak and asserts that policy makers, “…underscore the importance of experiences that allow students to study global connections and interdependence among diverse world cultures” (p. 90). Fry further notes the No Child Left Behind legislation has further moved social studies to the background because of its emphasis on math and the language arts. This is occurring despite our need to prepare children for our increasingly global economy. Wan (2006) notes that, “…educators in particular are faced with the task of preparing the youngsters to live in today’s diverse
Educators are faced with this task, yet they experience outside forces that minimize global aspects of their curriculum.

**Theoretical Perspective**

**Reader Response Theory**

This study is grounded in reader response theory. Reader response theory focuses on the interactions between the reader and the text and those background experiences that the reader brings with him or her to the interaction (Soter, 1999). The interaction is the way that the reader engages with the text (e.g., they read it, or it is read to them) as well as the way they approach the reading, by choice or assignment, for pleasure or learning. As the reader interacts with the text there is a transaction that takes place. Influential to reader response theory and the concept of “transaction” is the work of Louise Rosenblatt. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) who wrote extensively on her “transactional theory” of literature examined the reciprocal interaction that occurs between reader and text. Rosenblatt (1982) asserts that, “reading is a transaction, a two-way process, involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances” (p. 268). The experience is unique to the time it is occurring and unique to the individual who is experiencing it. Rosenblatt (1994) states in regard to the literary experience and transactional theory that “the ‘meaning’ does not reside ready-made ‘in’ the text or ‘in’ the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text” (p.1063).
Rosenblatt (1938/1995) uses the term poem to describe “…the transaction that goes on between the reader and a text” (p. 27). The reference to poem is not a reference to poetry in the traditional format, but as an event that occurs with the reader when he or she is engaged with any form of literature. The transaction between the reader and the text is context specific. No two readers will have the same transaction with the same literary materials. Rosenblatt (1964) narrates this concept when speaking about the transaction between the reader and text in her piece “‘The poem as Event’” with the following statement:

A poem must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It is an occurrence, a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience; the encounter gives rise to new experience, a poem. This becomes part of the ongoing stream of life, to be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being—aesthetic, ethical, or metaphysical. (p. 126)

As readers come into contact with texts they encounter through choice, or often in the academic world through assignment, they begin their transactions by adopting a stance.

Rosenblatt (1982) terms “the reader’s stance, his ‘mental set’ so to speak” (p. 268). Rosenblatt (1982) describes the reader’s stance as the “most important choice of all” made by the reader early in the reading event (p. 268). Rosenblatt notes the young reader needs to, “…encounter literature for which he possesses the intellectual,
emotional, and experimental equipment” (p. 25). She explains that he will inevitably bring to the text his past experiences and personal needs to shape his experience with the text. Rosenblatt (1994) states, “A stance reflects the reader’s purpose” (p. 1066). This is the reader’s motivation for reading, her intentions for the transaction. Rosenblatt describes the reader’s stance as lying on a continuum of efferent reading at one end and aesthetic reading at the other end. She explains that, “a particular stance determines the proportion or mix of public and private elements of sense that fall within the scope of the reader’s selective attention” (p. 1067). Although the experience depends on the reader, Rosenblatt (1938/1995) does acknowledge that the quality of text itself is important. She notes that, “some texts offer greater rewards than do others” (p. 269).

One aspect of this theory that Rosenblatt (1938/1995) addresses is the potential of what the text can do for the reader. This makes this theory especially attractive in thinking about the potential of global literature in the classroom. Rosenblatt (1982) describes the reader as approaching the text for efferent reasons, to seek information, or aesthetic reasons, for enjoyment or pleasure. For the efferent reader, global literature can answer questions, clarify misunderstandings, and work as a reference. For young school age children especially, global literature in the form of a picturebook can make new information outside of children’s schema accessible as picturebooks contain complementary illustrations that bring the content to life. These books are often written with a young audience in mind.
The aesthetic reader who chooses the text or comes into the text through another reader (e.g., a teacher) will have a transaction that will likely evoke an emotional response. In order for young children to understand cultures outside of their own, or to develop tolerance for ways of life that may not be akin to their own, it is important that children begin to develop empathy for others. Quality global literature can be a tool for developing empathy in school age children. Louie (2005) contends that an aesthetic response to global literature during the literary transaction makes the development of empathy toward people outside of one’s culture a possibility. Louie notes that, “aesthetic response to literature requires readers to step into the text world and to become immersed in it” (p. 566). She observed this happen in a study of children’s responses to a Chinese novella. The students began to respond empathetically to the Chinese characters.

Educators have an important role in arranging classroom time and a classroom environment that allows for an aesthetic transaction with global children’s literature. Maduram (2000) observed the benefits of aesthetic engagement with informational books at home, where her preschool age child was able to engage with information books at her own leisure. Her child frequently revisited books at her own pace, dependent on her own interests at the time as she worked through her understanding of the real topics presented in the texts. Classroom teachers may not fully realize the critical role their choices play in the classroom with regard to their choices of literature and how it is used in the classroom, especially for children that may not engage with literature outside of the
classroom. The role of the teacher is addressed in the transactional theory of reader response. In regard to teachers of literature, Rosenblatt (1938/1995) asserts,

They have not always realized that, willy-nilly, they affect the student’s sense of human personality and human society. More directly than most teachers, they foster general ideas or theories about human nature and conduct, definite moral attitudes, and habitual responses to people and situations. (p. 4)

Rosenblatt (1982) stresses the importance of allowing young readers to aesthetically (for enjoyment or pleasure) experience a text before forcing them into reading or listening to a text with an efferent (cognitive) response agenda in mind. Teachers may have in mind what they want the students to get out of a text, but in the end, the reader will experience it in his own way. The teacher as the facilitator will be a present mediator to step in when needed as children use global literature so that students do not walk away with misunderstandings. Reading should be an enjoyable experience. Rosenblatt notes that the older students become, the more likely aesthetic response is forgotten by the teacher. Students are expected to be reading less for enjoyment. Linking back to empathy development as well as the goal of introducing children to the wider world, aesthetic reading as part of engagement with global literature should be given an important role in classroom instructional time. In the next section I will discuss the research questions guiding this study as well as terms that will be used in the study.
Research Questions

This qualitative study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. In one second grade classroom, how do a focus group of children respond to global children’s literature shared in picturebook read alouds?

2. What evidence of global learning do children offer?

Defining Terms

For the purpose of this study I will define terms as they are used throughout the work. They are as follows:

1. **Reader Response** - This term refers to the experience the reader has when he or she engages with a text. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) describes the transaction between the reader and the text as being a very personal and individual dependent experience. She refers to this as the reader’s stance (Rosenblatt, 1982). From the researcher standpoint it will be impossible to capture the entire reader response of the child since much of the experience is internal. The experiences described in this study will be only those that are observable and documented.

   Rosenblatt (1982) describes the reader as being on a continuum of an efferent or aesthetic stance toward literature. In the efferent stance the child is seeking information and has an agenda in mind, either personal or influenced by the teacher. The aesthetic stance is the stance taken by the child when he or she is engaging with the literature for pleasure or enjoyment. In this type of engagement there may be no agenda in mind from the reader or consumer of the text.
Of those responses that are observable I will be doing open coding to form categories. In addition to using open coding to form categories, I will also consider the response to literature work done by Lawrence Sipe (2008). Sipe has done extensive work on children’s responses to picturebooks. His five facets of literary understanding will be informative in the data analysis process.

2. **Global Children’s Literature**- Scholars in reference to this body of literature tend to use the terms international or global when referring to literature with a theme outside of the United States. Lehman, Freeman, and Scharer (2010) prefer the term global instead of international in reference to this body of literature. Lehman et al. explain that the rationale behind this decision is that the term global is more inclusive than that of international. In this study, I will use the term global literature unless directly quoting another author.

In addition to books published in countries other than the United States by foreign authors, Freeman and Lehman (2001) include:

...books written by immigrants to the United States about their home countries and published in the United States, books written by authors from countries other than the United States but originally published in the United States, and books written by American authors and published in the United States with settings in other countries. (p. 10)

For the purpose of selecting and using literature in this study, I will define global literature in line with the definition put forth by Freeman and Lehman, which will entail
literature published abroad in the home language or translated into English as well as literature published within the United States by immigrants or American authors creating authentic representations of global cultures.

3. **Picturebook**- In this study the books being used are referred to as picturebooks. Sipe and Brightman (2005) describe these types of books as structurally different from juvenile fiction chapter books and juvenile nonfiction texts. Picturebooks are a common everyday tool in primary grade classrooms. Sipe and Brightman (2005) explain that the pictures in picturebooks give the reader something that the words cannot do alone. They assert that visual interpretation of the illustrations is an integral part of children’s responses to this type of literature.

4. **Read Alouds**- During this study, read alouds occur when a picturebook is read aloud to a student audience by a teacher. These read alouds are conducted orally in a setting of more than one child. When the teacher reads aloud a picturebook, the teacher is seated in full view of the audience. The teacher reads the text aloud and positions the book while speaking so that the illustrations are visible, or the teacher reveals the illustrations after reading a page. Students are welcome to respond to the text without hand-raising. There will be no strict guidelines for participation during read aloud other than the stated expectation that students engage respectfully by allowing all students to have their say. Elementary students have been observed to be more likely to participate during literature discussions if hand-raising is not a prerequisite for participation or if there are not strict guidelines in place (Copenhaver, 2001; Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the rational for conducting this study: a changing population and a growing interconnectedness with the world. Through this study I hope to inform teaching practices at the elementary school level by looking at the way children respond to global literature and by sharing their observable questions, understandings, and curiosities about our global society. In the next chapter I will review literature connected to this study.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

This literature review is separated into the following sections: scholarship about readers, scholarship about the development of the reader, emotional development, picturebook research, reading comprehension strategies, and scholarship about global understandings. In this review you will see that the reader’s cultural background plays a critical role in how he or she engages with literature. How the students respond to the literature in this study is specific to their culture and may not necessarily reflect the way that other students may respond.

This literature review will reveal the potential benefit of using global children’s literature in the classroom as well as the purpose for using this body of literature in the first place. A limited amount of scholarship examines children’s responses to global literature. It is this lack of scholarship that has fueled my interest in this area of study and my desire to contribute information on this topic to the field of educational research. I will begin this review with a discussion about the reader.

The Reader

Reader Response Theory. In the first chapter I explained reader response theory as conceptualized by Louise Rosenblatt (1938/1995). One concept explained in that chapter in relation to this theory is the reader’s stance. The reader takes a stance as reading
somewhere on the continuum of reading aesthetically or efferently. In this literature review I will provide more information about efferent and aesthetic reading as it is important to how children encounter and use global children’s literature.

Efferent reading is described by Rosenblatt (1938/1995, 1994, 1982) as reading with the principle intention of seeking information. The reader may be searching for information, or in the setting of an elementary classroom, the reader may be given the task of looking for information. As children move through school, efferent reading tends to be the type of reading that they will most frequently encounter.

In aesthetic reading, “the reader adopts an attitude of readiness to focus attention on what is being lived through during the reading experience” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1067). This type of reading appeals to the reader’s senses. He is essentially reading for pleasure. “The ‘evocation,’ and not the text, is the object of the reader’s ‘response’ and ‘interpretation,’ both during and after the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1067).

The reader’s stance will ultimately focus his or her response to a text. Rosenblatt (1994), in speaking about the reading event occurring in a particular time and place, explains that a reader may read the text in one setting efferently and in a different setting aesthetically. Rosenblatt (1982) describes a scenario in which a teacher held the expectation that her students would have an efferent focus on the read aloud she was doing, but in the end one student in particular transacted with the piece aesthetically and did not respond in a manner meeting the teacher’s expectations. Teachers often, without success, try to control the reader’s experience with a literary work. Cox and Many (1992) suggest that in place of the view that, “readers should primarily aim toward correctly
interpreting a literary work’s ‘theme’; instead, readers can experience the work and find meaning in light of their own worlds or any world they might imagine” (p. 41). Reader response theory does not suggest that all reading should be for aesthetic purposes, but in line with Cox and Many, the idea is that students should be given the opportunity to aesthetically engage with literature to not only fulfill their needs, but to reach understandings not always predicted by the teacher. Once children have had the opportunity to engage with a text aesthetically in the classroom setting, the teacher could then give them the opportunity to engage with it differently by adopting an efferent stance.

In the school setting, one stance should not be favored over the other but rather, students “need to learn to differentiate the circumstances that call for one or the other stance” (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 1084). Too much emphasis on one over the other is described by Rosenblatt (1994) as “counterproductive” to the development of the reader (p. 1082). She asserts that, “teaching practices and curriculums, from the very beginning, should include both efferent and aesthetic linguistic activity and should build a sense of the different purposes involved” (p.1082).

The reader’s transaction with the text at hand is dependent on many factors. As noted by Rosenblatt (1938/1995, 1982, 1994), one’s culture, life experiences, and schooling experiences are very influential in one’s transaction with a text and development as a reader. Cultural and developmental factors are essential considerations in elementary classroom instructional decisions made by the teacher. In the case of literature choices, and goals for those literature choices, the students’ cultural
backgrounds and their development as learners are essential factors in the planning process. In the next section I will discuss literature that focuses on the development of the reader.

**Development of the Reader**

Rosenblatt (1938/1995) stresses throughout her work the social and cultural factors that influence the reader’s transaction with literature. She describes the signs and the sounds linked to them as two elements in the literary experience and notes how often the “essential third element” is ignored in this process, the individual’s particular history (p.25). In the following section I will give a brief overview of sociocultural theory as this theory of development is connected to the social and cultural influences on children’s responses to literature as well as the way they function in the elementary classroom, the setting of this study.

**Sociocultural theory: An overview.** Sociocultural theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978) to “…explain how learning is socially mediated” (Pang, 2005, p. 17). Berk and Winsler (1995) state that “According to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, cognition is a profoundly social phenomenon” (p. 12). Although one’s biology makes him or her a unique individual, his or her learning is most heavily influenced by interactions with their cultural group. Sociocultural theory indicates that one does not learn alone or progress in his or her knowledge without interactions with more knowledgeable individuals.

Social interaction is culturally specific. Many features come together to define one’s culture. Rogoff (2003) gives a general definition of culture and describes culture as
being more than nationality and ethnicity, but as encompassing the “…configurations of routine ways of doing things in any community’s approach to living” and “…people’s participation in their communities’ cultural practices” (p. 3).

Culture is an influential factor in how children come to know their world. Although a child’s classroom has a culture that the children together create, students bring their home cultures, which may at times, be a culture that is not similar to the majority of students that inhabit the classroom. Culture influences how children engage with literature and how they respond and negotiate meaning with each other (Pappas, Varelas, Barry, & Rife, 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, Pappas, Kane, Arsenault, Hankes, & Cowan, 2007). In the next section I will review literature that speaks to cultural influences on children’s responses to literature.

**Cultural influences on shaping children’s response.** Teachers must acknowledge children’s cultural background as a resource that can contribute to his or her literary understandings. In this review of scholarly work I will be discussing studies of children’s responses to literature across cultures. A look at different cultures is important as the population in the United States continues to change. Cochran-Smith (2004) projects, based on an accumulation of statistics, that the population of students of color in the United States will be as high as fifty-seven percent of the total student body by the year 2050. The cultural background of teachers is not changing to match the population shifts of students. Although the student population across the United States is a mix of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, eighty-six percent of teachers in primary and secondary education “…are from mainstream, middle-class backgrounds” (Pang, 2005). Teachers
from mainstream backgrounds often misinterpret their diverse students’ responses to literature as being irrelevant or view students’ manners of response as representing off-task behavior when the response style they use does not reflect a teacher’s expectation for what a response should look like (Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Rietschlin, 2009).

As Rosenblatt (1938/1995) stresses throughout her work, cultural identity is influential on children’s responses to literature. Enciso (1994) asserts, “As we encourage children’s personal responses to literature, we must keep in mind that cultural knowledge is everywhere and always part of how we interpret the world and our place in it” (p. 532). Culture influences what children say as well as how they say it. Culture also influences the way children negotiate meaning together (Varelas, et al. 2007).

**Family and community.** One cultural influence on children’s responses to literature is family. Shirley Brice Heath (1983/2006) conducted an ethnographic study over a nine year period between 1969 and 1978 in which she looked at the discourse patterns of two communities in North Carolina. One community was Trackton, a mostly African American community. The other community studied was Roadville, a mostly Caucasian community. Both communities were located in old mill towns. Heath spent time observing the discourse patterns of the families in the two communities.

Children in the Heath (1983/1996) study brought their language experience and ways of functioning with their families into the classrooms. In Trackton the families did not function with a daily set schedule. They were not restricted by time and space which was somewhat evidenced in their story telling patterns. In the classroom when the Trackton children came in, their understandings of time and space structures from home
communities were often viewed as a behavior problem and lack of discipline. The teachers could not understand why the Trackton children had trouble staying in their work spaces and why, from the perspective of the teachers, they did not handle the classroom materials appropriately.

In addition to family, children’s experience at church is a cultural influence on how they respond to literature (Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2009; Haight, 2002; Heath, 1983/1996). At church many children come into contact with stories in print, orally, or through film. In Heath’s study she observed the dual influence of the church and the home on children’s choices about the stories they told. When Caucasian families in the Roadville homes told stories, they were predominantly of a factual nature. The storytelling in the Roadville families’ churches reinforced the storytelling rule of sticking to the facts. Adults in the community who gossiped or were not known to be truthful in their stories often became socially excluded. In the case of the classroom, one would have to ponder how this would play out in the composition of stories in the classroom or how these students might respond to read alouds of books that were filled with fantasy.

The African American children from the Trackton community also experienced dual family and church storytelling expectations. Children were praised for telling a good story full of exaggerations. Good storytellers in Trackton were good even if they had to fictionalize some of the events in their story. Pleasing and entertaining the audience was important. Stories at home could go on for an unlimited amount of time as long as they held the audience’s attention. This was similar to the story telling in the local churches where there was no set time to the service. In the elementary school classroom,
exaggeration and extended responses might be misinterpreted as showing off, or getting off task.

Both Heath (1983) and Haight (2002) observed a hierarchy of who should be telling the stories in the African American families in their studies. Adults were viewed as the knowledgeable ones. Haight (2002) explains that, “adults at First Baptist Church described interactions with children that could be described as relatively hierarchically organized; that is, adults are viewed as more knowledgeable and experienced, and as having an obligation to teach children culturally important information” (p.106). The children entered into the storytelling events with the adults through call-and-response sequences, individual responses, and spontaneous contributions. Heath had observed students who had typically engaged verbally at home with adults as being less verbal at school.


**Cultural identity and what children have to say.** The culture of the child’s family and church both influence how children respond to literature. In addition to the manner of how the children respond, the children’s cultural backgrounds also influence what they say in their responses and how they interpret the literature during the transaction. Enciso
(1994) observed during a reading of *Maniac Magee* (1991) the many ways that the students’ cultures influenced their responses. At the beginning of the reading, Enciso noticed that the children’s interpretations of the characters were heavily influenced by pop culture stereotypes of black males in the news and in film. The assumptions about the character Mars Bar, a black male, were that because he was a tough guy he would only develop into an even tougher guy in the future. Sipe (2002) explains that children, often in the quest to understand a story, lean on “…cultural products like movies, TV programs and commercials…” (p. 476).

As the reading progressed in the Enciso (1994) study, the children’s cultural identities continued to influence their responses to the literature. When racial differences became clear in the reading, students began to use their cultural knowledge of history, film, and television to explain the issues of race that were in the story. Although some of the students’ responses were unsettling to Enciso, she understood that the students were relying on their cultural resources to make sense of the plot. This work by Enciso is important when thinking about literature discussions with elementary school students. The students will begin to respond based on their cultural bank of knowledge and what they say may not be accurate or pleasing to the ears of teachers from a White middleclass background. Enciso is not advocating allowing misinterpretations to be left unchallenged, but rather allowing students the time and space together as a group to make sense of the story. Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, and Johnson (2007) also stress the importance of not judging students’ responses too prematurely. They note that premature judgment might silence children and cause them to take their conversations underground, which
would consequently result in children carrying around unknown misunderstandings. As a literature discussion moves forward, the teacher can step in and help children work through their misunderstandings.

**Cultural identity and race.** When children interact with global literature they will be presented with characters who are not only culturally different to them, but characters who are racially different as well. A child’s racial or cultural background may influence the way they respond to the global literature. As Enciso (1994) observed, children use their cultural identities in their quest to understand stories. In addition to understanding stories, children also use their cultural identities to understand themselves and their cultural group (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2007; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2009; Enciso, 1994). Children’s racial identity or the topic of race has been observed to be a topic during responses to literature. As children in the Enciso study continued to respond to the text, their conversations involved questions and statements about their own racial identities. Students responded with comments like, “I have some black relatives in my family” and “So my dad’s colored and not white” (p. 531).

Students in many studies discuss questions and curiosities about race in general (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006). One example of this is found in a discussion about the possibility of the existence of a Black Santa Claus by first graders in two first grade classrooms (Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2007). Another example is the Copenhaver-Johnson (2006) study in which first grade students wonder about how race and racial segregation played out in the Christian spiritual world. An African American male
wondered out loud, “like if God was Black and Jesus was White” (p. 19). A White girl chimes in, “Yes, what if Mary married a Black?” (p. 19).

In several studies, students discussed race in terms of their own race and how their particular race was represented in texts. Hefflin (2003) described African American students’ responses to children’s literature about African American characters. The students identified with many characters in the books. The students experienced joy in their engagements with the texts and openly critiqued the books for their cultural authenticity. Enciso (1994) observed a student challenge the absence of racial groups in *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1991). The student wanted to know where Chinese and Mexicans would fit in the story.

Students in several studies responded with comments and questions about racism (Copenhaver, 2000; Copenhaver, 2001; Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007; Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman & Rietschlin, 2009; Macphee, 1997). For example, first grade students in the study conducted by Macphee (1997) expressed displeasure at the treatment of Black protagonists in the books and pondered the reasoning behind such treatment. Copenhaver-Johnson et al. (2009) noted that children verbally responded to *White Socks Only* (Coleman, 1996) with comments about segregation and the consequences for individuals when faced with “Whites only” signs. Brooks and Hampton (2005) collected written responses from eighth grade students who expressed anger at the treatment of Blacks by White antagonists in the story *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976).
Students’ cultures influence how they move through the world as citizens. A hope for this study is that through interaction with global literature students will be able to affirm their identities and develop an understanding of other cultural groups. Enciso (1994) states, “Through literature, I can encourage my students’ desire to understand and feel empathy for different people, times, and dilemmas (p. 524). Students can understand others through empathy (Louie, 2005). In the next section I will discuss literature pertaining to the emotional development of children.

**Emotional Development**

Enciso (1994) asserts that the transactional model of reading (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) supports the notion that empathy in children can be developed through an aesthetic reading. In aesthetic reading the reader can have a lived-through experience with the characters. It is through this lived-through experience with the character that a child can become able to empathize with the character. In this section I will begin with an overview of the history of the concept of empathy.

**Empathy.** A modern definition of empathy is that it is, “the identification and understanding of another’s situation, feelings, and motives” (Field, 2001, p. 115). Wispé (1987) explains that the term empathy is derived from the German word Einfühlung with origins in the German aesthetics. This branch of psychology derives from aesthetic and form appreciation. The thought behind this theory is that aesthetic satisfaction does not reside in an object but rather comes from the internal activities that the individual derives from contact with an object. This sounds reminiscent of aesthetic reading and the results
of the transaction with literature. Wispé explains that the word empathy evolved from an analogy of sympathy.

Early writing on empathy suggests that researchers believed that only individuals could truly understand their own inner lives (Wispé, 1987). In the early 1900s psychologists began to assert that individuals could begin to imagine the feelings of others through “empirical empathy” (association) or by “empathy through feeling” (Wispé, 1987, p. 20). The association that both individuals were feeling was attributed to imagination (Wispé, 1987). Through imagination individuals can make connections, mental comparisons, and role play. Although no one has access into the internal thinking of others, researchers have observed children respond to literature in ways that would indicate that they are making connections to characters, making comparisons, and imagining possibilities (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman, & Johnson, 2007; Copenhaver-Johnson, Bowman & Rietschlin, 2009; Enciso, 1994; Louie, 2005; Sipe, 2000a; Sipe 2000b; Sipe, 2002; Sipe, 2008).

**Empathy development in children.** Developmental theorists note that empathetic responding entails both cognitive and affective components with some theorists putting more emphasis on one over the other (Thompson, 1987). Theories around the empathy development in children stem largely from Piaget’s developmental theory of a child’s cognitive development (Thompson, 1987). From this perspective a child’s ability to develop empathy is dependent on his or her ability to develop cognitive reasoning abilities. This would indicate that a child would not display empathy until the late
preschool years. Thompson (1987) asserts that there is a plethora of emerging literature that has:

…documented that after the age of 2 there is a burgeoning of spontaneous child utterances concerning the internal experiences of self and others that reflects a growing appreciation of the emotional, volitional, and cognitive states that individuals can experience. (p.121)

This finding would indicate that children from a very young age are capable of developing and demonstrating empathy. Thompson (1987) asserts that “children can understand others’ emotional experiences by the time of their first birthday” (p. 135). Empathy development of the individual is not isolated to cognitive factors within the individual but also influenced by social factors within the individual’s family (Barnett, 1987). Interaction with parents and the types of affection displayed, including, positive and negative reinforcements used in reaction to a child’s behavior, begin the socialization of empathy in the child (Barnett, 1987). A lack of interaction can equally suppress this development.

As children enter the school environment, this environment becomes a contributing social factor in their empathy development. When children enter school, they begin to engage with the curriculum at hand. They also engage with a teacher who decides the way that content will be delivered and what resources will be selected to support their instruction. In the next section I will be discussing the concept of historical empathy and perspective taking.
Historical empathy and perspective taking. In this review of literature, researchers described students’ development of empathy toward people in relation to historical events as “historical empathy” (Davis Jr. 2001; Louie 2005). For example, if a child was reading a realistic fiction book about a Jewish character set in Germany during World War II (WWII) and was able to empathize with the perspective and situation of the Jewish character, he would be displaying historical empathy. Although these scholars have coined the term historical empathy to describe this display of empathy and ability to show perspective taking, this is essentially a display of empathy. There are a limited number of studies of children’s responses to global literature. The scholarship describing historical empathy is important in thinking about children’s ability to empathize with global characters. If children have been observed to empathize with global characters of the past, this may indicate a potential of children to empathize with global characters of the present.

Aside from thinking about historical empathy and how it may relate to the potential of children’s interactions with present day characters, the scholarship on historical empathy describes the benefits of children’s interactions with global characters in relation to their work with the social studies curriculum. The curriculum in the classrooms of the United States is based on state academic content standards that are influenced by national academic content standards. Davis Jr. (2001) states that, “national standards published during recent years, not only in the United States but in other countries as well, generally recognize empathy as an important goal of teaching history” (p. 2). Although global children’s literature can be used as a tool for all academic content
areas, it fits very easily within the academic content of the social studies curriculum. Field (2001) asserts that, “a key component of historical thinking and understanding is empathy” (p. 115).

The development of historical empathy. Davis Jr. (2001) explains the importance of developing historical empathy in students as they progress through their school age years. Davis contends that historical empathy is often misunderstood as meaning “to develop a positive attitude or feeling toward and individual, event, or situation” (p. 3). Davis Jr. rather defines empathy as a way of thinking. He states that, “empathy characterizes historical thinking that yields enriched understanding within context” (p. 3). It does not mean that students side with the characters but rather understands where they are coming from, whether good or bad. This relates to perspective taking. The term “perspective taking” is frequently used by Davis Jr. and his colleagues to extend understanding of the term empathy, but not as a way to replace it (p. 3).

Historical empathy is only fully attained when children have a rich understanding of the content that they are studying (Davis, Jr. 2001; Louie, 2005). In the case of using global literature as a means to help children develop historical empathy for characters, children would need to first develop a thorough understanding of the context of the setting. This relates back to the discussion in the first chapter about using both information texts and fiction texts together. In his study, after having students read a passage from their history books, Davis Jr. asked students to put themselves in the situation they read about and to write a letter. Davis Jr. was stunned at how superficial the letters were. That was when he concluded that students did not have enough knowledge
about the content to truly demonstrate any perspective taking in their letters. In a similar exercise later concerning the Great Depression, Davis Jr.’s students had done a lot of work with the content and consequently displayed a great deal of historical empathy in their writing. Their work demonstrated knowledge about the content, empathy for the people of the time, and perspective taking that showed transferability of the content to their present day lives.

**Using global literature to support empathy development.** Field (2001) explains that, “American elementary social studies teachers appear increasingly aware of the needs and opportunities to help young children gain different perspectives on their world” (p. 129). In a review of the articles from the journal *Social Studies & the Young Learner* that dealt with a focus on personal perspectives, Field noted that there were several articles advocating for the use of children’s literature as a teaching strategy for teaching cultural perspectives. Dressel (2005) in speaking of the importance of the goals of multicultural, education explains that,

> As a component of multicultural education, multicultural literature is often considered a powerful instructional tool for helping students develop understanding and respect for people of cultures different from their own as well as gain an appreciation of their own heritage. (p. 750)

Like Field, I have reviewed literature that advocates the use of children’s literature, particularly global children’s literature, as a tool for delivering curriculum and for developing empathy and fostering perspective taking in students (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007). I have only
found two studies in which elementary children were actually observed responding to global children’s literature (Buck, 2009; Massey, Weeks, & Druin, 2005) and one that observed high school students responding to global literature (Louie, 2005).

In her study of high school students’ responses to global literature, Louie (2005) observed students making empathetic responses. As advocated by Davis Jr. (2001), the students in Louie’s study developed content knowledge of the historical setting of the characters before reading the novel and responding to it. They received information pertaining to the “political, historical, social, and cultural context” (p.569). The students in Louie’s study read *Let One Hundred Flowers Bloom* (Feng, 1995), a novella set in 1960s communist China.

Louie (2005) described five types of empathy displayed by her students as they began to make personal connections with the characters in the story. The first type of empathy was cognitive empathy. Louie describes this as the ability to “articulate others’ perspectives by understanding others’ circumstances” (p. 571). The second type of empathy in the students’ responses was historical empathy. Louie describes this as the ability to “reconstruct the attitudes, feelings, and actions of an individual who lived during a historical period” (p. 571). The third type of empathy in the students’ responses was parallel emotional empathy. Louie describes this as the ability to “express emotional responses similar to those the other person is experiencing” (p. 571). The fourth type of empathy found in the students’ responses was reactive emotional empathy. Louie describes this as the ability to “react to the emotional responses of others” (p. 571). The fifth and final type of empathy observed by Louie in her students’ responses was cross-
cultural empathy. Louie describes this as the ability to “step away from one’s self-centered approach of interpretation and work with other’s beliefs and values to explain what others think and do” (p. 571). Louie contends that empathy development in general is a way for students to shorten the distance between themselves and characters.

Although I was unable to locate a study that showed empathetic responses to global literature from primary school children, I found another study that found links between children’s exposure to literature and empathy development. In a study set in Israel, researchers found that being read to at home was related to socioemotional and literacy development in kindergarten-aged children (Aram & Aviram, 2009). Rosenblatt (1938/1995) asserted that some literature offered greater rewards than others. This study affirmed this idea. They noted that it was not just a matter of reading any book to their child, but that the mother’s expertise in choosing books was related to the child’s empathy and socioemotional adjustment. Some of the categories that Aram and Aviram (2009) say make a “good” book are, “…a plot that is understandable, well-rounded characters that trigger the reader’s identification…use literary resources that enrich the reader’s language and evoke emotional responses…and present moral dilemmas” (p. 176). The children whose mothers chose literature fitting those characteristics showed the most socioemotional development.

Literature is regarded as an effective tool in fostering empathy development (Miller, 2001). Literature presents characters that children may identify and respond to emotionally. Literature is an instructional tool with many potential benefits for classroom teaching and may foster the emotional development of children. The present study is set
in an elementary classroom as it typically operates. Although there are different types of
texts used in the elementary classroom (e.g., textbooks, chapterbooks, magazines)
picturebooks are typically used more frequently on a daily basis in this classroom. In the
case of this study, picturebooks will continue to be used versus other forms of literature.
In the next section I will transition from scholarship pertaining to child development to
literature that is connected to children’s picturebooks.

**Picturebook Research**

Rosenblatt (1938/1995) contends that “Teachers at all levels should have the
opportunity to observe the child’s entrance into the world of the printed page” (p. 24).
Nowhere is this entrance more observable than in the classroom setting during a
picturebook read aloud session. Picturebooks are a unique body of literature and will be
used exclusively in this study to provide the focus group with the opportunity to
experience stories aesthetically; a chance to engage with and enter the written world.

Rosenblatt (1982) stresses the importance of allowing the young reader to read
aesthetically (for enjoyment or pleasure), to experience the story based on his own needs
versus a predetermined agenda set by another. Pictures for young readers have the
potential to evoke a more aesthetic response than written text alone. Nodelman (1988)
notes that the illustrations in picturebooks, “…can be a source of immediate sensual
pleasure in and for themselves…” (p. 3). Sipe (2008) explains that, “the picturebook, in
addition to being the type of literature most commonly encountered by young children,
also offers them a highly sophisticated visual aesthetic experience…” (p. 13). The
responses of the readers in this study will be unique to their experiences, but also unique
to the experience of engaging with a picturebook versus a story presented in another format. In the next section I will review literature that speaks to the definition of picturebooks and how they differ from other forms of literature.

**Definitions of the picturebook.** Picturebooks are often referred to by different names or with variations on the spelling of picturebook. They are often referred to as picture books, picture-books, or picture storybooks. Sipe (2008) notes that some scholars assert that there is a distinct difference between what should be termed a “picturebook” and a “picture storybook.” He points to Sutherland and Arbutnot’s (1991) assertion that the term picturebook is more suitable for books like alphabet or counting books that do not tell a story but still rely on pictures to support the text. Sutherland and Arbutnot contend that picture storybook is a more appropriate term to describe books that have a plot that tell a story.

In contrast to Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1991), Sipe (2008) asserts that picturebooks should not be categorized as a genre, but rather looked at as a format for many genres. Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) describe a variety of forms that fall under the term picturebook explaining that “there are narrative and non-narrative illustrated nonfiction texts, and the appearance of these books matches picturebooks that tell stories” (p. 2). They do note that fiction is a common genre in picturebooks, but stress that there is a variety of narrative written in the picturebook form. Wolfenbarger and Sipe do not separate books into classifications like picture storybooks and picturebooks but rather point to the need to speak to the structure of the book when giving a description.
Picturebook and picture book are the spellings that I have most frequently encountered to describe books that have a storyline that is supported by illustrations (Nodelman, 1988; Hearne, 1990; Keifer, 1993; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Sipe 2008; Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). In this study, I will use the spelling picturebook to describe the stories I will be using with my focus group. Wolfenbarger and Sipe (2007) note that the, “compound word ‘picturebook’ recognizes the union of text and art that results in something beyond what each form separately contributes” (p. 273). These are stories with a plot, setting, and characters. Nodelman (1988) notes that “Most picturebooks tell stories” (p. 1). Although some books written for young children may have some illustrations (e.g., those labeled juvenile fiction in the library), picturebooks are distinctly different.

Nodelman (1988) speaks extensively about picturebooks in his book: A Word About Pictures. In the beginning of his text he gives a straightforward definition of picturebooks by stating that they are, “…books intended for young children which communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with relatively slight texts or no texts at all…” (p.vii). Nodelman and Reimer (2003) present a very similar definition of picturebooks, further adding that they have, “… pictures on every page” (p. 274).

The importance of pictures in picturebooks. Pictures in picturebooks are very important to the transaction between the reader and the text. Jella Lepman (1964/1999), the founder of the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany recognized the ability of pictures to transcend language barriers among readers from differing cultural
backgrounds. In her autobiography she recalled sending out a letter to twenty countries in a variety of languages begging for book donations for the library. In her letter she stated, “We are asking particularly for picture books, or at least heavily illustrated ones, to help overcome the language barrier” (p. 36). A child or adult, regardless of reading ability, can access a story in some way through his or her interaction with the pictures.

Pictures begin to foster imaginations in children. Although individuals can make images in their mind while reading, Nodelman and Reimer (2003) assert that pictures in picturebooks ignite a thirst in young children to imagine things on a grander scale. They note that “It might be argued that picture books offer readers actual visual information as an apprenticeship in learning how to imagine it for themselves, anticipating the act of concretizing information in novels they’ll read later that lack actual pictures” (p. 192).

Aside from making texts accessible to a variety of readers and fostering imaginations in young children, Nodelman (1988) also describes the purpose of pictures in relation to the story. He explains that typically pictures in picturebooks are not a complete picture of the event being described in the text and are only able to provide closure to actions for the reader with the last picture in the book. By the end of the book, the reader can piece together the illustrations. Nodelman states that, “Their purpose is to show just one part of a continuing action, a moment of tension and imbalance” (p. 126). The pictures tie the story together for the reader requiring the reader to tune into every page to gather a complete image as well as closure to the plot line. Sipe (2008) asserts, “Navigating picturebooks requires that we pay attention to every feature, from the front cover and the dust jacket to the back cover” (p. 15). Picturebooks typically move in a
linear structure with the exception of postmodern picturebooks that require the reader to move back and forth in the text (Wolfenbarger & Sipe, 2007). Picturebooks, as described here, are a structure to present stories. They are an instructional tool to be used in the pedagogical decisions of the teacher.

**Children’s responses to fiction picturebooks.** There is a substantial body of work on children’s responses to fiction children’s literature by Lawrence Sipe that informed my thinking about the responses of the children in this study. Through his own work using grounded theory, Sipe developed categories of children’s responses to literature. The five facets of literary understanding of the theoretical model conceptualized by Sipe (2008) informed some categories I used as they began to emerge in the data.

The first type of response to literature in the five facets theoretical model conceptualized by Sipe (2008) is an analytical response. Sipe (2008) states,

> Analytical responses indicate a type of literary understanding that is based on the making of narrative meaning through a discernment of story plot, setting, characters, theme, and style, as well as the use of illustrations to interpret these narrative elements, integrating words and pictures. (p. 181)

He notes that children situate themselves within the text. His or her action is to analyze the text, and the text in this situation functions as an object.

The second type of response to literature is an intertextual response (Sipe, 2008). Sipe explains,

> Intertextual responses are those in which children make links or connections between the picture storybook being read aloud and other
books and ‘texts’ in the broad sense of the word: television programs, commercials, and advertisements; music, paintings and commercial art; other texts of popular culture; and the art and writing of their own classmates. (p. 183)

The children in the classroom in which I conducted my study begin discussing “connections” in the first grade. Some of them already articulate if they are making a “text to text” or “text to self” connection. These are normal parts of their vocabulary and may show up in their responses.

The third type of response to literature is a personal response (Sipe, 2008). Sipes notes,

Personal responses involve linking the text to one’s own life by explicating how characters, actions, or situations are like or unlike the child’s own life experiences or the experiences of others. They also include ‘I would’ or ‘I wouldn’t’ statements indicating what children would say or do differently from the characters in the story; in this way, children demonstrate their ownership of the story. (p. 183)

Sipe (2000a) contends that personal responses give students a sense of agency.

The fourth type of response to literature is a transparent response (Sipe, 2008). Sipe asserts that, “transparent responses indicate that for a transitory moment, the world of the text and the children’s psychic worlds are transparent to each other: that children have entered the storyworld” (p. 183). Sipe (2000b) notes that with transparent responses
children show “evidence of surrendering to the power of the text” (p. 76). Overcome by emotion, children will emotionally respond as if the characters can hear and see them.

The fifth and final response to literature in Sipe’s (2008) five facets of literary understanding is a performative response. Sipe states that,

Performative responses suggest that the children are playfully manipulating the story for their own creative purposes. Their intention in these types of responses is not to interpret the story, but rather to wrest control from both the text and the teacher who is reading the text. (p. 183)

Sipes further describes this type of response as typically being considered off task behavior whether it is or is not. He also characterizes these responses as being sometimes humorous.

**Children’s responses to information picturebooks.** In the scholarship reviewed that discussed children’s responses to information books in a picturebook format, children often responded in the same observable ways that the children in Sipe’s (2008) study that used fictional texts. One way that children were observed to respond to information books was by making intertextual connections (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, et al. 2007). During read alouds of information books, children would frequently make text to text connections. These texts were other books or written texts in the classroom, like charts or posters. Students also made connections to texts in the form of media, such as informational films, or television programs.

The researchers observing children’s responses to information books in the studies I reviewed (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006;
Varelas, et al. 2007) considered connections to personal experiences as intertextual connections. Sipe (2008) considered these types of responses as being a separate category which he called personal responses. The researchers looking at responses to information books considered children’s responses that connected to personal experiences in life as being intertextual. This included school activities as well as experiences outside of school. Maduram (2000) described these personal intertextual responses as being representative of the transaction of the child between life and literature.

The intertextual connections that tapped into the children’s personal lives to make sense of the content in the informational texts, were a way to reflect and re-evaluate the new information (Maduram, 2000). Varelas and Pappas (2006) describe this tapping into personal experiences as a way for children to access their funds of knowledge (Rogoff, 2003) to scaffold the new information into their schema. Intertextual connections were a frequent way that children responded to information books across the different studies of children’s responses (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, et al. 2007).

Global children’s literature can be a tool in meeting curricular goals in school in the language arts. In the primary grades, reading comprehension instruction is expected in classroom instruction per the curriculum in the academic content standards in the state where this study took place. In the next section I will explore scholarship that speaks to the use of literature in reading comprehension instruction and the importance of this literature use in children’s development as an effective reader.
Reading Comprehension Strategies

Helping children to become citizens in our growing global community is an aim of using global literature in the classroom. It is important for the target reader of this dissertation, elementary school teachers, to know that global children’s literature can also be used in the classroom as an instructional tool to meet curricular goals in the language arts. In the primary school grades, one objective of the language curriculum, is to help beginning readers develop reading comprehension strategies. Global literature can work as a tool in helping students develop effective reading comprehension strategies. In addition to the development of reading comprehension strategies, once developed, students can then use them to maximize their understanding of global children’s literature.

Tierney (1990) explains that reading comprehension was historically a skill evaluated by measuring the student’s reading speed and ability to retell the story. Fielding and Pearson (1994) note that instructionally, reading comprehension was “once thought of as the natural result of decoding plus oral language” and so that was where instructional emphasis was placed (p.62). In the 1980s researchers began viewing reading comprehension as a much more complex act (Tierney, 1990).

In their synthesis of research on reading comprehension, Fielding and Pearson (1994) state that, “comprehension inherently involves inferential and evaluative thinking, not just literal reproduction of the author’s words” (p. 62). Understanding is shown by thinking beyond the literal parts of reading. Tierney (1990), like Fielding and Pearson, also contends that comprehension involves inferential understandings and evaluative
thinking while reading. Children must read between the lines and make inferences. Tierney further includes “the reader’s desire to make sense” as being the driving force behind the comprehension process (p.38).

The ability for students to comprehend what they are reading is an essential element in his or her academic successes as students. Many researchers have found through their work with elementary students and reviews of research, that reading comprehension strategies can be taught to students, hence leading to increased academic achievement in reading (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008; Carlisle, Kelcey, Berebitsky, & Phelps, 2011; Duke, 2008/2009; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Gersten & Carnine, 1986; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Miller, 2002; Tierney, 1990). Once students are presented with different strategies, they often employ the ones they find necessary to help them comprehend what they are reading.

Researchers contend that there are many factors that are needed in order to successfully teach readers comprehension strategies. The key factors are as follows: a lot of classroom time spent reading alone or with a partner, teacher-directed instruction of different reading comprehension strategies, student time spent practicing these strategies with the guidance of the teacher, student time spent practicing these strategies alone and with a peer, and classroom time for students to discuss with the teacher or a group their responses to literature (Duke, 2008/2009; Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Gersten & Carnine, 1986; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Miller, 2002; Tierney, 1990).

Currently some trade books written for comprehension strategy instruction have been published based on sound research on reading comprehension strategy instruction
(Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Miller, 2002). The reading comprehension strategies that are suggested for instruction and ideas for implementing them can vary slightly dependent on the trade book. At the core of the lessons are the following strategies: activating and connecting to background knowledge, questioning, visualization, inferring, determining importance, and summarizing and synthesizing information (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Miller, 2002). All of the lessons in these trade books involve using quality children’s literature to teach and practice using comprehension strategies. There is an abundance of quality global children’s literature that could easily serve the same purpose as the non-global literature promoted in these trade books.

Comprehension instruction is important in the teaching of reading. Global children’s literature can be used in this teaching. In the next section I will explore literature that speaks to the other important reasons to use global children’s literature in the elementary school classroom. I will begin by discussing global education.

**Global Understandings**

Brewster (2008) explains that the term “global village” is often used as a metaphor to describe our growing global interdependence (p. 371). Merryfield (1996) explains that, “Today’s schools face the challenge of preparing young people for a world that is undergoing dramatic change” (p. ix). Modern technologies and the ability of people to move about globally are changing the economic system in the United States as well as the demographics of our classrooms. Although there is a substantial body of work to guide multicultural education in our schools, there is a limited body of scholarship dedicated to the goals of global education.
As the demographics of our classrooms and our global access to the world continue to advance, educators are now starting to make connections between global education and multicultural education (Merryfield, 1996). In a collective study of teacher’s responses to the question: “Why make connections between multicultural and global education?” Merryfield found several common answers. The common answers she found were as follows: “first there are universals in being human, second human diversity needs to be addressed in the nation as well as the world, and third there is interconnectedness among people of the world” (p. 1). Multicultural education and global education are two separate fields with similar goals. In the next section I will talk about each field and the scholarship that defines them.


A major goal of multicultural education—as stated by specialists in the field—is to reform schools, colleges, and universities so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social class groups will experience educational equality. (p. 3)

Banks additionally states that, “another important goal of multicultural education is to give both male and female students an equal chance to experience educational success” (p.3). Banks (2001/2006, 2004) conceptualizes multicultural education to consist of five dimensions: Content Integration, The Knowledge Construction Process, Prejudice Reduction, An Equity Pedagogy, and An Empowering School Culture and Social Structure. All the dimensions are meant to transform students into productive citizens.
Multicultural education is not conceptualized to be a separate curriculum in schools but as the structure for delivering school curriculum. Nieto (2000) asserts that, “multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students” (p.305). It therefore makes sense to work from a multicultural framework if the goal is to meet the needs of all students. Multicultural education does not privilege one group over another but rather promotes success for all. Gay (1994) notes that multicultural education “…builds on the assumption that teaching and learning are invariably cultural processes” (p. 3). She further explains that, “since schools are composed of students and teachers from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, the best way for the educational process to be most effective for the greatest number of students is for it to be multicultural” (p. 3). In the next section, I will shift the discussion to global education.

**Global education.** Multicultural education and global education are similar. Brown and Kysilka (2009) explain that, “Global education, sometimes associated with but distinct from multicultural education, can be seen as having multicultural concepts applied to the world community and emphasizing the planet, its natural resources, and all interconnections” (p. 8). Multicultural education puts emphasis on the local community and our relationships within our own borders. Global education stresses the interconnectedness with the world.

Other scholarship on global education reflects similar concepts. Bourke (2009) describes five tenets of global education. Bourke states that, “the five learning emphases that reflect recurring themes in global education are interdependence and globalism;
identity and cultural diversity; social justice and human rights; peace building and conflict resolution; and sustainable futures” (p. 34). Similar in thought but differing in terminology, Merryfield (1994) defines global education by stating that:

Global education develops the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for decision-making and effective participation in a world characterized by interconnectedness, cultural pluralism, and increasing competition for resources. (p. 4)

Both Merryfield and Bourke emphasize characteristics that would lead students toward being able to participate effectively in the world while at the same time being responsible with global resources for the benefit of all.

Both multicultural education and global education are geared to transform students into citizens who live harmoniously and productively with one another. They are also meant to result in mutual respect among differing cultures. Brown and Kysilka (2009) note about the two that, “both involve a process whereby individuals develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors for participating effectively in a culturally diverse society” (p. 11). Brown and Kysilka combine the two fields and provide the following definition for both as follows:

Multicultural and global education can be seen as the educational process of acquiring certain knowledge, skills, and values to participate actively in a complex, pluralistic, and interconnected world society and to work together for change in individuals and institutions in order to make that world society more just and humane. (p. 11)
In the next section, I will discuss scholarship on global children’s literature in the classroom.

**Global literature.** Global children’s literature has been around in this country since the first pilgrims settled in the United States. This genre of literature has appeared and nearly disappeared in waves depending on the economic and political climate of the times. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1998) describe the strong presence of global children’s literature up to the 1900s in the United States. This genre of books began to slowly disappear in the United States throughout the 1900s due to the market place demand for books set in the United States as well as, the translating and printing costs (Joels, 1999; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1998). Around World War II global children’s books began to resurface in the United States. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson attribute this to being “Possibly as a reaction to the lack of cultural exchange during World War II and due to the awareness of the need to promote international understanding and world peace…” (p. 232). After World War II, these were reasons cited by Jella Lepman (1964/1999) for founding the International Youth Library in Munich which led to the creation of The International Board on Books for Young People IBBY. Since its inception IBBY has been the driving force behind the promotion of global literature.

Latrobe (2001) also supports the historical account of the rise in global children’s literature in the United States after World War II. Latrobe describes the importance of this genre of literature and credits various awards such as the *Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing* and the *Mildred Batchelder Award* for the most outstanding
translation of a children’s book originally published in another country in a language other than English for the promotion of global children’s books.

Lastly, aside from WWII and literature awards, libraries and librarians are credited with the availability of global literature. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson give great credit to libraries and librarians for aiding in the availability of global books for U.S. consumers. Jella Lepman (1964/1999) described the American Library Association as also being critical in the promotion of Global literature and support for the International Youth Library in her memoir. In the next section I will discuss the purpose for using global children’s literature in the classroom.

**Purpose for using global literature.** Global children’s literature is an instructional tool that can be used to meet many needs. Both multicultural education and global education are geared toward affirming the cultural identities of all students as well as being a conduit for students to understand diverse cultures. When Jella Lepman began the movement to promote international children’s literature, she used the metaphor of a bridge to promote books as a way to link cultures. In addition to bridges, as described in my introductory chapter, other scholars have used the metaphor of mirrors and windows to describe the function of books (Bishop, 1994; Cox & Galda, 1990; Landt, 2006).

Not all scholars use the metaphors of windows, mirrors, and bridges though. Lakshaman (2009) believes that the metaphors of windows, mirrors, and bridges in describing the use of global literature neglects the complexity of understanding other cultures. I disagree, and believe that on the contrary, they make the goals of multicultural and global education seem obtainable. The metaphors of windows, mirrors, and bridges
can impress on the classroom teacher the power of this body of literature. This critique is not to downplay the importance of looking deeply at various cultures, but making the study of other cultures seem too complex might diminish the enthusiasm of classroom teachers of adopting the idea of global education and the use of global children’s literature.

Learning about different cultures is important. Lickteig and Danielson (1995) assert, “Learning about people from all over the world is the most obvious goal of global education” (unpaged). Children need a chance to encounter others. Although it is not an equal substitute for a firsthand experience, quality global literature can work as a virtual experience. Stan (1999) notes that the relevance of meeting others through books is that, “Encountering a country through the perspective of a character who lives there creates a personal relationship with a place not possible through a textbook or television encounter” (p. 168). Television encounters can lead to troubling views of others if the viewer perceives a fictional film to be reality. It is essential that they be balanced by high quality informational texts in order to provide a more accurate account of others.

Rice (2005) contends that many educators use and believe that literature about other cultures, “…help students develop understanding and tolerance for others whose sociocultural frames differ from their own” (p. 343). Books can be a beginning in the journey to help children break down their misunderstandings, stereotypes, and cultural biases toward other people. Cai (1994) notes that, “many children know people of other cultures from picture books before actually encountering those cultures in life” (p. 169). People are typically curious about one another. In the classroom setting the teacher is
readily available to guide students through their encounters. They are present to address questions, to guide inquiries, and there to clarify misunderstandings.

Teachers can clarify understandings but their literature choices should be carefully made. It is important that teachers select culturally authentic books so that these encounters with books do not reinforce negative viewpoints and stereotypes. Wan (2006) explains, “Sharing children’s books with students can provide opportunities to call into question the traditional, prevailing beliefs and views people hold of themselves and others” (p. 141). Lo (2007) stresses that, “teaching students to consider the perspectives of others with the assumption that different is not synonymous with inferior is critical, yet it can be a somewhat daunting task” (p. 84).

Aside from being culturally affirming for students and a way to begin to learn about other cultures, global literature promotes the idea of internationalism advocated by the goals of global education (Joels, 1999). Kurkjian and Livingston (2007) explain that using international/global literature, “…can serve to enhance our understanding of one another, promote respect for different ways of being and seeing our world, and help us discover bonds of humanity that unite us” (p. 594). Discovering common bonds can lead to students developing a sense that they are part of a global community.

Global literature can be used to meet the learning objectives in the social studies curriculum. Field (2003) cited a large number of scholars advocating for the use of children’s literature in the social studies curriculum in the United States. Freeman and Lehman (2001) assert that global children’s literature can be an asset in reaching curriculum goals in United States classrooms, particularly curriculum connected to social
studies. Fry (2009) describes the national social studies curriculum in the United States as weak and asserts that policy makers, “…underscore the importance of experiences that allow students to study global connections and interdependence among diverse world cultures” (p. 90). Global children’s literature is a very tangible and accessible way to reach curricular goals as well as emphasize the global connections that Fry describes as being neglected. Gandy (2007) also promotes the use of quality children’s literature in the early elementary years as a springboard to initiate global understandings.

In addition to thinking about the citizenship goals and cultural goals in the social studies discipline, geographical concepts can also be taught with global literature. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) observed that, “The students valued literature as a means of enlarging their knowledge of the world, because through literature they acquire not so much additional information as additional experience” (p. 38). Young children have difficulty conceptually placing themselves in the world geographically. Experience with concepts helps children internalize them (Vygotsky, 1978). Global literature emphasizing geography can provide children with some experience. Supporting the idea of global literature to expand children’s geographic understanding, Lintner (2010) contends that, “Children’s literature has been found to be a powerful tool in both the presentation and understanding of seminal geographic concepts, particularly for young students” (p. 18).

Global children’s literature promotes emotional development (Aram & Aviram, 2009). Keis (2006) found global literature to be beneficial both socially and emotionally among international students living in the U.S. This body of literature was culturally affirming to the students in their study. In the post 9-11 United States era, this finding is
particularly important for Arab Americans who are increasingly being targeted for discrimination which may harm children’s emotional development. Al-Hazza and Bucher (2008) maintain that global literature is a critical tool for promoting cultural identity within Arab communities and for promoting cultural acceptance of Arab Americans within other cultures. Al-Hazza and Bucher note the following:

…many Arab-American students do not have classroom experiences that expose them to a story that reaffirms their cultural identity as Arabs or that validates the importance of their cultural heritage to students from other cultures. (p. 210)

Similar to Al-Hazza and Bucher, Keis (2006) found international and multicultural literature to be culturally reaffirming and found it to have a positive social and emotional impact on the Latino students in his school district.

As discussed in the section on the development of the reader, global children’s literature is an important tool in promoting empathy among students in the United States toward global cultures. Davis Jr. (2001) describes empathy as the most important element in the teaching of social studies as it promotes a solid understanding of history among students. Both Louie (1995) and Aram and Aviram (2009) observed the ability of literature to promote empathy development in children and teenagers through their transactions with literature.

There are many reasons to use global children’s literature in the classroom. Global literature can be culturally reaffirming for students who originate from the cultures at hand in the literature. Global literature can provide students with useful
insights into other cultures by simulating interactions with people they might never encounter and to travel to places that they might never visit. Global literature can be a valuable instructional tool to help teachers meet curricular goals in social studies as well as language arts. It is an instructional tool to help children internalize content. Finally, global children’s literature can help develop empathy in children toward people they consider different; empathy being an important element in understanding the perspectives of others.

**Children’s Responses to Global Literature**

The study of children’s responses to global literature is an important contribution to the education field. The first reason this study is so important is because of the lack of research done in this area. There is very little research done on American student’s responses to global children’s literature. In my review of scholarship I only uncovered four studies (Buck, 2009; Keis, 2006; Louie, 1995; Massey, Weeks, & Druin, 2005) that analyzed American students’ responses to international literature. Buck’s study, set outside of a classroom, was the only one that exclusively examined the responses of elementary students. Louie’s was the only one of the four to be set in a classroom but looked at the responses of high school students. Although Massey, Weeks, & Druin studied elementary aged students’ responses to literature, their data was collected through questionnaires that were filled out without the supervision of the researchers.

The responses of the children in the Buck (2009) study are a reason why this study is so important. The responses of the children in her literature group contained many cultural misunderstandings left unresolved and unchallenged by Buck who was
leading the literature group. This study conducted by Buck (2009) was set in a small town in Kentucky near a military base. Participants were invited to participate in a summer book club. Five Caucasian students and two African American students accepted. Of the seven students, six students were girls. The students met for a total of twelve sessions. The ages of the students were not disclosed, just that they needed to be reading at or above grade level, with no indication of what that grade level would be. The students read the books *The Breadwinner* (Ellis, 2000), and *Samir and Yonatan* (Carmi, 2000) which would indicate that the students had to be out of the primary grades as these books are not written in a picturebook format and do not contain primary school age main characters.

Buck (2009) described a lack of cultural background knowledge as being a potential barrier to students’ literary interpretations and cultural understandings of the texts that they were reading. Knowing this, Buck showed no evidence of trying to provide the students with extra information (i.e. information books). Buck only noted cultural understandings as a potential barrier to the students’ understanding even though her narrative of the children’s responses demonstrated that her students really lacked cultural and global understandings. These misunderstandings frequently surfaced in the students’ responses. The author seemed to downplay their misconceptions instead of questioning them further. The author took the opportunity to interpret her students’ remarks without questioning the students in order to clarify their comments.

Buck describes several instances where children attempt to make intertextual responses (Sipe, 2008) by connecting their background knowledge of other texts to the
characters. Buck describes one student who compared the Taliban to Hitler in response to the event where Parvana’s father in *The Breadwinner* was arrested by the Taliban. The student, Hannah, commented, “Like Hitler. He did a lot of bad things for no reason. And a lot of kings did things for no reason. Like chop off all their heads” (p. 20). Another student went on to compare the Taliban to Saddam Hussein and Bloody Mary. These connections went unchallenged. Buck (2009) went on to note, “The readers’ application of history and knowledge of the world to the Taliban indicate their struggle to understand the oppression of the Afghani people…” (p. 20). By her own words, Buck acknowledges their struggle to understand, yet shows no evidence of trying to guide them through this struggle in order to reach an accurate understanding of the culture at play. Buck also appears to struggle with her own understandings of the Afghan culture because in her own words she referred to the people as “Afghani” when Afghani is the name of their official currency, not the name of the people. Students in this study demonstrated a clear lack of cultural knowledge. Buck also appeared to be unprepared to teach about the cultures involved. With Buck not being prepared and the children’s being left unchallenged, the children’s lack of understanding could potentially increase misunderstandings or reinforce stereotypes that they may have held at the time of the study.

Buck continued to describe students’ intertextual connections (Sipe, 2008) in their responses. The students responded with connections to the text with texts that were mostly magical or from the fantasy genre (e.g., Harry Potter, Chronicles of Narnia). I was surprised that Buck (2009) played down the students’ comparison of the women in the
Burka in *The Breadwinner* to a “dementor,” an evil being from Harry Potter (p. 20). Buck contended, “Hannah seems to be using the reference to dementors only as a way of describing the appearance of the garments” (p. 20), insinuating that Hannah would not consider people wearing traditional Muslim garments as evil. Buck showed no evidence in her study that she ever asked Hannah to explain what she meant. Did Hannah consider the women in the Burkas to be evil?

Further on in the study Buck describes how students, still unable to personally connect to the story, began to create make believe scenarios as pseudo personal experiences in their personal responses (Sipe, 2008). She then describes how the students go from applying make believe scenarios to the text, to taking real scenarios from the text and generalizing them to people of that culture as they continue to try and understand. Buck explains that, “when the children read that “[m]ost people in Afghanistan could not read or write they applied this information to all the Afghani soldiers because a soldier hired Parvanna to read a letter to him” (p. 21). Buck makes assumptions about the students’ intentions and leaves their comments unchallenged stating that, “They may have over generalized the statement about illiteracy in Afghanistan, but they see reading as an important part of their lives and want others to experience the joys of literate lives too” (p.22). Buck also again refers to the people by the name of their currency. Again, children’s misunderstandings are left unresolved and downplayed.

Students engaged in inquiry frequently in Buck’s (2009) study soliciting information about the cultures from the books by posing questions and expressing their wonderings. The students were still trying to get information on illiteracy in Afghanistan
during the reading. Buck described their questions and wonderings, but did not reveal if these students were ever provided with clarity, answers to their questions, or additional information. She states in her concluding thoughts,

> The readers in this study did not reach absolute answers for all the questions they raised while reading. Their efforts to understand did yield them rich descriptions of ideas and events that supported their comprehension of the novels. The value was not in the ‘answer’ but in the process of inquiry and investigation. (p. 25)

Buck also mentioned comprehension of the novels, but it was unclear whether students ever genuinely understood the books at all. This critique demonstrates the necessity for a study of children’s responses to global literature. Through my study of children’s responses to literature, I hope to provide educators with examples of global literature being used in a literature discussion, in an elementary classroom setting, that both respects students’ right to aesthetically engage with the literature, but also attends to cultural misunderstandings that arise in children’s responses.

**Conclusion**

This study is essential to the field of education for two principle reasons. First, there is a lack of studies concerning children’s responses to global literature. Second, scholars have very little evidence of how children respond to global literature. There is a wide body of scholarship written about children’s responses to literature with culturally generic themes set in the United States as well as multicultural children’s literature set in the United States (Sipe, 2008). There is also scholarship written about children’s
responses to information books with culturally generic themes (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, et al. 2007). This work gives educators examples of how children may respond to those bodies of literature in those particular settings. By studying children’s responses to global literature, I will be able to compare and contrast children’s responses to work that has already been done in the more general area of children’s responses to literature. The responses of children in this study may provide some evidence for the theories behind the perceived benefits of this literature. Tomlinson (1998) contends that teachers should consider the following benefit of using global literature:

By interpreting events in the everyday lives of their characters and by depicting long-term changes in characters’ lives, international authors of contemporary realistic fiction present truer and more understandable pictures of life in other countries than does the sensation-prone, narrow coverage of television and newspapers. (p. 8)

In this review of scholarship, many scholars (Davis Jr. 2001; Field 2001; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Louie; 2005) advocate for the use of children’s literature to promote global understanding, curricular understanding, as well as a way to foster empathy in children.

The scholarship reviewed indicates that children’s literature can be a way to foster empathy-development in children in order to help children develop global understanding (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007). Empathy-development hinges on the child’s ability to engage in perspective
taking. Children’s literature provides characters that children can engage with through a virtual experience in which they can ponder the perspective of the characters (Dressel, 2005; Field 2001). The children’s engagement with the literature will be mediated by their social and cultural backgrounds (Rogoff, 2003; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995).

The promotion of global understanding was described in this review as being important in the development of school age children so that they can better function in a global society as an adult. Enhanced global understanding can potentially help children as they become adult citizens among a society of diverse populations to be better able to interact with various cultures as well as be more responsible in their use of global resources (Merryfied, 1996). Global understanding is also a step toward the achievement of world peace (Lepman 1964/1999).

Global children’s literature can be used as a classroom tool to deliver curriculum. The scholarship discussed describes children’s literature as an effective tool in social studies and language arts instruction (Davis Jr. 2001; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer 2010; Louie; 2005). In the primary school classroom picturebooks in particular offer an engaging format for children because of the union of pictures and text (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Teachers have a valuable resource in the form of global literature. In the next chapter I will discuss the research methods to be employed in this study of children’s responses to global literature.
Chapter 3

Method

Qualitative Research

For the present study qualitative research methods were used. Jones (2002) argues that “methods must be well suited to the question under inquiry” (p. 463). In the present study, children were studied in the everyday setting of their classroom in order to get an idea about how these particular children, in this particular setting, at this particular time responded to global children’s literature. Hatch (1998) explains that traditionally, qualitative researchers, “…argue that knowledge is symbolically constructed and necessarily subjective; and their goal is to discover how reality is experienced by participants in particular, contextualized settings” (p. 50).

As explained in chapter two, children’s interactions with literature are influenced by their cultural backgrounds and social groups (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). Traditionally, the positivist stance in research, “assumes an objective world that is independent of human perceptions” (Hatch, 1998, p.50). Approaching this study from a positivist perspective would have ignored the uniqueness of the participants and setting and overlooked the individuality of the children’s understandings and perceptions. The purpose of this study was not to prompt educators to generalize these findings to their own classrooms. The objective was rather to encourage educators to think of the
possibilities that may occur with their own children if they expose them to the study of
global children’s literature.

Many aspects of qualitative research made it well-suited for this study. First, “Qualitative researchers seek to study social phenomena as they naturally occur in
everyday life” (Hatch, 1998, p. 51). This study was situated in the participants’ classroom under regular classroom conditions. Although the current study was written for other researchers, the target audience was educators. Wollman-Bonilla (2002) explains that many classroom teachers are turned off to research that is conducted under unrealistic conditions ignoring the messiness of the real classroom, a criticism I planned to address by developing this as a practitioner research study.

A second tenet of qualitative research that made it well suited for this study was that the participants’ perspectives were captured (Hatch, 1998). Research from a positivist perspective often emphasizes large sample sizes and generates numbers and data that can be generalized across populations. Numbers may be reported without the narratives represented by the data. The participants in qualitative studies have a voice and can offer the reader some insight into their lives.

In addition to conducting research in an authentic setting and honoring and trying to capture the participants’ perspectives, a third tenet of qualitative research that made it well suited for this study was that the researcher was a data-gathering instrument (Hatch, 1998). As both the teacher and researcher of the participants, working as the data gathering instrument made sense for both the collection process and the analysis phase of the research. Hatch explains that:
Qualitative researchers argue that the human capabilities necessary to participate in social life are the same capacities that make it possible for qualitative researchers to observe and make sense of the actions and intentions of those under investigation. (p. 52)

I was a familiar presence to the participants being studied. Although the data collection did not occur over a lengthy period of time like in a traditional ethnography, the amount of time I had spent with the participants prior to the study was an asset in developing a defensible interpretation of the data.

**Ethnography**

For this study I employed ethnographic methods. Duranti (1997) defines ethnography as, “the written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group” (p. 85). An ethnography is essentially a written description of a people or cultural group (Glesne, 2006). Janet Hickman (1981) was the first to conduct naturalistic classroom-based research on children’s responses to literature. In her study, she advocated for the use of ethnographic methods in classroom-based research studying children’s responses to literature. Hickman stated in her study that in, “wanting to study children’s responses to literature as it is expressed in classrooms, and wanting at the same time to consider a variety of developmental levels and social-instructional contexts, I borrowed from methods of ethnography…” (p. 344). Hickman placed value on the idea of the classroom being a unique context.
Researchers conducting ethnography typically spend a substantial amount of time at the research site. Spindler and Hammond (2000) note that a year is often considered too short. Duranti (1997) notes that in order to produce a thick description of the participants being studied, ethnographies are typically conducted over a long period of time with direct participation in the social life of the group. Practitioner researchers in the classroom are often unable to spend a prolonged amount of time engaged in their research due to the daily requirements of their job, although they are achieving longevity in the research setting (Spindler & Hammond, 2000). Duranti contends that prolonged engagement along with participation implies contradictory qualities. He describes the following two qualities as being contradictory:

(i) an ability to step back and distance one’s own immediate, culturally biased reactions so to achieve an acceptable degree of “objectivity” and
(ii) the propensity to achieve sufficient identification with or empathy for the members of the group in order to provide an insider’s perspective” (p. 85)

Traditional ethnographic research aims for the goal of reaching an *emic* perspective, that is the perspective of the participants. A written description from the perspective of the researcher is referred to as an *etic* perspective. Practitioner researchers can be challenged about their ability to be objective because of their familiarity with the participants. I considered my familiarity with the participants in this study as being an asset that outweighed any challenges to my ability to be objective.
As Duranti noted, there is a contradiction between being an objective outsider, while needing to reach an emic perspective in the written description. Campbell, McNamara and Gilroy (2004) caution that an unreflective practitioner researcher may miss things during observations, because he or she is too familiar with the day to day routines. This oversight may taint the researcher’s ability to thoroughly describe the participants being studied. Spindler and Hammond (2000) assert that teacher researchers studying their own rooms are able to approach their work with an emic view. This is due to their familiarity with their group. In this study I adopted the stance that teachers could research in their own classrooms and use methods from the field of ethnography. I was capable of trying to achieve more objective interpretations of my data through reflective practices.

Duranti (1997) explains that the ideal of complete objectivity, that is disregarding one’s stance, emotions, and political and theoretical attitudes, is an impossible and questionable goal. He argues that no one can be completely objective, although, a researcher can use reflective practices to address his or her subjectivity. Campbell et al. (2004) explain that, “as long as objectivity is not claimed in the research and research methods are justified and critically reviewed, subjectivity is accepted and recognized as a perhaps inevitable feature of small-scale qualitative research” (p. 94). I therefore made no claim to be one hundred percent objective one hundred percent of the time. I did, however, take measures to keep my subjectivity in check. The knowledge I had about the setting that I was working in and the time I had spent with the participants were values that came from being an insider. Students spend an average of 180 days in the classroom
before they move on to a new classroom and a different group of peers. The students would be ready to move on before an outsider researching in this classroom and studying these participants would be able to establish the rapport and knowledge about this community of learners.

One way that I addressed subjectivity was through reflexivity. Glesne (2006) defines reflexivity as meaning that “…you are as concerned with the research process as you are with the data you are collecting” (p. 125). The researcher stays in tune with his or her etic stance as a researcher monitoring methods and staying in check with the goals. In this study I kept a research journal to reflect on the entire research process. Goldbart and Hustler (2005) suggest journaling throughout a research study as a way to address subjectivity through a reflective practice. Lincoln (1995) describes reflexivity through the duration of a study as, “…absolutely required to understanding one’s psychological and emotional state before, during, and after the research experience” (p. 283). There are several suggestions made by Altrichter and Holly (2005) that I included in my research journal in order to address researcher subjectivity. They are as follows: “data, additional found items, contextual information, reflections, and ideas and plans for subsequent research steps” (p. 24). Some data that were included in my journal were student responses to complement audio recordings. I did this to check them against the audio recordings when transcribing. Additional found items were those items that I did not anticipate. For example, some of the students brought me magazines and books they thought would connect to our readings. I held onto those items and returned them at the end of the study. I kept those things with my journal. I also added comments to my
journal connected to global literature that were discussed outside of the area where the read alouds occurred. This was when the literature discussion continued among the students. I also collected information about student work connected to global literature, and information from secondary sources like parents. I added contextual information to the journal about the environment where the events in the study occurred such as: furniture arrangements, seating arrangements of the students, as well as movement patterns of the students and where they preferred to sit when they came to work with me. At the beginning of the year, I spent time observing students’ preferential seating for independent reading time. I noted their patterns for where they chose to sit as well as whether they preferred to sit near the music or in quieter spots. The students did not see it as out of the ordinary for me to be making quick notes about seating choices or sketches. As I kept track of the participants in situations pertaining to their interactions with global literature, I looked for similar things as they engaged in literature discussions as well as worked on written products connected to our continent study. The contextual information was in the form of written descriptions in addition to sketches. Embedded in this information were reflections about the day’s events as well as ideas pertaining to future steps in the study.

Reflexivity was one way that I addressed researcher subjectivity in order to add to the validity of the study. In addition to reflexivity, I used triangulation of the data in order to address subjectivity as well as to add to the validity of this study. Lather (1986) describes triangulation as “critical in establishing data trustworthiness” (p. 67). Triangulation entails collecting data through diverse methods (Johnstone, 2000). Fine,
Weis, Weseen, and Wong (2003) explain triangulation as adding multiple layers of data sources to build evidence about the same construct.

My relationship with my team teacher and students worked as an asset toward triangulating my data and engaging in reflexivity at the research site. These individuals provided feedback on the data that I was collecting and analyzing. They provided another perspective on the work. Campbell et al. (2004) describe member checking as being frequently used in the triangulation of data in qualitative research. Spindler and Hammond (2000) describe this type of close relationship between the teacher researcher, co-workers and school families as being one of the attributes that attract practitioner researchers to ethnography. My insider relationship with my students allowed me the opportunity to approach my research with an emic perspective. Smith (1999), in her research of indigenous peoples, pushes for more insider research because of the insider’s ability to accurately portray the people being researched.

**Ethnographic methods.** Ethnographic researchers look for patterns in cultural groups (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972/1988). Spindler and Hammond (2000) describe attention to culture in research as being the biggest contribution of ethnography in education research. Engagement with literature is a highly social event (Rosenblatt 1938/1995). Although this study was not carried out over an extended period of time as advocated for when conducting an ethnography in its purest form, the methods for collecting data that I used were borrowed from this field. Ethnography has many methods that allowed for the triangulation of the data.
The first method from the field of ethnography that I employed in this study was participant observation. Woods (1986) characterizes participant observation as a principle method in the field of ethnography. As part of their job, elementary teachers already spend a great deal of their time observing and listening as well as engaging with the learners. Spindler and Hammond (2000) note that, “teachers seem on the surface, well-positioned to do this task since they are truly participants” (p. 46). They caution that the teacher needs to be aware of the responsibility to step back from her working position and to remember to step into the etic role to observe as a researcher. Heath, Street, and Mills (2008) describe the following as necessary qualities of the best ethnographers when observing: “visual acuity, keen listening skills, tolerance for detail, and capacity to integrate innumerable parts into shifting wholes” (p. 57). They note that silence and stepping back can be difficult for those studying their own field, but also that it can be done. This was difficult to do at times while teaching, although I was working in an environment that allowed for opportunities to step back. I was team teaching with another second grade teacher. She was able to step in and intervene in classroom management with the larger group while I stepped back and worked with my focus group and collected data. This was the way our classroom normally operated, so it was natural to the children. During the times when she was busy with a small group, I took care of the larger group.

The second method from the field of ethnography that I used in this study was the collection of many materials. These materials included field notes, audio recordings, and student artifacts such as books and magazines brought to the read aloud group. These
resources were collected throughout the data collection period to help with the data analysis process. Ethnographers collect many artifacts even if there is no immediate sense of relevance because the items may eventually be worthwhile (Spindler & Hammond, 2001). I collected items that at the time seemed irrelevant and through reflection and member checking with my participants, families, and team teacher, came to realize that they were relevant.

The third method from the field of ethnography that I used in this study was that of interviews. They were not interviews in the sense that they were preplanned. They were unstructured interviews to clarify things that were said and were conducted in a very impromptu manner. Woods (1986) prefers the terms discussions or conversations over the term interview when talking about ethnography. For this study I stuck to the term interview in reference to the conversations that occurred between the participants and I outside of the actual read aloud time in order to differentiate them from the dialog that occurred during the read aloud sessions. Interviews were used to seek additional information, answer questions that arose, and to address any topics that needed clarification during the data analysis process.

Although this study was not lengthy, methods from the field of ethnography contributed to the descriptions during the data analysis piece of this study. Ethnography will be helpful to the reader of this study in order to understand the perspective of these participants through detailed descriptions. Participant observation and a plethora of collected information enhanced the analysis and description of this group of students and their transactions with the global literature in the study. Member checking and the
triangulation of data through work with the participants, my team teacher and the parents of the children added to the validity of the findings and written description of the study. In the next section I will discuss practitioner research and how I worked within this framework for this study.

**Practitioner Research**

Research undertaken by teachers, college lecturers, school administrators, librarians, and individuals in school management are all considered to be forms of practitioner research (Middlewood, Coleman, & Lumby, 1999). In this study, I maintained my dual role as both a classroom teacher and a researcher as I conducted research in my own classroom. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) note that, “one feature that every form of practitioner inquiry has in common is that the practitioner himself or herself simultaneously takes on the role of researcher” (p. 41).

As discussed in the section on ethnography, qualitative researchers who research as an insider can be challenged about their ability to be objective. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) assert that the insider perspective is an asset stating that they find credible, “the assumption that those who work in particular educational contexts and/or who live in particular social situations have significant knowledge about those situations” (p. 42). This would make practitioner research an appealing research design for teachers.

Brooks (2010) describes practitioner research studies by classroom teachers as making invaluable contributions to the field of education, if they are informed by sound research-based methodologies. Brooks stresses the importance of teacher-researchers consulting researchers who are academic professionals. I acknowledge that I have
academic professionals in my life who were profound resources in my journey to carry out this study in my own classroom. My doctoral program and work with academic professionals has informed my practice in a way that made me capable of finding the tools necessary to engage in practitioner researcher that will contribute to the education field.

Practitioner researchers begin with identifying a research topic relevant to their classroom practice. As expressed in chapter one, my interest in children’s responses to global literature stemmed from my interest in addressing the social studies curriculum in my classroom as well as curiosity about how children would respond to this type of literature. After identifying my topic, I took the next step in practitioner research by conducting a review of literature. The literature review I conducted indicated that global children’s literature may be an effective classroom tool in promoting global understanding, but this effectiveness has not been studied extensively. This was one of the principle motivations behind conducting this study.

Campbell et al. (2004) note that in the area of practitioner research, there is no tidy system of data collection methods and further note that there is no one dominant methodology. Campbell et al. suggest that practitioner researchers choose a combination of data collection techniques, set up a time frame for data collection, and determine the site for data collection. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) describe the professional context as the most common site for practitioner research. In this study that professional context was my school.
As suggested by Campbell et al. (2004) I collected data through a variety of techniques. These techniques were from the field of ethnography. The techniques I used were as follows: participant observation, observation, audio recording, journaling, and artifact collection. These were suggested by Campbell et al. for practitioner research. The variety of items collected enabled the data triangulation. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) contend that, “… a strength of practitioner inquiry is that it entails multiple data sources that illuminate and confirm, but also disconfirm one another” (p. 44).

Collecting data through a variety of methods, including reflection in the research, is a valued aspect of conducting quality practitioner research (Ballenger, 2009; Campbell et al. 2004; Spindler & Hammond, 2000). Reflection is a valuable tool for addressing subjectivity as well as a valuable tool for the practitioner to improve his or her practice while engaged in research. Middlewood (1999) explains that practitioners who engage in practitioner research improve their practice because their research work and engagement with professional literature requires them to reflect about their practice throughout the research process. Practitioners start with a question directly related to their practice, a question that they have a vested interest in pursuing. They start with a literature review, pursue their study, reflect and continue to do this until they come to a satisfying conclusion.

Case Study

A case study is a “special kind of qualitative work that investigates a contextualized contemporary phenomenon within specified boundaries” (Hatch, 2007a, p. 228). Case studies use multiple sources of evidence to support their research (Yin, 1984).
In classroom-based research, there are different types of phenomenon bounded in the education setting. Merriam (1988) lists these as, “a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (p. 13). In this study the social group was the participants, and the event was the children’s responses to global literature.

Case studies approaches are useful for their focus on “how” and “why” questions by the researcher (Yin, 1984). In the classroom the teacher can guide children’s responses to literature, but no teacher can predict what a child will ultimately say, or how he or she will interact with the text. Case studies are a good strategy for exploratory and unpredictable circumstances (Yin, 1984). The case study approach worked nicely with the research population in this study.

Although regarded as a good research strategy, there are some potential shortcomings for using case studies. Yin (1984) notes that, “the case study has long been stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods” (p. 10). He explains the many prejudices against the case study strategy. Historically, many case studies have lacked rigor and have been reported in a less than rigorous manner (Yin, 1984). Many also “provide very little basis for scientific generalization” (Yin, 1984, p. 21). In recent years, political conservatives have increasingly challenged the validity of research conducted outside of the positivist research paradigm (Hatch, 2007b). Finally, case studies have been described as being too long and unreadable to be useful toward practice (Yin, 1984). Despite these potential shortcomings, I used the case study approach because of the benefits previously described—the nature of the research questions and its utility for exploratory research. The overarching goal of this study was to examine how
children respond to global children’s literature. Due to the lack of studies done on this subject, it was an exploratory study.

Yin (1984) describes five components of a case study research design:

1. a study’s questions
2. its propositions, if any
3. its unit(s) of analysis
4. the logic linking the data to the propositions
5. the criteria for interpreting the findings. (p. 29)

Yin (1984) suggests that these components combined with time boundaries, a tentative timeline for completing the work, as a way to keep the researcher focused on the original intent of the study.

Case studies are a common research structure found in many of the social sciences. The case study “allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1984, p. 14). Each classroom is a unique entity. This design will allow the reader to vicariously experience the read aloud event in this classroom through the reading of this report without the real life disruption of actually entering the classroom.

This research was conducted as a single-case embedded research design (Yin, 1984). A single-case study is suggested when the study represents a unique case (Yin, 1984). In this study, the unique case was this particular small interpretive community with its unique history. It was not identical to any other classroom. This study was
embedded because there were several units of analysis. Although twenty-two students shared the classroom, five students were the focus of this study.

The five students selected for this focus group were chosen based on their lack of global connections. These were students who had no known extended family who were foreign born. These were also students who have had either no or very limited travel outside of the United States. As discussed in Chapter Two, the educational community generally recognizes that American children need opportunities to experience perspectives on their world that differ from their own (Field, 2001). Global literature is recognized as a tool to help achieve this goal (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). These books can serve as windows into the broader world (Landt, 2006). Although U.S. classrooms are becoming more diverse, many classroom populations as well as teacher populations remain monocultural. Although I taught students with direct global connections through their foreign born parents, I chose to focus, instead, on students without these connections in order to reveal how students without any global connections responded to this body of literature. This selection strategy may reveal the ways monocultural children seem to experience global literature, but I also recognize that these students were still culturally specific to my school and may not reflect the viewpoints of other students.

The larger unit of this study was to consider the responses to global literature made by second graders in a U.S. classroom. The small unit was how each focus group member in particular responded to the literature. Yin (1984) cautions that researchers can become too tangled up in the smaller units and neglect a return to the larger unit. Yin
does highlight that the upside of this design is that when the researcher stays focused, the subunits (individuals versus the group) can lead to significant opportunities for in-depth and extensive insights into the single case study. As discussed in Chapter Two, there is very little research on children’s responses to global children’s literature. Although the focus group for this study was a small sample, this small group of children had the potential to reveal information pertinent to research on this topic, provide insights into classroom practice, and inform current social studies curriculum theory. The small group may also lead to further research in this area. In the next section I will discuss data collection methods.

**Methods to Collect Data on Children’s Responses**

In reality, it is impossible to truly capture a child’s transaction with literature (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). It would require entrance inside the mind of the child. Many scholars have been able to capture children’s responses to literature through observation (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2007; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2009; Hickman, 1981; Macphee, 1997; Sipe, 2000a; Sipe, 2000b; Sipe & Brightman, 2005; Sipe, 2008). Glesne (2006) explains that, “participant observation ranges across a continuum from mostly observation to mostly participation” (p. 49). In this study, I collected data through observation and participant observation. Like Hickman (1981), I kept observational notes, both anecdotal and descriptive. Johnstone (2000) describes observation as one of the best ways to get a sense of what might be happening in local terms. Observation helped with the cultural description of the classroom, the focus group and gave me the opportunity to step back and take notes about these students.
Observational notes were used to capture statements by students to help with audio transcribing. Hickman noted the importance of writing down students’ quotes. In addition to recording utterances by the students, Hickman also described drawing sketches in her notes of the physical arrangements of the rooms and the seating of the children. I did not use any type of video recording in the classroom. There was one occasion when I forgot my audio recorder, and so I used the sound recording function on a video camera. The lens was closed so no images of the students were taped.

Researchers have made observational notes to record children’s physical responses to literature (Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2007; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2009; Hickman, 1981; Sipe, 2000a; Sipe, 2000b). This is something I did during this study. Copenhaver et al. (2007) observed students manipulating a Black Santa figurine and a White Santa figurine as they responded to a text featuring an African American Santa. This moment was captured during an observation not a video recorder. The physical description of the students manipulating the figurines enhanced the description of their conversation captured by an audio recorder. This example highlights the importance of keeping observational notes.

In addition to data collected through observation, I collected data through audio recording. I chose audio recording because it was less invasive than video recording. Hubbard and Power (1999) contend that audio recording is a great way to capture verbatim quotes. Many researchers have used children’s quotes during responses to literature that were captured through audio recording in their work (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2007; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2009; Hickman, 1981;
Audio recordings give the reader a glimpse into the conversations that can occur inside an elementary school classroom. The audio recording in this study was done through a digital recording device that was small. Students were not recorded without their consent and the knowledge that the recording device was present. At the start of each read aloud I showed them that the device was recording and laid it out where they could see it. This was explained in my consent procedures.

After audio recording read alouds, the recordings were transcribed within the school week of the recording. This timely transcription was important in order to keep a steady stream of data coming in as well as making it possible to analyze the data in order to inform decisions about further data collection. Keeping up with the transcribing was very helpful. Audio recordings are not always audible in a noisy classroom but the recordings I made were easy to understand. It was important to transcribe them while the conversations were fresh in my mind. As part of the reflective process of this study, and for the triangulation of data, I did consult the participants and my team teacher when needed to ensure that the transcription and analysis was accurate.

I collected data on the children’s responses through artifact collection. Hubbard and Power (1999) assert artifacts provide “tangible evidence of what kids are able to do and of the range of responses kids make to different learning tasks” (p. 102). Children responded to literature orally, but sometimes they responded by movement or by bringing in additional written materials. Artifacts like their books from home and children’s magazines were collected. These items were collected with permission from the students.
and returned at the end of the study. Artifacts have yielded important information in studies on children’s responses to literature. Macphee (1997) collected students’ drawings to triangulate her data. The children in her study expressed emotions in their drawings in response to the read alouds in class. These artifacts revealed students’ understandings of the text as well as their personal feelings, or reactions to the issues concerning race. Tyson (1999) collected letters written by students. In the students’ oral responses they began to shift from “who, what and where” questions to “why” questions about the social reality of the impoverished characters as well as the characters facing racial discrimination (p. 157). The letters from the students showed an extension of their “why” questions as they began to ask these questions of prominent social figures such as the then president Bill Clinton. Copenhaver-Johnson et al. (2007) studied first grade students’ responses to a read aloud of Melodye Rosales’s *‘Twas the Night B’fore Christmas* (1996) which featured an African American Santa Claus. Although many of the students verbalized in their responses whether it was possible for Santa to be Black, a collection of their drawings of Santa showed that most of them still saw him as White. These studies reinforced the importance of triangulating data through artifact collection.

Observations, audio recording, and artifact collection were ways I collected data on the children’s responses to global children’s literature. These were all methods borrowed from ethnography. In the next section I will discuss the ways I collected data on the children in order to identify my case study group.
Data Collection Method for Identifying Case Study Group

As mentioned earlier, I planned to select students for my case study group based on their limited global connections. Even though I was with my students daily and had read through their cumulative files, I knew that this was insufficient to determine whether or not they had any knowledge about cultures outside of the U.S. through firsthand experience. There were two methods I used to decide which students to invite to participate in my study.

The first way I determined students’ global connections, or in this case, lack of global connections was through conversations I had with their families prior to our continent unit. I talked with both students and their parents to gather information about their global experiences. I began with the parents during fall conferences. If parents were unable to come, I sent them an e-mail with questions and talked with them over the phone. In the past I have asked parents these questions when soliciting volunteers to help facilitate our continent study. I did this for this current study as well as in order to have parents with firsthand knowledge come in to be primary resources for our study. As part of my regular teaching, I tried to involve parents in instruction in places where they could enrich our learning. Parents were invited to share their global experiences and to bring in artifacts. Questioning the parents was not out of the ordinary as this was how I typically prepared for a unit of study. These questions for the parents were not part of this study; they were part of my classroom planning. The first grade teachers had a continent study as well and invited parents to share their heritage and worldly knowledge with the
students. Parents at this school were and still are typically eager to share. The questions for the parents were as follows:

1. Can you please describe where you and your ancestors come from?
2. How often do you travel outside of the United States?
3. Do you have a place that you visit most often? If so, what brings you there?

Parents who expressed knowledge about a country or culture outside of the United States were subsequently invited to participate in the teaching during the continent study. Our continent study fell just prior to the planned data collection phase of this research study. Based on the parents’ responses, I selected students to continue the family heritage and travel conversation. Again, these conversations were not part of this study, but my typical way of preparing for this unit. Pieces of these conversations or those with the parents did not surface in this study. Those families who indicated a limited amount of experience outside of the United States were not probed for information, but rather questioned at other points of the year about areas in which they could contribute to the teaching and learning of the children. Although I sent home questions with the parents, the students were questioned at school. In the case that students took on some role in the teaching process, I wanted to know what worldly information they could share without the aid of a grown up. The children were asked the following questions:

1. Where have you traveled? What can you tell me about those places?
2. What do you know about countries outside of the United States?
3. Have you ever met people from somewhere other than the United States?
4. What can you tell me about the people you have met?
During the questioning I enforced my “no interruptions while friends are at the reading table rule.” This was a daily expectation.

Students who were questioned were told that they were helping me plan for what I was going to teach. This was usually what I did. Pre-assessments were a typical part of our week and students knew that pre-assessing was our way of learning what they already knew. Students understood that I was always trying to find out what they already knew so that I could teach them new things. My goal through this study was to maintain a normal instructional day. I did know that when asking children questions that they would inherently want to please me with their answers because of our student and teacher relationship. I never knew for sure until the continent study moved forward if students were overinflating their global experiences. Hubbard and Power (1999) describe successful teacher-researchers as being successful when the participants knew that the researchers were genuinely interested in what they had to say. Although these conversations were not part of the study, they were the beginning steps in fostering a relationship of mutual respect.

Classroom conversations were one tool that I used to gather information to help select my case study group. The other tool that I used was my beginning of the year review of their cumulative files. As their teacher I had full and legal access to the cumulative files of students in my class. Although I will not speak to the information in their files in this study, based on my regular review of the files I already had prior knowledge that was useful in my student selection such as: records of ESL support, history of schools attended, records of all alternative learning experiences (ALEs) which
detailed excused absences for travel, and extended family contact information. The review I did of their files before school started had already revealed the global connections of three of my students. These families were immediately excluded from the study. They were, however, questioned for their ability to contribute to our study of the seven continents. The only student who participated in this study whom I selected without a re
view of his cumulative file was a student in my team teacher’s classroom. I excluded the possibility of global travel or foreign born immediate relatives through conversations with his mother as well as with him.

Setting

Selection of the site. In this study, I chose to work as a practitioner researcher. I wanted this study to take place in a natural classroom setting in the real life daily events that would occur in a second grade classroom. I chose to conduct this research in the classroom where I was teaching. My room is adjoined with the neighboring room; a collapsible wall separates our rooms. With the exception of morning work and attendance, our wall was open all the way or partially the entire school day. The teacher in the adjoining room and I team taught. This continued for the study. As a natural part of our day, I was still responsible for the readers in my classroom. They were pulled by me for individual and group work with literature. Although we did whole group read alouds with both classes, the case study group continued to be pulled by me for work with the global children’s books as part of the study. The students were seated within my classroom.
The study took place in my classroom which is situated in a multi-age public elementary school. This was my fourth year with this school and this school district. This particular setting was selected for many reasons. The main reason was that it is where I work and I felt my insider knowledge would be an asset to the interpretation of the data. The day-to-day operations of the school were well known to me. Practitioner research is also valued at my school. My affiliation with classroom-based research was one of the reasons my current principal hired me. The principal at my school values reflective practice and teachers who are in a constant state of reflexivity to improve practice. The nature of this study, looking at children’s responses to global literature in order to inform practice is directly related to our school curriculum. My team teacher and principal were looking forward to the findings of this study. My position at this building and the supportive environment made this a good environment for this study.

The use of children’s literature to deliver curriculum was valued among our staff. Children’s picturebooks were a natural part of the children’s school day. Opportunities to engage with children’s picturebooks were a natural fit to the day. In addition to their work with picturebooks, the students in my classroom were used to other staff members coming into the room to work with individuals and small groups. During the school week, the intervention specialist, literacy coordinator, ESL teacher, speech pathologist, and occupational therapist worked with students. Pulling students aside to gather response data was not a disruption to the children’s school day, rather it was a central component of it.
The curriculum focus during data collection in this classroom worked naturally with the goals of the study. This was another reason this classroom setting leaned itself to this study. The data collection occurred during the spring. The entire second grade began their seven continents study during the winter. The students were engaged in learning about global cultures during the winter. This study naturally picked up where that unit left off and provided an extension for the students selected as part of the focus group. The continent study included the integration of content in their specials areas: art, physical education, music, library, and technology lab. The use of global children’s literature was not an extra activity. It was congruent with, and a necessary component of their curriculum. The students during this time were engaged in discussions focusing on cultures outside of the United States. Students are used to their teachers collecting information, artifacts, and making observational notes. The only item that the children needed to be introduced to that was new was the digital audio recorder. The novelty of the recorder wore off quickly and it was hardly noticeable.

Aside from my insider knowledge as being the primary reason for this site selection, and my familiarity with the faculty and curriculum, the second reason why I chose this site was because of my relationship with the students and parents. I had considered using my twin sister’s classroom, another second grade room, but felt my already established relationship with my own students was more of an asset than a deterrent. Erikson (1986) states, “Trust and rapport on fieldwork are not simply a matter of niceness; a concessive, mutually rewarding relationship with key informants is essential if the researcher is to gain valid insights into the informant’s point of view” (p.
The fact that my students’ and I had already established closeness with me helped them to feel comfortable in responding to literature.

**Description of the Site.** The school is one of fifteen elementary buildings in a school district that covers one hundred square miles in a Midwestern State. The school district is close to a large university. The building is of new construction and was in its fourth year of operation at the time of this study. It was built on donated farm land and is shaped like a large square. The center of the building houses the gym, cafeteria, art room, music room, and library. Branched off from the center are one large hallway of classrooms and offices, and three pods of classrooms. My classroom is located in one of the pods that contain all of the first and second grade classrooms and two small offices used for speech and intervention services. My classroom and the adjoining classroom offered me lots of space to work with my case study group as well as a quiet uninterrupted space to digest data when the students were out of the classroom.

The school serves students who are mostly White and from middle, to upper middleclass backgrounds. There are, however, a number of ethnically and economically diverse students. This year in particular, my classroom and my team teaching partner’s classroom hosted an unusually diverse group of students in comparison to most of the classrooms at our school. The district has a reputation for being one of the districts in the state this study is set in with families that have high incomes. There are many families in this district labeled as working affluent because they have a lot of money, but are full time workers. They do not come from “old money” so to speak. There are however, many families that face financial challenges embedded in this district.
**Participants.** The participants in this study included five students selected as a case study group. The demographic of this group was intended to mirror monocultural groups of students found in many schools that serve mostly mainstream White middleclass students. This decision to gather information on this particular group of students’ responses to global children’s literature was intentional. As explained earlier, these students were selected based on my prior review of the records as a normal part of my beginning of the school year planning and my conversations with students and families as part of my unit planning for our continent study. They were also selected by me based on my observation of how they interacted during whole and small group read alouds. No human possesses the ability to read minds so I needed to pick children whom I thought would be vocal during the read alouds. This was in order to maximize data collection.

As this study involved human subjects, I sought permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The Ohio State University prior to initiating this study. No student/family participation was sought nor any data collected, until permission had been granted by the IRB. Before seeking permission from the IRB, I obtained a letter of support for the study from my school.

Once this study was approved by the IRB, I distributed a letter to families explaining the goals of the study. One goal was to see how a focus group of children would respond to global children’s literature shared in picturebook read alouds. The children’s responses to global literature in this study may provide evidence for what this instructional tool can do to introduce children to diverse populations and settings that they may never experience firsthand. Families were informed of the secondary goal
which was to learn through the children’s responses what kinds of questions they express about global cultures. This was intended to contribute to teachers’ understandings about the possible needs in their instruction to help address children’s questions and misunderstandings, as well as how teachers might facilitate children’s inquiries to learn more about their global community. These goals directly reflected the two research questions of this study stated in Chapter One.

Holmes (1998) notes that, “In reality and unlike adults, children have very few rights as participants” (p. 16). If a parent consented for his or her child to participate, I then provided that child with the opportunity to agree or not agree to participate via an oral assent procedure as described in my IRB proposal. Parents and children were informed via the consent procedures of their right to decline participation at anytime during the study. It was important that participants knew that they had the right to withdraw at anytime (Glesne, 2006). Parents and students were also made aware that their desire to participate or not to participate would have no effect on their classroom grades. This study would not change the students’ day to day learning. No classroom activities would be altered to suit this study. All the parents of the five students solicited agreed to participate. All of the students also gave consent. No family or student declined participation throughout the study.

In the end I picked two girls and three boys as participants. All students in this study are referred to by pseudonyms. The first student will be referred to as Chrissy. Chrissy was chosen because she was typically one of the more verbal students during read alouds. Chrissy is a student who can be described as a slightly below average
reader. In addition to selecting Chrissy because of her loquacity, I also selected her to give her additional time working with literature.

The second student selected for the study is a girl referred to as Mackenzie. Like Chrissy, Mackenzie is also a more talkative student during read alouds. Mackenzie can be described as a slightly above average reader. During our study of the seven continents, Mackenzie was one of the more enthusiastic learners.

The third student selected for this study was a boy who is referred to as Travis. Travis could be described as an above average reader. He is a student who is typically quiet during whole group read alouds, but very talkative during small group work. Travis is in latchkey before and after school. Latchkey is an afterschool daycare program located at the school, but supervised and run by the local YMCA. Travis often came to the classroom during this time to help me sharpen pencils. I selected him because of his talkativeness during small group work and also because of his comfort levels working with me in the classroom.

The fourth student selected for this study was a boy who is referred to as Ethan. Like Travis, Ethan is much more talkative in a small group setting. I would describe Ethan as an average reader. Throughout the school year Ethan was a standout student in social studies. During the summer I received standardized test results that scored Ethan as gifted in this area. He appeared to enjoy the additional work with global literature. During the summer I received a thank you card in the mail for including him in the study.

The fifth student selected for this study came from my team teacher’s homeroom. He is a boy who is referred to as Devon. Devon was selected for his enthusiasm for read
alouds. During large group read alouds he always sits up close to the book and always has something to say. The interesting thing about Devon is that he is a learning disabled student who at the start of the second grade was considered illiterate and left the second grade reading at a kindergarten level. Although print is a struggle for Devon, he can listen to a story and articulate understanding as well as his peers. Although Devon could not write out a thank you card like Ethan, after the start of our focus group he handed me a small card he made at inside recess with a heart drawn on it and he thanked me for including him in the group.

Although there were 22 students in my classroom, when both classrooms were combined, 44 students were present. There were times when students who were not part of the case study group appeared in the conversations. I had no control over student interactions or participation during the day. Students who were not participants were not quoted directly at any point during the written phase of the study or in the transcripts. Their contributions were generically summarized to protect their privacy. They were referred to as nonparticipants in the study with no labeling such as participant one or participant two.

Privacy was a priority for the students involved in the study, particularly as they were so young. Glesne (2006) asserts that “researchers must consciously consider and protect the rights of participants to privacy” (p. 138). To ensure privacy for the children in the study, the site location will not be revealed. The students were also all given pseudonyms in the study. Families were able to request an update on their child’s contribution at any time during the study. The final research report will be available upon
request. Data collection methods were made very clear during the consent process as was information related to the secure storage of the research materials.

In addition to the students, I sought permission from my team teacher to participate in the study. My partner, to whom I gave the pseudonym “Mrs. Wilson,” and I already taught and assessed together. Although her role in the study will not be any different from her usual role as team teacher, I sought her participation since our teaching and assessing during this time was part of the study. Although she was not involved in the actual write up of the study, Mrs. Wilson was available when I was reviewing my data. She was another set of eyes and helped me as I worked to keep my subjectivity in place. Mrs. Wilson and I regularly trade our assessment data on the children to make sure that we are being as objective as possible in our grading and instructional decisions. She was someone to member-check with, useful in triangulation, and because of her natural involvement with the students during read aloud she helped with classroom management as I worked with the focus group. Mrs. Wilson has taught for 23 years. I value her as an indirect part of this research process. In the three years I have worked with her I have found her to be reflective, honest, and always trying to be objective. She is not concerned with telling me what I want to hear but rather what I need to hear. Mrs. Wilson is a nationally board certified teacher and has been selected by her peers in this school district as teacher of the year.

**Gaining access.** When I was hired at my current school district, I had expressed an interest in conducting my dissertation research at the school. Glesne (2006) explains that when negotiating access to your research site that this “involves your lay summary,
listening and responding to concerns and demand, and clarifying overarching issues” (p. 45). I was completely transparent with my principal about the goals of this study and the connection to the curriculum and my desire to contribute to the educational field. These goals were introduced again in written form in the same wording that was going out to the parents in their consent forms. I had expressed to my principal my knowledge about conducting research ethically, communicating with parents about the study, and my efforts to maintain no disruption to the children’s normal school day in order to insure her peace of mind about allowing this research to occur in her building. This transparency led her to support this project without hesitation.

In addition to the conversations with my principal over the past four years, I have also been communicating my goals with my team teacher as well as the teachers in my school. My team teacher has expressed her consent and has also expressed an interest in being involved with the data analysis as a second set of eyes. The teachers I work with all expressed their support. I was working in an environment where the teachers were always looking for ways to improve. I informed the parents in both my classroom and my team teacher’s classroom of my intent to design a study during the first week of school at curriculum night. No parents expressed concern throughout the school year. Most comments were supportive and parents regularly inquired about where I was in my process throughout the study. The parents expressed support for my efforts to improve my practice as well as my desire to contribute to the practice of other teachers. If my principal, team teacher, or parents had expressed any reservation about the study, I would not have continued this study at the current site.
Procedure

The children had their literacy block daily from 11:00 a.m. to 12:55 p.m. In addition to literacy block, the children were engaged in content study, social studies or science, for thirty minutes to one hour daily. Content study usually occurred in the hour before literacy block, or in the last hour of school. This change was dependent on when guidance was scheduled as well as when assemblies, late starts, and pull outs by intervention specialists occurred. In the Copenhaver-Johnson (2006) and Copenhaver-Johnson et al. (2007) studies data were collected during shared reading and writer’s workshop. When the students moved from shared reading to writer’s workshop, they often extended their responses and inquiries over the entire period. The conversations did not necessarily end after the reading. I collected my data in the same fashion. Students were observed during the shared reading and writer’s workshop periods. The case study group was engaged in small group reading in conjunction with writer’s workshop time as well as guided reading time.

I was at the school Monday through Friday. I focused on data collection on Monday through Thursday. On Friday the students had two specials in the morning which meant that they were out of the classroom for one hour and thirty-five minutes. This time overlapped with Mrs. Wilson’s prep time. I used this time to review data at school as well as to consult with Mrs. Wilson as needed.

Although most data was collected during literacy block, I also made observations, recorded audio and collected artifacts during social studies. Ethnographic methods and my desire to add to the validity of this study required that I employed multiple forms of
data collection. In this study those methods were: observations, interviews, audio
recording, artifact collection, and a researcher journal. By the end of the data collection
procedure I had spent twelve weeks gathering data. There were no out of the ordinary
interruptions to this collection.

**Book Selection.** Book selection was an ongoing process throughout the study. I used
professional references such as *Reading Globally, K-8: Connecting Students to the World
Through Literature* (Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010) and *Global Perspectives*
(Freeman & Lehman, 2001) to help guide my choices. These authors provide guidance in
choosing books for grade and age appropriateness and cultural authenticity.

The first issue I addressed in the book selection process was cultural authenticity
(Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). A lack of cultural
authenticity in the text and/or the illustrations can promote cultural misunderstandings or
stereotypes (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). The beginning step toward establishing cultural
authenticity of a book was to identify the author’s status as a cultural insider or outsider
(Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). The author does not necessarily need to be from
the culture he or she is writing about to be an insider, but should have spent enough time
studying that culture or living among that culture in order to achieve an insider
perspective (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). Included in
an author’s qualifications to write an authentic text are, “education, travel, expertise on
the book’s topic, and literary recognition” (Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010, p. 106).

The second issue to be addressed in the book selection process was accuracy
(Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). It was important to me
when selecting informational texts that they were up-to-date. Freeman, Lehman, and Scharer advise teachers to be aware of information about a topic or culture that may be omitted as well as to look at what is included. Some authors may privilege some information about an event, or setting over other information. One aspect of accuracy described by Lehman, Freeman, and Scharer that is of particular concern is stereotyping. They advise reading the reviews of cultural insiders when possible in evaluating accuracy.

The third aspect of book selection that applied to selecting books for this study was attention to literary merit (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). The best resources for doing this were through reading book reviews in professional publications such as *Bookbird* and *Hornbook*. I also looked online to see what others had to say about their experiences with the texts. Teachers just need to keep in mind that literary merit in book reviews is often judged from a Western European perspective (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). Cultures outside of the U.S. may value differing illustration styles as well as plot structures (Freeman & Lehman, 2001).

The final issue considered in book selection was evaluating translated books. Books published outside of the U.S. are often translated (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). Lehman, Freeman & Scharer explain that “Expert translators consider the book’s child audience, the translation’s target culture, and the subtleties of both languages with which they are working” (p. 116). They note that literal translations are poorly written. Translated texts should not sound translated to the reader.
(Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). In the end I did not end up using any texts that had been translated because the books the students requested did not end up being translated.

The books that were selected were both fiction and nonfiction informational texts. Although my classroom focused as a group on the continent of Asia for our continent study, our partnering class studied Europe. Prior to the start of the study, I preselected books from these regions as well as books from the continent of Africa. As the study started, I gave the students choices from the books I had selected. Then, I began selecting new texts based on their interests and what they wanted to learn about. Many of the books I preselected were never used because the students had other ideas about what they wanted to hear. It was important to me to give the students the ability to learn about things they were interested in. I wanted this to be an opportunity for them to not only learn, but to have some ownership in their learning. I believed the students would be more apt to engage if they were listening to books about global cultures they were curious about. Table 1 gives information about the books read aloud in the present study:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Copyright</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daly, N.</td>
<td>Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story From Africa</td>
<td>Clarion Books</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Folktale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedman, M.</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Children’s Press</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray, S. W.</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Compass Books</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heide, F.P. &amp;</td>
<td>The Day of Ahmed’s Secret</td>
<td>Mulberry Books</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Realistic Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilliland, J. H.</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Scholastic Inc.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinrichs, A.</td>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Scholastic Inc.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickox, R.</td>
<td>The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story</td>
<td>Holiday House</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Fairytale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson-Davies, D.</td>
<td>Goha the Wise Fool</td>
<td>Philomel Books</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Folktale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connor, J.</td>
<td>The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China</td>
<td>Viking</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersen, C. &amp;</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Children’s Press</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Information Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersen, D.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, K.L. &amp;</td>
<td>Four Feet, Two Sandals</td>
<td>Eerdmans Books</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Realistic Fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohammed, K.</td>
<td></td>
<td>For Young Readers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Company</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Other texts mentioned by the students in the study are included in the reference section.

Table 1. Books Used as Read Alouds in the Study
Data Collection

Information to choose participants and the act of gaining consent, including the IRB process, occurred from September 2010 until February 2011. Data collection occurred from the end of February 2011 until the first week of June 2011. Ethical data collection was a priority in this study. The children’s right to privacy was very important in the data collection process. All data collected in this study was stored in a locked filing cabinet at my house. All data kept on my computer was secure and only accessible by logging on with my password. During the writing process I had to have my hard drive replaced. The old hard drive was given back to me and is being stored in the locked filing cabinet. The items stored in the locked filing cabinet include journals, artifacts, and transcripts. All electronic data collected was stored on a flash drive that continues to be locked. I am the only person with a password to open the flash drive.

Observations. When I was not engaged in reading the picturebooks, extensive field notes were taken. This included times children talked to each other in response to the global books, when I walked around and observed the children at writer’s workshop, and when my team teacher was reading global literature. Like Hickman (1981), these observations were kept in a researcher log separated from my reflective journal. As the study moved forward and I began my data analysis, my observations took on a focus. Until I began my observations looking at the children’s responses and began to analyze audio transcripts, I could not predict what that focus would be. The initial observations were a beginning step in getting to know the group being studied (Johnstone, 2000) as well as the emerging categories in the data.
Audio recording. Aside from observations and recording them with writing, I also audio recorded the read alouds. I transcribed all audio recordings. All read alouds were transcribed. Hubbard and Power (1999) note, “It’s important to realize that tapes can provide valuable data for your research study without the requirement of lengthy transcription of every word” (p. 95). As patterns emerged, some parts of the audio recordings were not transcribed. The audio recorder was not used to record conversations outside of the read aloud. The written observations in my journal helped with the transcription by giving me something tangible to check on the rare occasion that the audio was unclear. This was a way to capture statements as well as information to confirm who was speaking.

Interviews. Although conversations were initially used to identify potential participants, unstructured interviews were conducted as needed. Hubbard and Power (1999) contend that interviewing is a good way to “bring out information we couldn’t learn without getting inside the students’ minds” (p. 89). There were times when I wondered what the child actually meant by a statement. In such instances, I asked the child about his or her thinking or intentions at the time he or she was responding to the global literature. These unstructured interviews that arose during data collection were an important part in member-checking and triangulating the data.

Open-ended interviews are a feature of ethnographic work (Fontana & Frey, 2005). They help the researcher in his or her quest for an emic perspective and accurate analysis of data. There were times that I needed to ask, “Can you tell me more about
that?” and “What did you mean by that?” in order to gain a better understanding of the speaker’s intent. These were not unusual questions for the children to hear.

When interviewing, Glesne (2006) suggests that you should “select quiet, physically comfortable, and private locations when you can” (p. 86). All questions occurred at my reading table which is away from most of the action in the classroom. This is where I typically met with students so it did not seem to be an unusual location to the child.

I was mindful during interviews that children may start by telling me what they think I want to hear because I am their teacher. Glesne (2006) warns researchers to “be mindful, however, of status differences inherent in any research interaction and work to minimize them where possible” (p. 99). Glesne suggests maintaining these attributes during interviews to minimize the status difference: being non-threatening, aware of power and hierarchy, and being careful and grateful. During our interviews, I gave students frequent reminders that they were not being evaluated, but rather helping with my understanding about what they were trying to say. Although none chose to, students were given the opportunity to revisit me and add to their responses.

**Artifact collection.** In studies on students’ responses to literature, artifact collection has been an important piece of the data collection process (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2006; Copenhaver-Johnson et al. 2007; Macphee, 1997). To help evaluate the nature of the children’s responses as well as to obtain a better understanding of their oral responses, student artifacts were collected and on one occasion copied. The student artifacts were
books that students brought from home as well as a children’s magazine. There was an article that a student highlighted in the magazine that I copied for the group.

**Research journal.** To engage in vigorous reflexivity (Lather, 1986), I kept a daily research journal to reflect on the daily events of the research study. This journal included my feelings, wonderings, ideas, and ideas for revising plans when needed. This journal helped me to stay focused as well as assisting me in my planning and re-planning the goals for each day. This journal was kept in a yellow legal sized paper notebook.

**Researcher bias.** Peshkin (1988) describes subjectivity as being “…like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). I was the teacher of the students in the study. I could not completely remove this from my being. I know that I had the potential to be biased based on this role. My choice to be a teacher-researcher shows my commitment to the improvement of public education. I entered into this study with a belief that our schools could benefit from more global understandings. Pang (2005) notes that the first step in changing the views on the cultures of others is to first acknowledge your own views.

Holmes (1998) explains that, “a researcher’s gender, age, social status, and ethnic membership are potential factors that could produce different life and socialization experiences and ultimately lead to different perceptions of the world” (p. 9). On the surface I am a white middle class teacher. Underneath I am a white middle class teacher raised by Appalachian working class parents. I do not see myself as being from the same culture as my students. I understand the importance of not letting my world view and history influence the responses of the children. We may not see things the same way. Engaging in reflexivity during the research process helped me keep my cultural bias in
check. Member checking with families and checking in with my team teacher helped me keep these biases in check.

**Researcher qualifications.** I felt I was qualified to carry out this qualitative research study for this dissertation based on my experience with the following activities:

1. I worked over a three year period as a classroom based researcher under the lead and guidance of Dr. Jeane Copenhaver-Johnson. Throughout this study I learned to work collaboratively with my team teacher in that placement to carry out data collection over a three year period. These data collection methods included the methods to be used in this study: audio recording, transcribing, observation, field notes, and artifact collection. Dr. Copenhaver-Johnson modeled ethical research practices through her consent process with the site and families and complete transparency with all of those involved. She also taught me the importance of member-checking and engaging in reflexivity through collaborative discussions with all adults involved.

2. Prior to the start of this study I passed my doctoral candidacy exams in the School of Teaching and Learning with an emphasis on Children’s Literature, Teacher and Multicultural Teacher Education, and Early Childhood Education.

**Data Analysis**

**Grounded theory.** There two are questions that this study is focused on:

1. In one second grade classroom, how does a focus group of children respond to global children’s literature during picturebook read alouds?

2. What evidence of global learning do children offer?
I used a grounded theory methodology for my analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Many studies begin with a developed hypothesis. In grounded theory, the study begins with focus questions, then data collection. Charmaz (2005) explains, “grounded theory methods are a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development” (p. 507). Charmaz further cites that a strength of this type of theory is that it requires the researcher to remain close to her studied world, which is consistent with my position as a practitioner researcher.

Grounded theory is a process of simultaneous data collection and analysis with each one informing the other throughout the process (Charmaz, 2005). As data is collected in connection with the goals of the study, the researcher looks for emerging conceptual categories. As categories emerge, the researcher seeks out data to “fill out, refine, and check the emerging conceptual categories” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 508). In this study categories began to emerge within the first three read alouds.

The first phase of the data analysis began as a process of open coding. In the beginning I coded all the data collected about the children’s responses to global literature. Codes were written in the margins of field notes. While transcribing audio tapes of children’s responses to literature and interview, I used color coding to separate emerging categories. Hubbard and Power (1999) describe color coding as a useful visual marker. During the cycle of collecting and color coding, I checked in with my advisor Dr. Copenhaver–Johnson about my emerging categories to get her feedback. Charmaz (2005) recommends that the researcher finds time to question herself about how and why
they developed certain codes. I found it useful to liaise with my advisor about my codes as she asked me to think about them in different ways.

As I continued with the data collecting and coding processes, categories continued to emerge which guided my focus for collecting and coding. At this point, instead of open coding, I engaged in selective coding. As my codes were refined to reflect emerging categories, I engaged in more focused theoretical sampling. Although I could not predict what categories would emerge, some of the categories looked familiar to the work done by another scholar.

Sipe’s (2008) categories in his *five facets of literary understanding* did provide categories for coding some of the data. Four of his five facets emerged in the data. Sipes’s work does not focus on global literature but did work with many of the children’s responses. There were categories that emerged in addition to Sipe’s categories that were specific to the understandings and misunderstandings about global cultures therefore grounded theory was an appropriate method for this study.

**Conclusion**

This study was conducted as a qualitative study borrowing methods from the field of ethnography. I worked as a practitioner researcher with a case study group of five students. Data was collected over a three month period and was analyzed using grounded theory, while being simultaneously informed by scholarly work previously conducted on picturebook read alouds. In the next chapter I will discuss the results of this study.
Chapter 4

Children’s Responses

Introduction

The two questions for this study are: In one second grade classroom, how does a focus group of children respond to global children’s literature shared in picturebook read alouds? And, what evidence of global learning do children offer? In this chapter, I will describe the children’s different responses the children had to the literature read aloud related to this first question. Many of the children’s responses fit four of the *five facets of literary understanding* conceptualized by Lawrence Sipe (2008). Those response styles are as follows: analytical, intertextual, personal, and transparent. The one response style conceptualized by Sipe that did not appear in the data was performative responses. I went into the data collection with an open mind about how the children would respond, but kept in mind the work previously done by other scholars on children’s responses to picturebooks.

In relation to the first research question, I will describe the children’s general responses in relation to these categories. I use the term general responses because these response styles are not only unique to global literature. Not all of the children’s responses fit cleanly into Sipe’s categories, but many do. Discussing the students’ general responses in relation to Sipe’s *facets of literary understanding* is important to the discussion of using global children’s literature in the classroom. It is important for
educators to see that global children’s literature is not so completely different from mainstream children’s literature published in the United States; that it has value in educational instruction and is a quality tool. The way the children responded to global children’s literature was very similar to the way children responded to literature published and set inside the United States in other studies. Global children’s literature can be used to meet many educational curricular goals (Freeman & Lehman, 2001). As you will see in this chapter, global children’s literature, like children’s literature published inside the United States has topics, themes, story structures, and characters relatable enough to the children that they are easy to use with students in order to meet instructional needs.

Included in the discussion around Sipe’s (2008) facets of literary understanding will be the ways in which the children responded analytically using reading comprehension strategies (Fielding & Pearson, 1994; Tierney, 1990) they learned in the classroom prior to the start of the study. Woven into the students’ analytical responses was evidence of the use of reading comprehension strategies: using background knowledge, questioning, and inferring (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Miller, 2002). These responses using comprehension strategies is evidence of the students meeting the curricular goals taught during language arts instruction. The second grade curriculum in the state where this study was conducted puts an emphasis on teaching reading comprehension strategies.

The children’s responses could also fit in more than one of Sipe’s (2008) categories. I chose to place their responses into the categories that I felt they best
represented. I did this for personal clarity and so that the reader of this research, who is unfamiliar with this topic, could best understand the results. I do acknowledge that some of the comments show characteristics of more than one response style. For example, a student may be making an intertextual connection, while at the same time expressing a strongly analytical response. In such an instance, I categorized it as an analytical response because analysis seemed to be the student’s primary goal. Although research on children’s responses to information books (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, et al. 2007) describes personal responses as stated by Sipes, as being intertextual connections with the life experience as the text. I am keeping them as two separate categories in line with Sipe’s work. The following table (Table 2) shows the different categories of response styles that the children used during the study. Beside each category are descriptions of the different ways the children responded in relation to that particular category along with examples of what these responses sounded like. These descriptions reflect how I chose to place the responses, even if they could have fit into more than one category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Response Style</th>
<th>Description of Response Style</th>
<th>Example of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytical Response</strong></td>
<td>Analysis of story elements, analysis of genre, analysis of text and illustrations in the book for comprehension of the story or critique of the author’s choices</td>
<td>Devon: (points to cover illustrations) What the heck is that? She/he’s got yellow and red.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intertextual Response</strong></td>
<td>Connecting books to other written text, connecting books to media</td>
<td>Ethan: Anansi is African …Yeah, we read Anansi stories this year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Response</strong></td>
<td>Connecting personal life to books, connecting to the book with displays of empathy</td>
<td>Devon: I tried that before. It was like a green. It it’s really good I tried it. It’s all like green and it tastes like green apple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transparent Response</strong></td>
<td>The student enters the story through his/her imagination</td>
<td>Devon: (in response to the dog attacking the grandma) Uh oh! (he starts flapping his arms and makes chicken noises to startle the dog).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Categories based on response categories conceptualized in *Storytime* by L. Sipe (2008). All examples are from Transcript Four (Rietschlin, 2011) during the read aloud of *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa* (Daly, 2006).

Table 2. General Response Categories to Global Children’s Literature

After discussing students’ general responses, I will describe their responses as they relate to my second dissertation question. In this section I will share children’s responses that show the global understandings they brought to the conversation, the global misunderstandings they brought to the conversation and examples of the ways the
children and I worked to clarify their misunderstandings. Last, I will provide concluding thoughts about the children’s overall responses to the global literature. Throughout this chapter I will provide examples from the transcripts. A row of asterisks (****) will note any breaks in the transcripts. Parts of the transcripts where I am reading aloud will be italicized.

**Five Facets of Literary Understanding**

**Analytical Responses**

In this style of response children analyze the story elements, theme, style, as well as illustrations to indicate, or develop literary understanding (Sipe, 2008). Sipe’s work is largely based on children’s responses to non-global fictional literature. Five of the eleven books read during this study were nonfiction books. In the studies I read about children’s responses to information texts, the authors did not describe responses akin to Sipe’s analytical categories (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, et al. 2007). The children in this study show evidence of analyzing the nonfiction texts. In addition to the items cited by Sipe, I would also add that the children in response to the nonfiction literature were responding not just to themes, but also to the main idea, a mostly nonfiction construct. Additionally Sipe contends that analytical responses are a means to indicate or develop literary understanding. I would also add based upon the responses in this study to the nonfiction literature that children used analytical responses to indicate, or develop content knowledge.

**Analytical responses concerning story elements.** When responding to the fiction literature read aloud, the children made many statements, or asked questions regarding
the plot, main characters, and setting. With some of the picturebooks the children
integrated prior knowledge into their responses by connecting the stories to other stories
that they have read. Although these were not explicit text-to-text connections, the
children connected to the general knowledge they have acquired over the years about the
traditional tales being told.

By the second grade many children have been exposed to different versions of
Cinderella stories as well as Little Red Riding Hood stories. All of the children in this
study have been exposed to Cinderella stories per the classroom work done before this
study. One version was set in Korea and the other was set in China. All the children in
this study group also acknowledged that they had heard some form of Little Red Riding
Hood at some point in their life, but none of the children noted that the versions were set
in global cultures outside of the United States. The children’s connections to these stories
were intertextual (Sipe, 2008), but their responses to these books were less of a
comparison of the stories, or explained connection, than they were analyses of the way
the stories were written. They went beyond the “This reminds me of…” responses, to
using the connections to critique. The decision to categorize these responses as analytical
versus intertextual was a dilemma. The children used their knowledge of Cinderella and
Little Red Riding Hood stories to analyze the stories *The Golden Sandal: A Middle
Eastern Cinderella Story* (Hickox, 1998) and *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood
Story From Africa* (Daly, 2006).

There are common elements to most versions of Cinderella which are as follows:
an innocent daughter, a jealous stepmother, mean stepsisters, an elegant ball, a prince,
and characters that live happily ever after. The children in the group immediately began to use their prior knowledge of Cinderella stories, an initial intertextual connection, and started indicating that they knew how *The Golden Sandal* should go based on that knowledge. Devon was the first to respond with a tone of pleasure in his voice signaling that he had this story all figured out as soon as I finished reading the first page.

Mackenzie joined in to support his response.

Devon: Oh yeah.

Angela: You are saying oh yeah. Why?

Devon: Cause a lot of stories are like that.

Angela: So lots of these stories have a jealous stepmom?

Devon: Yeah

**

Mackenzie: They usually make, well the mother dies and who marries the widow, the man they marry someone that’s not nice. (Transcript 1, p. 2)

Many times in the group, students drew from their prior knowledge to predict what would happen in the plot, or what character would emerge.

There were times in the two familiar stories when the children did challenge each other’s assertions. Those times were when the plot, setting, or characters deviated from the traditional European versions of the story. For example, Travis and Devon noted with confidence that the main character in *The Golden Sandal* would go to a ball even though it was explicitly stated in the story that the sisters had been invited to a wedding. Ethan stepped in and reminded the others that in this story it was a wedding and not a ball. When reading *Pretty Salma*, a version set in an urban West African setting, although the character depicted on the cover did not resemble a Wolf, the children were reluctant to
call it a different animal. Travis noted that the animal looked funny, but would not challenge the possibility that the animal was not a wolf.

Angela: Who do you think this character is?

Devon: The wolf.

****
Angela: What thing? Point. (He points to the dog on the cover hiding behind a tree). The tree or the animal?

Travis: The animal. (Transcript Four, p. 3)

It is only later during the read aloud, prior to me reading the text that Chrissy points to the part of the book and reads where it is written “Mr. Dog” that the children acknowledge that the antagonist is not a wolf but rather a dog.

As the children engaged with the global versions of traditional tales they had heard at some point in their childhood, they began to respond with comments that spoke to the possibility that things could be different in the story because of the unfamiliar cultural setting. During the read aloud of Pretty Salma, Devon was predicting that Salma would not arrive in time to save Granny. In the more traditional tales the wolf usually has taken the place of the Grandmother character and is waiting for the arrival of Little Red Riding Hood. Mackenzie asserts that this may not be the case stating, “You never know, this one is African” (Transcript Four, p. 7).

Aside from using prior knowledge, the children made analytical responses to the main characters in both the fiction and nonfiction literature regardless of familiarity with the tale or the origin of the story. A lack of familiarity with the cultural origins of the story did not prevent the children from attempting to analyze the text. One thing the
children did when analyzing the text was to critique the actions of the main characters in
the fiction literature and the real people in the nonfiction literature. During one of the
readings from *Goha the Wise Fool* (Johnson-Davies, 2005), the children respond by
critiquing the intelligence level of the main character Goha. Devon insisted that Goha
was stupid while Mackenzie thought he was not stupid, but rather easily confused.

Angela: (I read on) *But he had just bought twelve donkeys...Now there
were twelve. That was better...*

Devon: Man that guy’s stupid.
****
Angela: (I read on) *Happy again...So he walked all the way to his house
behind the twelve donkeys that he had bought at the market.*

Devon: Man that guy is stupid.

Angela: What do you think Mackenzie?

Mackenzie: I think he is kinda one of those people who like knows, has
the money, just doesn’t know how.
****
Mackenzie: yeah he kind of gets confused. He’s not stupid. (Transcript
Two, pp. 4-5)

Analyzing the story elements were ways the children responded to the global literature.
Analysis of the characters, or people in both the fiction and nonfiction texts were also
ways the children responded. Next I will discuss how the children responded analytically
to the genre of the books.

**Analytical responses critiquing genre.** During the picturebook read alouds the students
often responded to the global literature by declaring the type of genre they were hearing
and why it fit that particular genre. One example of analysis of genre that the students
offered was differentiation between fact and fiction. Over the past ten years I have taught
both first grade and second grade students. During these years of schooling I have experienced children’s excitement when they start to learn about genres. In this second grade classroom the children began filling out a reflective reading log after independent reading. On this log they coded their reading choice by genre. When we gather at the large classroom carpet where all students can sit, the students enjoy explaining why they believe that their books fit a particular genre. Some of the longest discussions at these gatherings have been around what is and is not “real.”

I have observed the group in this study to do this mostly with folktales or discussions involving biblical stories. I had explained to the students that before scientific tools were readily available, many cultures explained things through the tradition of folktales. The students often wanted to know if the folktales were real during this case study or during read alouds with the entire class outside of the study. During the reading of *The Jade Stone: A Chinese Folktale* (Yacowitz, 2005), Travis and Devon both noted to the group that the book was “Definitely fiction” (Transcript Eight, p. 4) after observing some of the magical elements of the story. While listening to the read aloud of *Pretty Salma*, Travis responded that the story was fiction because “The dog is standing on his [two] feet” (Transcript Four, p. 5).

During several of the read alouds the students responded with comments that they thought proved that the story they were hearing was a folktale. Earlier in the school year the students were given a check off list to monitor the features of folktales in the books they were reading, or hearing. While reading *The Jade Stone* (Yacowitz, 2005), the
students noted in their responses that many things were grouped in a group of three, a common feature of folktales.

   Travis: I think there might be three fishes on the back.

   ****

   Angela: (I read the eleventh page of text) *No dragon whispered the first...Punish him! The three advisers chanted.*

   Ethan: Threeee.

   Mackenzie: This is definitely a folktale.

   Angela: Why?

   Travis: Because there is three in a group.

   Mackenzie: It was on the paper.

   Angela: Our folktale check-off list?

   Mackenzie: Yeah. (Transcript Eight, pp. 5-6)

   In addition to things being grouped in threes, students also responded that some of the books had elements of a folktale because an animal in the story displayed human characteristics. While listening to *The Golden Sandal*, Ethan pointed out this feature.

   Ethan: Um uh..so.. um.. this is definitely a folktale.

   Angela: How do you know?

   Ethan: Because the rooster just talked.

   Angela: The rooster just talked. (Transcript One, pp. 6-7)

   When responding to the global books read aloud, the children demonstrated that they could use prior knowledge of other stories to work towards comprehending the stories. They also showed that they could use prior knowledge of classroom instruction
about genre to work towards comprehending the stories. The global setting was not a deterrent. In addition to prior knowledge, the students responded a lot to the texts by using the comprehension strategies of inferring and questioning (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).

**Analytical responses for comprehending fiction texts: questioning and inferring.**

Inferring was a comprehension strategy explicitly taught to all the students prior to the study. The children were instructed that not all authors state things directly, but that at times they would need to use the words and pictures to infer what was happening in the story. There were times during the read alouds when I challenged them to infer, and times when they made inferences on their own. During the first read aloud of the study, Ethan indicated during a response that the group was using this strategy.

> Angela: Okay (I read on to the next page of text). *Several days after the wedding...so beautiful about the little shoe that he longed to meet its owner.*

> Looking at the illustrations, how do you think the shoe got over to the guy?

> Devon: The fish! The fish!

> Angela: We would have to infer since the author did not tell us.

> Ethan: It’s the second time we’re inferring. (Transcript One, p. 6)

Illustrations were used a lot by the students to infer meaning about these unfamiliar global settings. This was very evident during the reading of *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Heide & Gilliland, 1990). As the main character Ahmed navigates the streets of Cairo, Egypt the students used the pictures to make inferences about the things they were seeing in the pictures in order to develop an understanding of the main
character’s life. At the beginning of the story Devon and Travis wanted to know what the cart was for that Ahmed stops at in the street.

Devon: (Points to the picture of the boy’s cart.) What is that cart for?

Angela: His cart?

Devon: Yeah.

Angela: We’ll find out what his cart is for.

Travis: (Points to a vendor’s cart on the page) Popcorn!

Angela: It does look like a popcorn cart. I am thinking it has something to do with food.

****

Devon: What is that thing? (Points to the water man’s container)

Angela: That is probably what he carries his water in and gets it out with. See the spout and the glass.

Devon: Oh

Mackenzie: (Points to the rings on the side) Right here he could put the cups.

Angela: It does look like cups would fit. (Transcript Ten, pp. 2 &6)

The items in this cultural setting were unfamiliar to the students. The children in these responses were using the strategy of questioning to achieve understanding, but had to rely on inferences using the illustrations to draw conclusions.

In addition to using the illustrations to make inferences, the children also applied this comprehension strategy to understand the global literature through their analytical responses to the story elements by using the text given by the author. There are examples of this during the read aloud of *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007).
This book is a story set in an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. Two girls meet and become friends.

Angela: Yes, Afghanistan was our last book. (I continue reading) *She had carried her brother...not bigger than a water jug then, but just as heavy...*

Mackenzie: How old was her brother?

Angela: It does not say but I am assuming if he has to be carried that he is not big enough to walk. Probably a baby or under the age of 2.

Devon: Under 2, 2

****

Angela: Right (I read on) *Lina felt the tears make a trail down her cheek...We will share again in America, she called.* (I pause and turn to the author’s note and read it). *Author’s note. People who flee their country...Lina and Feroza are shared by refugees around the world.*

Why do you think the author notes that most of the refugees are children?

Ethan: Because their parents were likely killed in war. (Transcript Twelve, pp. 3 & 6)

In these responses the children are using their inferences to make sense of the living conditions of the characters. They are trying to figure out how big that child actually was. When they looked a little puzzled at why most of the refugees were children, I checked in to see if they understood and affirmed Ethan’s inference.

**Analytical responses for comprehending nonfiction texts: questioning.** The children integrated questioning with inferring to comprehend the global literature. While reading the nonfiction books, the children frequently used the comprehension strategy of questioning as a strategy to understand the information in the text. Although both the pictures and text in the book prompted the children to ask questions, unlike the fiction stories, most of the information was directly stated in the books and the children were not
left to infer. If it was not, I looked to outside resources such as additional reading and maps to help the children answer questions.

There were many examples of the children responding analytically through questioning to comprehend the text. During the read aloud of The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China (O’Connor, 2002), the students want to know what the unearthed figures were. They began by hypothesizing as they analyzed the pictures and text. Eventually their question was answered.

Angela: Like a material you may find in Mexico. (I read on, on p. 8 ) The figurines are soldiers... That much is clear...

Travis: So those aren’t the actual people buried.

Angela: No these are statues

Travis: oooh (Transcript Six, p. 3).

While reading The Emperor’s Silent Army, the students responded with connections to their prior knowledge about Egypt to try to make sense of the burial of the statues. They talked a few times about mummies, tombs, and sarcophagi. Although Travis had the answer to the question of what the silent army was made of, there were times during the conversation when he would still allude to the possibility of people being buried as being part of a trap. During the read aloud of Egypt (Gray, 2002), Travis presents his hypothesis that people were trapped in the sarcophagi on purpose and buried alive. This was a question that was still on his mind. Travis learned through the reading that the sarcophagi and burial tombs were for burying the dead.

Travis: Well Mrs. Rietschlin like what I’m talking about it looks like a person but it is standing up and there is a door to it and it would trap someone in it and they would just melt away in it.
Angela: Well we will have to see if we find anything like that

Devon: Ooh yeah!

Angela: (I read on onto p. 15) The Egyptians built pyramids...they put pharaohs and queens inside...

Devon: The pharaohs and queens are inside like no kidding. I mean it they’re inside.

Angela: (I turn the page)...Yes. (There is a picture of King Tut's death mask) There you go, King Tut.

Travis: That’s what I am talking about.

Angela: This is what they put dead people in.

Travis: Oh (Transcript Nine, p. 5).

Analytical responses were one of the ways the children responded to the global literature read aloud. Unfamiliarity with the global settings of the books did not prevent the children from applying comprehension strategies to the books in order to understand them. In the next section I will discuss the ways the children responded using intertextual responses, another one of the five facets of literary understanding (Sipe, 2008).

**Intertextual Responses**

In this type of response children make connections between the text being read aloud to other texts. These texts they connect to can include written texts such as other books they have read or heard as well as stories written by their peers. Additionally, other texts that the children could make connections with include media seen on television, film, or art (Sipe, 2008). Reading comprehension is related to the reader’s ability to connect to prior knowledge (Tierney, 1990). Intertextual connections are important to
children’s ability to comprehend global literature which may not fit into their schema. Despite the children’s lack of first-hand travel to the global settings that were featured in the books, the children in this study made intertextual connections to the literature read aloud by connecting to other books and media seen on film or television.

**Intertextual responses to books.** During the read alouds the children in this study made many intertextual responses by connecting the read aloud books to other books they have read or heard read out loud. Other texts that the children referred to were books from Mary Pope Osborne’s *Magic Tree House* series. These books have been popular amongst the second grade students at our school. They are popular for the way they mix fiction with historical facts as the main characters travel through time using a tree house as their time machine. Although the books are not set entirely in global cultures, in many of the books in this series, the main characters travel to different locations around the world.

The following are examples from the transcripts when the children responded with connections first to *Egypt* (Gray, 2002), then to *Greece* (Petersen & Petersen, 2001) to books from the *Magic Tree House* series that they had read on their own:

Travis: It’s a big state.

Angela: Actually it looks like the size of one of our states but it is actually a country. And I know it can be confusing because our states are sized like a lot of countries.

Ethan: Um actually I am thinking about something that is kind of connected to it. I just found something in my *Magic Tree House* book. I’ll mark it. (Ethan marks a page in Mary Pope Osborne’s *Magic Tree House: Mummies in the Morning*, he does not show what he marks) (Transcript Nine, p. 3)

****
Chrissy: There is a Magic Tree House book with myths in it.

Angela: Magic Tree House mixes nonfiction and fiction a lot. (Transcript Thirteen, p.4).

During the read alouds of Greece (Petersen & Petersen, 2001) and Egypt (Gray, 2002), Ethan brought over his classroom book box used for silent independent reading. Inside his book box were several books from the Magic Tree House series. Ethan pulled them out and sat them near his lap anticipating that he may be able to connect them with the read alouds.

In addition to intertextual connections to non-global literature, the children made connections to other global children’s literature read in the classroom prior to the study as well as the global children’s literature used during this study in order to develop understanding of the global literature being read aloud. One example of an intertextual connection made to global literature read prior to the study was during the first read aloud in the study, The Golden Sandal (Hickox, 1998), Ethan, Mackenzie and Devon responded with an intertextual connection to Yeh Shen: A Chinese Cinderella Story (Louie, 1982). This book had been read aloud to the entire class prior to the study. When I first introduced The Golden Sandal to the group and told them that the book was set in the Middle East, I reminded them that we had read other versions of Cinderella set in other global cultures. Devon immediately referred to Yeh Shen as one of those books. As I read aloud The Golden Sandal, Ethan, Mackenzie and Devon made an intertextual connection to Yeh Shen acknowledging that both versions had an animal character in them. The response began with Ethan reaching out and touching the red fish pictured in the illustration of the main character, Maha’s basket.
Ethan: Remember when um the other one, the other Asian one (reference to Yeh Shen).

Angela: Yes, one of them had an animal in it, this book is Middle Eastern, but do you remember which one had the animal in it?

Mackenzie: Yeh Shen.

Devon: Yeah, definitely it was Yeh Shen. (Transcript One, p. 3)

During other read alouds in the study the children responded with intertextual responses connecting the global literature being read aloud to other global books read to them during the study. During the read aloud of *The Jade Stone: A Chinese Folktale* (Yacowitz, 2005), Ethan noted that the horses depicted in the illustrations on one page resembled the stone horse from the book *The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China* (O’Connor, 2002). While reading aloud *Egypt* (Gray, 2002), Mackenzie had made an intertextual connection to *The Golden Sandal* acknowledging that both books mentioned the food “dates” in them as a product. Mackenzie also noted in an intertextual response that donkeys were in both *Goha the Wise Fool* (Johnson-Davies, 2005) and *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Heide & Gilliland, 1990) during the reading of *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret*. As shown in the chart at the beginning of the chapter, Ethan had connected the character Anansi from *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa* (Daly, 2006) back to the stories featuring Anansi that were read aloud at school in preparation for our author visit from Eric A. Kimmel.

When making intertextual connections, the children did not always rely on connections to literature set in the same place. Their responses were strengthened by both
connections to literature published in the United States and Global literature. Next I will discuss their intertextual connections to media.

**Intertextual responses to media.** Throughout the study the children often made intertextual connections to things they had seen on television or in movies. During the read aloud *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story From Africa* (Daly, 2006), the main character Salma had dressed up as Ka Ka Motobi the Bogeyman in order to scare Mr. Dog away from her Granny. Ka Ka Motobi was explicitly referred to as the Bogeyman. The children responded with curiosity about “The Bogeyman.” I was unable to locate any information about the Bogeyman character in this book. When I began the read aloud of *The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China* (O’Connor, 2002), Devon immediately expressed a desire to learn more about the Bogeyman. He made an intertextual connection between the Bogeyman and the evil character from the movie *Scream* (Dimension Films, 1996). The evil character in the movie *Scream* is never referred to explicitly as the Bogeyman, but this seemed to be what Devon had in mind as to what a Bogeyman might be. Due to the ongoing curiosity about the Bogeyman, I printed out an information page about the Bogeyman on the website *Wikipedia*. When reviewing the information on Bogeyman characters, Devon again talked about the evil character from *Scream*.

Travis responded with an intertextual connection to film during the reading of *Greece* (Petersen & Petersen, 2001) when I began reading the section in the book about Crete. Travis offered up some information about the Greek God Zeus and informed the group that there was information about Greek Myths in the movie *Percy Jackson* (20th
Century Fox, 2010). Unfamiliar with the character or movie *Percy Jackson*, I later looked up information on the movie and discovered that the mythical Greek God Zeus was a character in the movie mentioned by Travis.

During the read aloud of *Afghanistan* (Heinrichs, 2003), the students responded with questions about Mecca and the pilgrimage made by Muslims during Ramadan. When I began reading the names of religious figures in the Muslim religion, Mackenzie responded with an intertextual connection.

Travis: Why are there so many people there?

Angela: Actually this picture is in Saudia Arabia. Many religions have a place they consider to be a holy place. Muslims gather in Mecca, their holy city. (A student sitting outside of the group offers information on Ramadan.)

Mackenzie: This reminds me of like The Ten Commandments. I watched the movie, there is like Moses.

Angela: Well (I read on onto p.32) *They include Moses, Abraham, and Jesus...* (Transcript Eleven, p. 4)

In addition to intertextual connections to movies, the children also made many references to things they had seen on television. As a teacher and a researcher I found the intertextual connections to television to be the most challenging. The children named movie titles they connected to which made it easy for me to look them up and confirm what they had said. When the children responded with intertextual connections to things they had seen on the television, they would speak in more general terms and just say something akin to “I saw it on a show.” During the read aloud of *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story From Africa* (Daly, 2006), Travis made the statement about West
Africa that “They eat a lot of gross foods there” (Transcript Four, p. 2). No students objected to his statement so I decided to probe him on his thinking.

Angela: Well we did learn in our continent study that people around the world eat food that is easily found where they live. And, sometimes it is the same as us and sometimes it’s not foods we are used to. What do you know about the foods there?

Travis: Well I watched a show that it tells what they eat and…

Angela: What did they say?

Travis: I think they eat snakes.

Angela: Maybe snakes?

Devon: Ooh.

Angela: When you say they, do you mean like everybody? Or that it is just a food that can be found there?

Travis: It can just be found there.

Angela: So not a common food?

Travis: No. (Transcript Four, p. 2)

This was the only intertextual connection to television that I was unsure about. I did not know what show he had seen. Personally, I was not an expert on the diet of West Africans. I was, however, uncomfortable with leaving a group of children under the impression that the people there ate gross food and a lot of snakes.

During the read aloud of China (Friedman, 2008), there was a section on celebrations. Chrissy responded with an intertextual connection to a television show stating that, “I watched a show about China and on that show they used dragons to celebrate” (Transcript Fourteen, p.2). Although I had not seen the same show as Chrissy,
our class had studied China during a social studies unit about Asia. When Chrissy had responded about the use of dragons, Travis confirmed this to be true because a guest speaker had taught them about the use of dragons during her presentation on the Chinese New Year.

There were other instances of intertextual connections to things viewed on television. During the read aloud of Afghanistan (Heinrichs, 2003), Chrissy noted that she thought she had only heard of Afghanistan from TV but did not offer any information of what she may have found out. During the read aloud of The Emperor’s Silent Army: Terracotta Warriors of Ancient China (O’Connor, 2002), Ethan and Travis responded with an intertextual connection about a story they had seen about a girl who tried to kill herself when the read aloud talked about death and burial.

Throughout the study students responded with intertextual responses. The children were trying to process new information by making connections to their prior knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) theorized that people developed tools of the mind to help them mediate their social world and to make meaning. The intertextual connections that the children made were a tool of the mind that they were using in order to make meaning of the new content they were encountering. As the students heard more global literature during the study, they began to make connections between the texts set in similar geographical locations. At the start of the study they were unsure about the Middle East. As the study progressed, they were recognizing and identifying features of the Middle Eastern setting. The connections the children were making informed their thinking and helped them to retain the new information.
The intertextual connections that presented the biggest challenge from my perspective, the teacher researcher, were the ones connected to media, especially when students would make a statement and were not clear about where they got the information. Due to the lack of clarity about where their information was coming from, I was unable to decide if what they were viewing was fact or fiction. To the students, whatever conclusions they had made upon their media viewing, to them was real. In the next section I will discuss children’s personal responses (Sipe, 2008) to the global literature.

**Personal Responses**

In this type of response conceptualized by Sipe (2008), children responded personally linking the literature to experiences in their own life. Children responding this way will often discuss their opinions of the character’s actions and how they would or would not behave the same way. I would add to Sipe’s definition of personal response that expressions of empathy are also a way that children respond personally. Sipe notes that personal responses stem from connections to one’s own life. Empathy involves perspective taking and the ability to connect to one’s own personal life (Wispé, 1987). In this section I will discuss the ways the children responded with personal responses to their lives and times when those personal responses demonstrated empathy toward the characters in the book.

**Personal responses to global literature.** Throughout the study the children made personal responses about their lives and asserted their opinions. During the read aloud of *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Heide & Gilliland, 2003), students made several personal
responses. In this story Ahmed had a daily job in the city delivering fuel. Devon responded personally to the idea of children having jobs. He was very surprised that Ahmed had a job and made a personal response stating his opinion.

Mackenzie: What’s his job?
Devon: He has a job!
Angela: Yes.
Devon: He’s a kid!
Angela: Yes.
Devon: Good thing I don’t live there. (Transcript Ten, p. 3).

As the reading progressed, Devon stated again that he was glad he did not live there. Travis and Mackenzie both made personal responses to the stoves in this story describing how they had personal experiences with nontraditional stoves from their field trip to the historical museum, or ones they had seen at a grandparent’s house.

As I continued to read aloud The Day of Ahmed’s Secret, the children chimed in with personal responses asserting opinions for how Ahmed and other city workers could do their jobs. Devon thought Ahmed would do better carrying his fuel load with a bigger basket. Mackenzie responded with an idea about where the water man in the story could carry his cups. Ethan responded during the reading with a personal response that he would prefer to have Ahmed’s job over some of the other city workers because he preferred the type of transportation that Ahmed used.

As shown in Table 2, Devon had a personal connection during the read aloud of Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa. In that example the students
had been trying to figure out what drink the main character had. Devon had shared how he thought it was a drink that he had had before and commenced to describe the drink’s color and flavor. He assured the group that it was a good drink that she had because he had had one like it. At the end of the read aloud of this story, Mackenzie had a personal response to the story as well. The students were curious about the characters used by Salma’s grandfather to scare away the wolf. The students were not sure if they should be scared or not because they were not sure what the character actually was. Ethan questioned how “the unknown” about the characters could be scary.

Ethan: How can that not be scary?

Mackenzie: There is a place I was told not to look into cause the Bogeyman would be in there.

Angela: I’ll look for some information and we’ll talk about this again. (Transcript Four, p. 8)

Mackenzie thought it might be scary because in her personal life she was warned to be scared of the Bogeyman, and the character in the story was a Bogeyman character.

While listening to Afghanistan (Heinrichs, 2003), some of the children responded with personal responses. When discussing Afghanistan, Mackenzie told the group that she had an uncle in the Marines and thought that he had been in Afghanistan. Chrissy made a personal response when there was a discussion in the book about droughts. With concern she informed the group that without water things would not live. She said she knew this because one time she had not had enough water and had become dehydrated.
During the read aloud of *China* (Friedman, 2008) the children made personal responses. Chrissy thought her art teacher would have liked the part in the book describing calligraphy prior to their calligraphy project.

Angela: Yes. (I read on) Many people in China enjoy drama...They dance and do amazing jumps. (I read on) Ancient Chinese painted watercolors...beautiful writing called calligraphy, an art too...

Chrissy: I bet Mrs. Long would have liked to see that when we made our art. (Transcript Fourteen, p. 4)

The book may have given the teacher some ideas or examples. When I read about the use of Mandarin oranges during Chinese New Year, Devon replied that he had eaten his Mandarin orange after our Chinese New Year celebration and that it was really good. During the reading the children made personal responses that were connections to their lives. In the next section I will discuss personal responses that showed empathy toward the characters in the stories.

**Personal responses displaying evidence of empathy.** Although there has been very little research done on children’s responses to global literature, one of the things that scholars have written about is the potential for global children’s literature to foster empathy in children toward other people around the world (Field, 2001; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010). In one of the studies that I reviewed (Louie, 2005) children responded empathetically toward the characters in the global literature being read. In this study there were times when the children made personal responses that were empathetic toward the characters in the stories.
The first expressions of empathy came during the read aloud of *Afghanistan* (Heinrichs, 2003). This nonfiction book included information on the country’s culture, geography, traditions, and religions. In the chapter titled “Centuries of Change,” the author provided information on the Taliban regime and the consequences of their rise to power on the Afghan people. This chapter also discussed the significance of September 11, 2001 and the military action taken by the United States. Mackenzie and Devon had a strong reaction to the Taliban discussed in the book. This book is a small nonfiction book that includes information on the people, geography, cultures, religions, and history of Afghanistan. Mackenzie and Devon’s responses were personal and emotional as they pondered the unfairness of the Taliban’s actions. When I was reading the end of the chapter that spoke about Afghanistan’s history, their responses showed empathy for the Afghan people as they protested the Taliban’s rules.

Angela: Okay, so we left off with a group called the Taliban taking over. (I turn the page and read on, on p. 22) They claimed to be religious…rules often had nothing to do with religion...

Mackenzie: Meanies…

Devon: Jerks…

Angela: I will read more about them. The Taliban regime outlawed music…and girls could not attend school…

Devon: What! (Transcript Eleven, p. 2).

Shortly after this reaction Mackenzie made an empathetic statement by describing how these restrictions might feel.

Angela: *These people changed life for the Afghan people.*
Mackenzie: It would be like someone coming in and when you could do something when you are twelve and them saying you can’t until you’re like fourteen. (Transcript Eleven, p. 3)

Mackenzie wanted to know if the Taliban were still alive. She also expressed that she thought Hamid Karzai, the man who became president after the collapse of the Taliban regime, seemed like a nice guy.

The other read aloud book that the children made empathetic responses to was *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007). This story was set in Pakistan, in a refugee camp for Afghan people. The two main characters were girls aged ten, a little older than the students participating in this study. The students showed immediate concern for the main character, Lina, and later the other character, Feroza.

Angela: Yes the pictures look like they were painted. (I turn the page and continue reading) *The crowd began to leave...Lina was ten, but she had not worn shoes for two years.*

Travis: Whoa.

Devon: What the…cuss. Two years dang. She has it bad.

Mackenzie: Wait, they’re like in the desert?

Travis: So they’re not like on the sidewalk.

Angela: No but have you ever walked on sand when it’s hot out?

Mackenzie: Gosh.

Chrissy: I have it’s hot. (Transcript Twelve, p. 2)

As the story continued, the children continued to react with empathy toward the two girls.

Angela: Yes could be. (I turn the page and read on). *The two girls greeted each other as they carried...they waited together in the long line.* (I pause and turn the page to read on) *Everyone in the camp was waiting for a new*
home...Feroza nodded and two tears ran down her cheek. I have only my grandmother now.

Devon: Not uh not uh her grandpa?

Angela: No just her grandmother.

Devon: Ahhh (sounds sad). (Transcript Twelve, p. 4)

In class and inside the study group, Devon talks about his grandparents. They are important figures in his life. During the read aloud of Egypt (Gray, 2002), he talked about his grandpa, whom he calls Poppa. His sad reaction to this book passage was sincere. In another response to the story, Mackenzie also reacts with sadness when one girl is chosen to go to America and not the other girl. Here Mackenzie proposes an idea to help the girls not be as sad.

Angela: (I continue reading)...My name is not there...You cannot go barefoot to America. Feroza gave Lina a hug.

Mackenzie: That’s sad.

Ethan: Yeah.

Mackenzie: They could use the sandals, well they don’t have to wear them. They could use them for like friendship.

Angela: Do you mean like you do with your friendship necklaces?

Mackenzie: Yeah.

At the end of the read aloud Devon and Mackenzie wanted to know more about the characters in the book. They wanted to know if they were real and if there really were people in this situation. Mackenzie indicated that she thought the author should write a follow up book that spoke about the experiences of refugees once they were resettled in new places. Concern for the refugees lingered at the end of the read aloud.
The children did not visibly respond empathetically to the other books, but these books had elements that seemed to resonate with the students. The information book dealt with current events, and the denial of things they enjoy such as music and school. The fiction story had two characters around their age who were living in miserable conditions all the while dealing with the loss of family and the uncertainty of their future. In the next section I will describe children’s responses as they relate to Sipe’s (2008) last two facets of literary understanding, transparent and performative responses.

**Transparent Responses**

Transparent responses to literature are when children respond to the reading as if they have entered the world of the text (Sipe, 2008). They sometimes talk back to the characters and engage with the text as if the characters can hear or see them. During the readings for this study, this response style occurred least frequently.

One student in the group, Devon, responded in this style. There were only a few occasions when Devon made transparent responses. This is a manner in which Devon responds to books in the whole class setting outside of this study group. One example of a transparent response occurred during the read aloud of *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* (Hickox, 1998). When the children began discussing the appearances of animals in some of the Cinderella stories, Devon began to make a whacking motion with his hands as he stared at the book and made a noise. At this point he appeared to be in the text, a part of the story. He was going after the fish. This reaction came when Devon made an intertextual connection to *Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* (Louie, 1982). In this book, read aloud to the entire class prior to the study, the
stepmom character in the story had killed the fish. When the fish appeared in *The Golden Sandal*, Devon stepped in and re-enacted this scene as if he were going after the fish in this book.

Another example of a transparent response from Devon occurred while I was reading aloud *Goha the Wise Fool* (Johnson-Davies, 2005). For a moment Devon entered the fight between the two robbers. He yelled at them to “come back” and made smacking noises as he swung his fists (Transcript Two, p. 5). As described in Table 2 from the introduction of the chapter, Devon also reacted transparently during the read aloud of *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa* (Daly, 2006) when he tried to make noises to distract the dog from his mission to do harm to the grandmother. He behaved as if he would really be able to disrupt the dog from completing his mission to do harm.

Transparent responses are not out of the ordinary for the students in this classroom. It is perhaps the physical setting of this study that may have reduced the possibilities of more responses of this nature. As shown by Devon, sometimes transparent responses are accompanied by physical responses. Instead of the large spacious carpet that the class typically uses for read alouds, the students in this study were seated in a more confined area at the table used for guided reading lessons. The last response style described by Sipe (2008) in his *five facets of literary understanding* are performative responses. Performative responses “…suggest that children are playfully manipulating the story for their own creative purposes…” (Sipe, 2008, p. 183). This style of response is typically accompanied by physical movement. The lack of space during the read alouds
may have influenced the children’s ability to respond in this manner. I found no evidence of this style of response during the study.

Four of Sipe’s (2008) *five facets of literary understanding* surfaced in many of the children’s responses to the global literature. Sipe’s categories were relevant to the ways in which the children responded. In the next section of this chapter I will shift toward the children’s responses and the evidence of global understanding in those responses. In their responses there was evidence of understanding, misunderstanding, and movement toward developing understanding.

### Evidence of Children’s Global Understanding

**Global Understanding**

At the time of this study in the primary grades in the state where this study took place, students have some exposure to global cultures through the social studies curriculum. Students from kindergarten to second grade study different aspects of the seven continents. The curriculum across these grade levels focuses on geography, economics, and cultural aspects of the people who inhabit the seven continents of the globe. Prior to the start of this study, four of the five participants were involved in a unit that focused on Asia. One student in our study, Devon, was not in my homeroom class, and was involved in a unit that focused on Europe. None of the participants in this study have traveled outside of the United States. Also, none of the participants’ parents or grandparents had recently immigrated to the United States from other parts of the world. Based on conversations with the students and their parents, their exposure to global
cultures has come from the boundaries of the United States via books, television, film, and encounters with foreigners within the United States.

During this study, children made responses to the literature that showed evidence of global understandings. These are understandings that they brought to the group from their previous learning. Some of the responses made demonstrated knowledge of the geographical features of the countries our stories were set in. For example, some of the children responded with prior knowledge about Egypt. During the read aloud of *The Day of Ahmed’s Secret* (Heide & Gilliland, 1990), a story set in Cairo, Egypt, the text mentions “the great river.” When I asked the group if they knew what the great river was, Travis and Ethan immediately said, “The Nile” (Transcript Ten, p. 5). During the read aloud of *Egypt* (Gray, 2002), I started by asking the children what they knew about Egypt. Immediately Chrissy and Mackenzie said that they knew there were mummies and pyramids in Egypt. Ethan also responded that Egypt was on the continent of Africa.

Aside from Egypt, the other understanding that surfaced in a response related to things found on the land came from Chrissy. Before I could ask what the students knew about Greece, Chrissy said, “I know something about Greece” (Transcript Thirteen, p. 1). She then proceeded to describe how they had a lot of ancient things there that are white, a reference to structures and statues.

In the children’s responses they also showed evidence of prior global knowledge about people. Their responses could be used by the teacher to assess the knowledge they had retained from their prior studies. The children continued to share their knowledge through the different read aloud discussions. During the read aloud of *Egypt* (Gray,
2002), Chrissy responded that people living in the desert used camels for transportation. During the read alouds of *Goha the Wise Fool* (Johnson-Davies, 2005) set in Egypt, and *China* (Friedman, 2008), the children responded with prior knowledge about the way people dress. While reading *Goha the Wise Fool*, Ethan knew that a turban was used as a hat. During the read aloud of *China*, Chrissy responded that she knew farmers sometimes wore hats on their heads while working.

In the prior discussion about *intertextual connections* (Sipe, 2008), I had expressed my concern as a teacher and researcher about the uncertainty of the children’s information they brought to the conversation when they made connections to texts that I had no knowledge of. There were intertextual responses to texts that showed evidence of global understanding that I was able to confirm. During the read aloud of *The Jade Stone: A Chinese Folktale* (Yacowitz, 2005), there was a Pekinese dog that appeared on every page. Mackenzie responded during the read aloud that she knew Pekinese dogs originated in China because she had read it in a book. Although she did not indicate what book she read this in, I was able to quickly confirm this fact from an online encyclopedia. During the read aloud of *Greece* (Petersen & Petersen, 2001), Ethan responded during the read aloud that he could bring in a book about constellations so the group could learn about Greek people, a reference to Greek Gods. Ethan brought in a book the next day about constellations that featured information about Greek Gods.

As mentioned, prior to the start of this study, four of the students participated in a social studies unit about Asia. There were times during the read alouds when children responded with global understandings from this unit. During their study of Asia, children
learned different greetings in different languages from various countries around Asia.

During the read aloud of *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007), the children recognized one of the greetings that we had learned.

Angela: Let’s read on and see. (I keep reading) …*She was thinner and darker...As-salaam alaykum*…

What does that mean?

Chrissy: Hello

Angela: And do you remember what language that is?

Chrissy, Travis, Mackenzie, and Ethan: Arabic! (Transcript Twelve, p. 2)

Devon is the only student who did not respond, but Devon was not part of our entire Asia study.

Although my students focused on Asia, the students in my class and Devon’s class all participated in a presentation on Chinese New Year. A parent of one of my former students comes in each year to do this presentation. For her privacy I will refer to her as Mrs. Smith. During the read aloud of *China* (Friedman, 2008) the students responded with information that they remembered from this presentation. There were times when I was reading that they shouted out Mrs. Smith’s name to acknowledge that they knew the information that I was reading from the presentation. There were also times when they spoke about the things they knew from the presentation.

Angela: What are those?

Devon: They’re for money!

Angela: Yes Mrs. Smith showed us those for?

Chrissy: Chinese New Year.
Travis: Maybe that is why they call them Mandarin oranges.

Angela: Maybe, there is a Mandarin region, and yes Mrs. Smith brought oranges.

Devon: I ate mine, it was really good. (Transcript Fourteen, p. 5)

The children did enter this study with some prior global understandings. They knew information about geography, people, and culture. I am not sure if this knowledge would have surfaced in the classroom absent from the conversations that occurred during these read alouds. In addition to global understandings, the children also responded with misunderstandings. In the next section I will discuss evidence of misunderstandings from the children’s responses and times when the children showed evidence of resolving their misunderstandings and turning them into global learning.

**Global Misunderstanding**

There were responses made throughout the study that showed evidence of children’s misunderstandings. Sometimes the children would ask questions. At times when I would ask the children questions about what they knew, there would be silence. It was only through the responses and questions that I was able to get information on what the children misunderstood and what they wanted to know. I often wondered what they were thinking in their moments of silence. Regardless of the way the students responded, when a misconception or question arose, I did my best to guide the children toward understanding.

Every time I started a read aloud set in a country we had not read about before, I always started by asking the students what they knew about the country. Most of the
time, I was met with silence. The first book I read aloud was set in the Middle East.

When I asked the children what they knew about the Middle East, Mackenzie was the only student to respond by noting that it was “east” (Transcript One, p.1). At the start of the next read aloud I provided the children with a map of the Middle East. When I started reading off the names of the countries on the map, Mackenzie expressed a misunderstanding about the country Turkey.

Devon: (Points to map)- Why do they call that one Turkey?

Angela: I have actually been to that country Devon and they are quick to tell you they are not an animal (Devon giggles). I forget how they actually say the name but it does not sound like the animal. Turkey is a little easier for us to say.

Mackenzie: Um I always thought that like Thanksgiving was celebrated there.

Angela: Well they do not celebrate Thanksgiving in Turkey. That is something that we do here because of our history.

Mackenzie: Whatttt… (Transcript Two, p. 1)

After further review of the map, Ethan showed evidence of understanding by connecting the location to the read aloud. While reading *Goha the Wise Fool* (Johnson-Davies, 2005), Ethan pointed to the map of the Middle East and noted, after hearing the illustrators were from Egypt and looking at the illustrations, that the Middle East was the likely setting.

The only time I read a book aloud, and asked the children about the setting and was not met by silence was during the read aloud of *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story From Africa* (Daly, 2006). Right away the children responded with a lot of misunderstandings about South Africa when I told them the author was South African.
Although the book is not set in South Africa but rather Ghana, we got side tracked by a discussion about South Africa when the children began to make assumptions based on the author’s origins. The following are examples of our conversation from the transcripts after showing them the book cover and telling them that the author of the book was from South Africa.

Mackenzie: That it’s hot there.

Angela: What?

Mackenzie: It’s hot there.

Angela: Hot there.

Mackenzie: There are lots of jungles.

Angela: Okay they adapt to the weather. Are there any people in South Africa that do not have black skin? (All students are quiet). I am just trying to find out what you know. I can help you answer the questions I am asking. (Students are still quiet and a student outside the group interrupts about the bathroom). Are there any other kinds of people that you know of?

Mackenzie: No (Transcript Four, p. 1)

The children immediately assumed that since this country was on the continent of Africa, it was a hot jungle location with all Black people in it. Before I continued the read aloud I pulled the globe down off a shelf and explained that South Africa had times during the year when it was cold and that the country was not filled with jungles. I also told them that there was a large White population of mostly Dutch heritage. I was met with some surprise. Even though the children were nodding and responding with agreement, when I
again mentioned the author’s name, Devon said, “He’s not White” (Transcript Four, p. 3).

I told Devon that he was White and that I would show a picture of him. I later pulled the author Niki Daly’s picture up on the internet for the children to see. When I proceeded to read the dust jacket that described this book as being set in West Africa, there were no more discussions about the geography until we tried to find out the origins of the Bogeyman character in the book.

The beginning of the read alouds were not the only places where the children responded with misunderstandings. As we continued the reading of *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story From Africa* (Daly, 2006), the children had lots of questions about the Bogeyman character. I did a generic search of the Bogeyman and Africa since the book did not give very specific information about this character. I read aloud information about the Bogeyman character and its origins that I found on the internet site Wikipedia. At the end of this discussion the children began expressing what they wanted to learn more about. During this discussion Ethan responded with a misunderstanding about China. In the following excerpt from the transcripts, Travis attempts to clarify Ethan’s misunderstanding:

> Angela: As I look ahead, what kind of books do you want me to be looking for? Think about things you want to learn.

> Ethan: I want to know if there is a Bogeyman in China…because they seem to be very nice and peaceful people.

> Travis: They can’t be peaceful, I mean there is like a million people living there.

> Angela: Seems like we need some more information on China. There is nothing here on this print out about China. But I will look some more. (Transcript Five, p. 2)
The idea that Ethan brought forth that the people of China were peaceful was a difficult misunderstanding to clarify. On one hand I did not want Ethan to think that the Chinese were all happy and peaceful all the time, but on the other hand I did not want him to go to the other extreme and develop a poor opinion of the Chinese. I had a difficult time finding nonfiction books for this age group that dealt with some of China’s history and would show that the people of China were/are not peaceful all the time. The book *China* (Friedman, 2008) was one of the simpler juvenile information books that I was able to locate that spoke to some of the restrictions placed upon the Chinese people that may possibly cause them to be unhappy or peaceful all the time. It was not until this read aloud, our last read aloud, that Ethan responded that perhaps the people were not always happy.

Some of the misunderstandings expressed by students were resolved by outside materials, conversations, or future readings. Some misunderstandings were resolved during the read aloud where they surfaced. One example occurred during the read aloud of *Greece* (Petersen & Petersen, 2008). In this excerpt I use the next pages in the book to resolve a misunderstanding expressed by Ethan:

Ethan: Wait Mrs. Rietschlin I have a question. Why were most Greek people during that time naked?

Angela: (he is looking at the picture on page 15 that depicts the naked torso up of Zeus). Well Ethan, I am sure you have seen art like this statue or pictures. Artists liked to capture the human body, but I don’t want you to be confused that people were possibly walking around naked. (I flip ahead to pp.19 & 20 to pictures showing Greek military outfits and togas) These are pictures showing ancient times. These are some of the styles of clothes you may have seen.
Ethan: Oh

Angela: Yeah, so sometimes it was minimal clothing at times, but they were covering up. (I turn the page to p.16 and read on). Crete is the largest of the Greek Isles…but lots of fishers and farmers. (Transcript Thirteen, pp. 3-4)

Although I could not in the moment vouch for all the clothing styles of that era in Greece, I knew that the majority of people were not walking around naked and did not want Ethan to hold onto that misunderstanding.

The read alouds in this study led to responses that showed both global understandings and misunderstandings. In the absence of these read alouds, I am not sure how these understandings and misunderstandings would have come to light. The atmosphere of the read alouds and the conversations that came with them allowed for conversations that would not occur in many teaching scenarios. Learning about global cultures at the time of this study was a learning goal of the primary social studies curriculum in the state where this research was conducted.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter children responded to global children’s literature using response styles that children have been observed to use when responding to both fiction and information books that are culturally generic. The children showed evidence of both global understandings and misunderstandings as they responded to the content of the books. In their quest to understand the books, the children were observed to employ reading comprehension strategies that they had learned prior to the study in their reading instruction. In the next chapter, I will discuss conclusions about the beneficial uses of global children’s literature in the classroom as evidenced in this study.
Chapter 5
Summary and Discussion

This study was designed to explore children’s responses to global children’s literature. I began this study with an interest and a desire to know more about how children would respond to this genre as well as the potential uses for this body of literature in the elementary classroom. The two questions that directed this study were: In one second grade classroom, how does a focus group of children respond to global children’s literature shared in picturebook read alouds? What evidence of global learning do children offer?

This study is an important contribution to the field of education. One reason, as discussed in the previous chapters, is that a very limited amount of scholarly research exists concerning children’s interactions with global children’s literature as well as scholarly research documenting the actual use of global children’s literature in the elementary classroom. At the time of this study I was only able to locate four studies that documented the responses of children from the United States to global literature (Buck, 2009; Keis, 2006; Louie, 2005; Massey, Weeks, & Druin, 2005). None of these studies captured the responses of elementary students in the classroom.

Aside from the limited amount of studies documenting students’ responses to global literature, this study is also important because of the information that the
students’ responses provided about the potential benefits from using this body of literature in the elementary classroom. During the literature review, I encountered scholarly work that advocated for the use of global literature in the classroom citing many potential benefits for using this genre with children. One benefit cited was to promote empathy development in children for the purpose of helping students relate better to cultural outsiders in order to meet the goals of multicultural and global education (Barnett, 1987; Davis Jr. 2001; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Louie, 2005). One important finding in this study is that children at the elementary level are capable of expressing empathy in response to global literature toward people from other cultures. In this study children made responses that displayed empathy toward the global characters in realistic fiction books as well as real people in information books.

Empathy development is described by Lehman, Freeman, and Scharer (2010) as being an element to “pave the way for moral development” noting that “elementary children are developing their sense of right and wrong” (p. 7). When the children encountered the cruel restrictions imposed by the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan during the read aloud of Afghanistan (Heinrichs, 2003), they discussed the fairness of the rules. Lehman, Freeman, and Scharer (2010) assert that “Global books offer rich opportunities for young readers to vicariously experience ethical problems and explore issues of justice and equity” (p. 7). Although the read aloud of Afghanistan was the only text that presented the students with contemporary issues of social injustice, their responses
indicate the potential for moral development with more exposure to quality global literature.

Another benefit of using global literature cited by scholars was to meet curricular goals in the social studies and language arts curriculum (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Gandy, 2007; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Lintner, 2010). In this study there was evidence of the children making responses connected to their social studies and language arts curriculum. Finally, scholars cited the emotional development of diverse students as being a beneficial use of global literature in the classroom (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008; Bishop, 1994; Cox & Galda, 1990; Merryfield, 1996; Wan, 2006). None of the participants in this study were from a culture outside of the United States. Therefore there was no evidence documenting the emotional development of diverse students.

In the current study children responded to the global literature in similar ways that children have been documented responding to culturally generic children’s literature, as well as the ways children have responded to multicultural children’s literature set inside the United States. Children responded to global children’s literature in ways that showed some understanding of global cultures as well as in ways that demonstrated some misunderstandings about global cultures. As the children expressed misunderstandings, their attempts to understand were documented. The article by Buck (2009), the only study to document responses by upper elementary students outside the classroom, showed evidence of the students verbalizing misunderstandings of global cultures. In Buck’s study there was no evidence presented of the children ever reaching clarity on their misunderstandings, nor was there evidence shown of an adult providing guidance to help
the children reach any correction to their misunderstandings. As explained previously, a concern that I had with the Buck study was that the children’s misunderstandings seemed to be downplayed as not being of concern to the researcher. Buck, also showed a lack of preparation for using her books. She referred to the Afghan people twice in her article as Afghani, the word used for their currency. In my current study there was evidence of the children having misunderstandings and of children trying to reach understanding through conversations. The teacher/researcher provided students more information to help them resolve their misunderstandings. When I was unclear about something I told the students. Although there was no way to know for sure whether the children completely resolved their misunderstandings, there was at least an attempt on the part of myself as both the teacher and the researcher to not leave the children with incorrect information on the cultures being discussed.

In the next section I will summarize more fully the ways children responded to the global literature. I will also summarize the evidence of global learning from the children’s responses as they worked through their misunderstandings.

Summary of the Results

**Question one: Children’s responses to global literature.** In this study I documented the responses of five second grade students in a predominately middle to upper middle class school district in the Midwest. The five students in this study consisted of three boys and two girls. No students in this study had any immediate family members born outside of the United States and none had ever traveled outside of the United States. Throughout the course of the study, no student verbalized having any contact with a person from another
culture. The students’ knowledge of global cultures came from secondary sources such as children’s literature, and classroom lectures from their first and second grade classrooms during studies of the seven continents, an objective of both the first and second grade social studies curriculum where this study took place.

In this study, I discovered that many of the children’s responses to global children’s literature fit response styles conceptualized by Lawrence Sipe in his comprehensive study of children’s responses to culturally generic picturebooks (Sipe, 2008). In his study, Sipe created categories to describe children’s responses to literature called the five facets of literary understanding. Of these five facets of literary understanding, the children in this study often responded in ways that matched four of those response styles.

The first, analytical responses, is one of Sipe’s (2008) five facets that the children showed evidence of using. In this response style the children were doing what the term suggests, i.e. analyzing the text. In this classroom the children made responses that showed analysis of the story elements of the fiction texts. While analyzing the author’s choices for delivery of the story elements, setting, characters and plot, the children did at times rely on their use of Sipe’s second facet, intertextual responses. The children used text to text connections to support their analysis. They critiqued and analyzed the story elements when the global children’s stories did not match, or disrupted their knowledge of the same types of stories that were told from a perspective more traditional in the United States. Examples included the children’s responses to global literature that were Cinderella-type stories, and from the book that they heard was a Little Red Riding Hood-
type story. During the read aloud of *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa* (Daly, 2006), the children repeatedly referred to the antagonist as a wolf even though he was shown as a dog and referred to as a dog. The dog character did not fit with what they knew about the character from their previous reading of Little Red Riding Hood books. As they began to acknowledge that the antagonist was a dog, they commenced to critique the character. One student, Devon, was documented critiquing the illustration of the dog saying, “What the heck is that? She/he’s got yellow and red” (Transcript Four, p. 3). Devon did not appear to be okay with the portrayal of the dog.

In addition to the analysis of the story elements, the children’s analytical responses were critiques of the books’ genres. The children in this study had studied the characteristics of folktales just before the start of the data collection process. Prior to the start of the study, during the read alouds of folktales, the children used a check off list to evaluate how many folktale features the book being read aloud contained. The children made responses during the read alouds in which they discussed the characteristics of the books that were typically found in folktales. Examples given were from the read alouds of *The Jade Stone: A Chinese Folktale* (Yacowitz, 2005) and *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* (Hickox, 1998). Mackenzie very confidently confirmed that *The Jade Stone* was a folktale when she reminded me that it fit the criteria from our check off list that we used during group read alouds of other folktales.

Aside from making analytical responses about the story elements and genre, the children also made analytical responses in order to comprehend the texts more fully. The children in this study had learned different comprehension strategies (Harvey & Goudvis,
2007) during their whole group language arts instruction prior to the start of this study. During the read alouds in this study, the children used the comprehension strategies of questioning and inferring while making analytical responses. There were times when my questioning prompted them to do some inferring, as we would normally do in class, and there were times when the children would make inferences on their own. They used the strategy of questioning independently without my prompting, particularly when the read aloud was of an information book. Scholars studying children’s responses to information books advocate for a read aloud structure that allows for children to respond and ask questions so that they can make sense of the content (Maduram, 2000; Mathis, 2001; Pappas, et al., 2003; Varelas & Pappas; 2006; Varelas, et al., 2007).

Although the cultures and content of many of the books were outside of the children’s schema, this was not a deterrent to their desire to understand. In fact, the lack of familiarity seemed to fuel their desire to understand as evidenced in their willingness to respond with inferences and questions. This may be an indication of elementary school students’ capabilities for using global literature that a teacher may believe to be out of their reach, at least with regard to content. Analytical responses (Sipe, 2008) were one of the ways the children responded to the global children’s literature.

Another one of Sipe’s (2008) facets of literary understanding found in the children’s responses were intertextual responses. In these responses children connected the story being read to other texts they were familiar with. These texts were in the form of other books and media seen on television or in film. The children made intertextual connections to the content shared during a presentation by a parent volunteer that
included a read aloud, artifacts from China, and the use of charts, all of which were about the Chinese New Year. Researchers studying children’s responses to information books noted large amounts of intertextual responses in their studies (Maduram, 2000; Pappas, et al., 2003; Varelas & Pappas; 2006; Varelas, et al., 2007). These researchers included personal experiences as intertextual, something I did not do in this study. Although the interaction during the presentation of the Chinese New Year was a personal experience, the children’s intertextual connections were in response to the texts Mrs. Smith provided and not the interaction portions of the presentation where they engaged in make believe play.

The children made references to Mary Pope Osborne’s Magic Treehouse series in their intertextual responses. Osborne’s books mix enough nonfiction with her fictional characters and storyline that the children drew on the nonfiction pieces in her books to try and make sense of the learning in the global literature being used. At one point in the study Ethan kept his Magic Treehouse Books close at hand in the event he needed them for a reference.

The children’s intertextual connections to media on television as well as film were responses that created a dilemma for me as both a researcher and a teacher. There were times when the children made intertextual connections to media that I had not seen, or could not locate due to a lack of information, so that I was not able to confirm or refute whether what they saw was true. One example was Travis’ insistence that people in West Africa ate gross foods. He was unable to completely articulate what he meant by gross foods. I had not seen the show he was talking about and was not sure what he considered
to be gross. I was concerned after this conversation that students would be left with a poor impression about the West African diet. The children’s connections to media taught me that challenging children’s intertextual connections to media can be difficult if you do not have enough information to review the media source. I did question Tyler about his opinion and generalization about the food in order to prevent the children from harboring a misunderstanding. The children used intertextual responses to make connections to the books being read, as well as a way to confirm or disprove their thinking.

Another facet of Sipe’s (2008) literary understanding that showed up in the children’s responses was personal responses. In this type of response children respond to literature by linking the text to their personal experiences in life. According to Sipe’s (2008) description, children will link their own actions to the characters’ and describe how they may or may not have acted based on their own experience. During the read aloud of The Day of Ahmed’s Secret (Heide & Gilliland, 2003), Devon had a strong reaction to the idea that the main character, a child, had a job and a rather laborious job at that. As a child in the United States, child labor was not part of Devon’s experience.

In addition to Sipe’s (2008) description of personal responses, I included displays of empathy as a way that children responded personally to the global literature being read aloud. Although Sipe did not speak specifically to empathy, he did speak to the nature of connecting to one’s personal life in this style of response. Empathy involves perspective taking and connecting back to one’s personal experiences (Wispé, 1987). In this study children responded with displays of empathy toward fictional characters in some of the stories as well as real people in the information books. Children in the study responded
empathetically toward the citizens living under the rule of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as they listened to the read aloud of the information book, *Afghanistan* (Heinrichs, 2003). They discussed the unfairness of the Taliban’s rules and how it may feel if they were living under the same restrictions. During the read aloud of the realistic fiction book, *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007), the children made empathetic responses concerning the feelings of the two main characters, and responses about the conditions in which the two main characters were living. The two main characters were portrays to be around the ages of the children in this study group which added to their personal connection. The development of empathy toward other people around the world has been cited as a particular need in promoting global harmony and peace as well as a need in meeting the goals of global education (Cress & Holm, 2000; Field, 2001; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Savage & Savage, 1993; Wasta, 2010). I will talk more about this in the discussion section.

The last response style used by the students in this study, *transparent responses*, is the fourth *facet of literary understanding* described by Sipe (2008). In this style of response children respond to the text as if for a moment in time they have temporarily entered the world of the text. At times, children engage with the story characters as if they can actually hear them. Over the course of this study, this is the response style for which there was the least amount of evidence. Devon is the only student who showed evidence of this response style. Devon is a student who is not a very shy or reserved child. Transparent responses like *performative responses* (the only of the five facets not
to appear in the transcripts) often are accompanied by movement. The limited physical space where this case study group met may have influenced the children’s ability to respond to the stories more physically. It is possible that if the read alouds had been done in a more open space, the children may have responded with more transparent and performative responses. Maduram (2000) described creative and imaginary interactions with the real content in her work with responses to information books as being important in a child’s ability to arrive at understandings of the new information in the texts.

**Question two: Evidence of global learning.** At the start of this study I wanted to know how a focus group of students in one second grade classroom would respond to global children’s literature shared in picturebook read alouds. Analytical responses, intertextual responses, personal responses, and transparent responses were all ways that the children responded to the global children’s literature. Next, I wanted to know what evidence of global learning children would offer. In this study I found that children showed evidence of prior knowledge of global information as well as evidence of global misunderstandings. Through the children’s discussions and interactions with each other and the global literature, they showed evidence of global learning.

Prior to the start of this research the children had participated in studies of the seven continents in both the first and second grade. These studies focused on both geography and aspects of global cultures and human ways of life such as: clothing, food, shelter, language, celebrations, people and economics so the students did enter into this study with some prior information. Some of their responses, as discussed in chapter four, showed evidence of prior knowledge about the following: geographical features of other
countries, landmarks, architecture, people, transportation, and traditional dress. In these responses the children offered evidence of global learning from instruction that occurred before participating in this study.

During the responses in which misunderstandings were expressed, the children offered evidence of global learning that occurred during the study. In order to get at children’s misunderstandings, there were times when I asked questions. I did this when I was met with silence. An example occurred prior to a read aloud set in the Middle East when I asked the students what they knew about this region. The children expressed very little knowledge about the region. At this point I brought in maps and discussed the geography of the Middle East. Later in the study during the read aloud of *Goha the Wise Fool* (Johnson-Davies, 2005), a student was able to identify the setting as the Middle East, supporting his conclusion by citing features that we had discussed together when we looked at maps as well as the fact that the illustrators were from Egypt, a country we had pointed out on the map.

The children expressed misunderstandings in the absence of my questioning. They began verbalizing misunderstandings about South Africa when I told them that the authors of one of our books, Niki Daly, was South African. One student began describing South Africa as hot with a lot of jungles. Another student described all the people as having black skin. After this discussion, I brought out the globe and discussed the seasons of South Africa so that they were not making assumptions that all countries in Africa were hot with jungles. I also pulled up a picture of Niki Daly on the internet so that the
children would understand that not all people in countries on the continent of Africa have in Travis’ words “black skin” (Transcript Four, p. 1).

Another misunderstanding expressed by a student during a read aloud was that all people in China are peaceful. When Ethan expressed this misunderstanding, another student, Travis, used what he knew about China to challenge Ethan’s assumption. Travis challenged Ethan to consider the size of China’s population and whether it was possible to be peaceful all the time with that amount of people living in that space. After a read aloud of an information book, China (Friedman, 2008), Ethan was able to show global learning by expressing that an examination of China’s history alone demonstrates that, people were not peaceful all the time.

During the read aloud of the book, Greece (Petersen & Petersen, 2008), a misunderstanding was expressed about Greek clothing in the past. Ethan had inferred, because of the statues showing people either completely nude or partially dressed, that people during this period were possibly walking around naked. This misunderstanding came to the surface in his response. Through discussion about the information in the rest of the book, Ethan was able to understand that people were wearing some type of clothing and not walking around naked.

It was through conversations during the read alouds that children’s knowledge about global cultures and misunderstandings about global cultures came to the surface. It was also through conversations between the students and I, and the students with each other that understandings were developed. Without listening to responses and stopping to discuss the content, the children’s confusions would have gone unknown. There also
would have been no way for me as a teacher and a researcher to know what global learning was actually occurring. In this study children’s responses to global literature showed the word choices in which they would respond, as well as insight into their prior knowledge and the learning that they did during read alouds. In the next section, I will discuss the implications of this research.

**Discussion**

**Purpose for using global literature.** The current study offers new contributions to the field of education because for the first time, at the time of this study, elementary children’s responses to global literature have been documented within the natural setting of an elementary classroom. Many researchers have advocated for the use of this literature and now this study confirms many of the potential benefits of using global literature in the elementary classroom advocated for by those researchers (Cress & Holm, 2000; Field, 2001; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Fry, 2009; Gandy, 2007; Kurkjian & Livingston, 2007; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Savage & Savage, 1993; Wasta, 2010). This study targets an audience of readers that are practicing teachers. Teachers can see through this study that the benefits advocated for by researchers, can happen through use of this literature in the classroom. One of the benefits of using global literature cited by researchers is to support empathy development of elementary students toward other citizens of the world. Savage and Savage (1993) assert that “children’s literature helps students become vicariously involved with the lives of people who are different from themselves and to develop empathy with and an understanding of values, beliefs, and aspirations of people and cultures” (unpaged). Cress and Holm (2000) note that the
primary years are the appropriate time to work on empathy when, “children develop the ability to empathize with a person who is not present” (p.594). Books provide a venue in which the characters are not physically present in the classroom. In this study the children became vicariously involved with the two main characters, Lina and Feroza, from the fiction book *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (Williams & Mohammed, 2007). They responded to the girls’ situation with displays of empathy. The children also displayed empathy for real people in the information book, *Afghanistan* (Heinrichs, 2003).

Another potential benefit for using global children’s literature cited by researchers is to meet curricular goals in social studies (de Groot, 2006; Field, 2003; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Fry, 2009; Kelley, 2008; Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010; Lintner, 2010; Mathis, 2011; Savage & Savage, 1993; Wasta, 2010). Children’s literature is noted as a valuable tool for social studies instruction because of its easy-to-understand format and ability to attract and hold the attention of children (Davis & Palmer, 1992; Kelley, 2008). The illustrations in children’s picturebooks attract children’s attention and spark their interest in what they are seeing in a way that textbooks may not (Lintner, 2010). The children in this study showed evidence of learning objectives of the elementary social studies curriculum through their work with the global children’s literature. In the children’s responses they used information and shared learning about geography, language, people, dress, celebrations, art and food. In order to develop a deeper understanding of global cultures, information texts used along with realistic fiction and folktales are thought to give students a deeper understanding of global cultures in social studies instruction (Kelley, 2008).
In addition to empathy development and meeting the curricular goals in social studies, global children’s literature is cited as a valuable educational tool for meeting goals in the language arts curriculum. In the current study the children showed evidence in their responses of using comprehension strategies (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007) that they learned during whole group reading instruction prior to the start of this study. These books allowed them to practice using their comprehension strategies as they came into contact with content outside of their schema. Aside from comprehension strategies, the children showed evidence of meeting language arts curricular goals in responses that target the following objectives: using the features of information books, describing different genres and describing the features of fiction books.

**Reader response theory.** One of the potential appeals for using global children’s literature cited in the first chapter was the potential for what this body of literature could do for the individual reader based on the ideas put forth by Rosenblatt (1938/1995) in her work on transactional theory which has come to be known as *reader response theory*. At the heart of reader response theory is the *transactional theory*. The transactional theory is the idea of the reader making meaning through the transaction with the text. The meaning made by the reader is dependent on the individual’s personal connections to the text because readers bring their own lived experiences to the reading. Also the transaction is dependent on the stance the reader adopts when reading.

In Rosenblatt’s (1938/1995) theory, she describes the reader as reading for efferent reasons (to seek information) or for aesthetic reasons (for enjoyment). In many classrooms, children are not given a chance to read for aesthetic reasons (Cox & Many,
Rosenblatt (1994) described readers in the aesthetic stance as being more engaged with the work since they are transacting with the text on their own terms. In this study the students were allowed to experience the texts aesthetically. The children were only directed to listen for information in the event that there was a misunderstanding. By conducting the read alouds in a way that left the children to experience the reading aesthetically, they were engaged with the stories and responded freely. It was through these open discussions that I was able to gather information about their global learning as well as to get to know their misunderstandings.

A common thread through the scholarly work I have reviewed is the push to ensure response, or discussion time, when using global literature in the classroom as well as during culturally generic picture book read alouds (Cress & Holm, 2000; Copenhaver, et al. 2009; Enciso, 1994; Mathis, 2001, Kelley, 2008; Field, 2003; Davis & Palmer, 1992; Pappas, et al., 2003; Sipe, 2008; Varelas & Pappas; 2006; Varelas, et al., 2007). Discussions were described as being particularly valuable in the case of multicultural and global literature as well as during the read alouds of information books because the content is often outside of the young elementary students’ schema (Mathis, 2001; Pappas, et al. 2003; Varelas & Pappas, 2006; Varelas, et al., 2007). Mathis (2001) in her discussion about reader response theory and the importance of classroom discussions about literature, states that:

…stories are a means of response--a vehicle for interpreting the literature we read and a structure for sharing with others. That response is deepened by discussions
in which the audience hears our stories and we hear the stories of others, understanding each layer of meaning as it is exposed. (p. 155).

The current study reaffirms the value of discussion and response time during read alouds. Through response time and discussion time the children were able to share their knowledge, ask questions, confirm or disprove their theories, and work towards understandings. This study also affirms the importance of allowing children to engage with the literature aesthetically. This does not mean that there is no direction to the reading. Through aesthetic reading the children were highly engaged with the text as shown by their discussions. The children were given direction to pay attention for efferent reasons when the need arose.

The children in this current study provided evidence of how children respond to global children’s literature. They provided evidence of global learning that can occur during picturebook read aloud discussions. The children in the current study also showed evidence of curricular learning through the use of global children’s literature as a classroom tool.

**The teacher’s role in the classroom.** The teacher’s decision making for what literature will be used and how it will be used is essential in maximizing students’ learning in the classroom. As discussed in relation to reader response theory, the first decision is whether the text will be used for efferent or aesthetic reasons. Also important, as discussed, is the teacher’s decision about how much time he or she will allow for discussion.

In addition to how the books will be used, and the time allotted for classroom discussions, the teacher’s role during those discussions is important. Research regarding
children’s responses to literature advocates for the teacher to assume the role of facilitator (Copenhaver, et al. 2009; Pappas, et al., 2003; Sipe, 2008; Varelas & Pappas; 2006; Varelas, et al., 2007) guiding the children through their discussions, but not dominating them. If the teacher dominates the discussion, the children may not respond, which in the case of using literature with characters who may seem different from what the students know or have seen, may result in students not revealing any misunderstandings that they may hold (Copenhaver, 2000; Copenhaver-Johnson, et al., 2007). In the current study, it was through discussion in which the teacher/researcher stepped back that children revealed some of their cultural misunderstandings.

Teacher as facilitator may be misunderstood as the teacher allowing students to have unstructured control over the entire interaction. The concern I had with the Buck (2009) study was that the children appeared to be left with lingering misunderstandings. The conversation seemed to lack needed intervention from the teacher.

The teacher in the role of facilitator is not akin to just monitoring turn taking and allowing conversations to run amuck. The teacher as facilitator has the responsibility of scaffolding (Bodrova & Leong, 1996/2007) the children’s learning because she, as a trained educator and an older person with more life experience, is the more knowledgeable person in the classroom. Bodrova and Leong (1996/2007) note that a potential result of the teacher scaffolding learning is that this can lead to, “…relatively errorless learning because, in principle, just the right type and amount of help are provided at each point for the pupil to succeed” (p.136). This study showed the importance of the teacher’s role in the scaffolding of learning. Although the children
were given the opportunity to request books, and were given the freedom to respond when they wanted, there was planning involved to enhance their learning. For example, information books were used to enhance the children’s understandings of the settings of most of the fiction texts. When misunderstandings came to light in the responses, extra information was provided such as maps, pictures, and additional reading, and the children were guided toward clarity on their confusions. In the next section I will discuss the limitations of this study and the implications for further research

**Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

**The study’s limitations.** This study is an example of what children might do with global children’s literature. I observed a small group of second grade students in a school district that has a school population of mostly middle to upper middle class children. Ideally I would have liked to have included the entire class in this study, but time constraints and the feasibility of trying to manage all of the data as a first time solo researcher and teacher would have made it impractical. There are children in the class who have direct connections to global cultures. Their perspectives would have offered the insight of cultural insiders for many of the texts that were used in the study, but I wonder how their voices may have influenced the direction of the conversations as well as how their voices would have influenced the global learning that took place. I also wonder about what this literature would have done for students from global cultures on a social and emotional level since so much of the scholarly research I reviewed said that global literature had the potential to be affirming and to promote positive self-image among diverse students (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008; Aram & Aviram, 2009; Keis, 2006). Although I wonder what the
data would have shown with more voices included in the research, a small case study was appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the study (Yin, 1984).

Aside from the number of subjects being included in the research as a potential limitation, the length of time over which data was collected may also be a potential shortcoming. Although I borrowed from ethnographic methods (Duranti, 1997), a traditional ethnography is conducted over a long period of time with some noting that a year is often considered to be too short (Spindler & Hammond, 2000). The data for this study was collected over a three month period, a constriction of working on a school schedule as a teacher/researcher. As a fulltime teacher and a fulltime doctoral candidate, it was not feasible to collect data at another venue.

Although limiting to my choice of where to conduct my research as well as the amount of time I could spend collecting data, I wanted to research inside my room because I felt there were advantages to this situation. I spent a lot of time with the children in this study and knew them very well. The children also felt comfortable around me which made getting started right away easy. I do know there may be potential limitations arising from the fact that I am researching my own students. I did take measures to keep my subjectivity in check through journaling and the triangulation of the data. Duranti (1997) explains that no one is completely able to be objective all the time.

The small number of subjects included in the research, the short period of data collection, and working as a practitioner researcher are all possible limitations to this current study. Although there were limitations to this study, there was still beneficial
information provided about the way children respond to global children’s literature as well as the global learning they attain.

**Implications from the study.** Global education is a developing field. As discussed in the literature review, there are many common goals between multicultural education and global education. Global education borrows many tenets from multicultural education and applies them to the global community (Kysilka, 2009). Global education stresses the interconnectedness we have with the world outside of our own geographical borders. Both fields have the goal of transforming citizens into productive individuals who are capable of living harmoniously with others (Bourke, 2009).

Banks (2001/2006, 2004), a leading researcher in the field of multicultural education, has written extensively on designing school curriculum that enhances children’s understanding of others, and a curriculum that promotes social action. Global children’s literature, as shown in this study, can be used to deliver curriculum using the *transformation approach* and the *social action approach*, the two higher levels of curricular approach described by Banks.

Banks (2001/2006, 2004) describes the transformation approach as infusing the perspectives of others into the curriculum instead of adding it on as an extra with the majority of curriculum being from the White European perspective. At the time of this study, the United States was and currently is involved in an ongoing war on terror that has placed our military mostly in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this study the students were exposed to the perspective of those affected by the war on terror in the Middle East through the eyes of the characters of Feroza and Lina in *Four Feet: Two Sandals*.
(Williams & Mohammed, 2007). The children in this study began to empathize with these characters as they made empathetic responses about their situation. This story offered them the ability to see life from the perspective of the people living where our war is taking place. Mackenzie was so moved by the story of the refugees that she expressed the hope that the author would write a follow up book so that she could find out what happens to the girls once they are relocated. Further research on children’s responses to global literature using books that infuse other perspectives on contemporary issues would offer more insight of the beneficial use of global literature in curriculum implementation to meet the goals of global and multicultural education.

Banks (2001/2006, 2004) describes the social action approach, the highest level of curriculum delivery, as using the tenets of the transformation approach with the goal of inspiring students to want to take social action in the face of injustice. In this study the children were vocal about what they felt were unjust rules set by the Taliban regime during the read aloud of Afghanistan (Heinrichs, 2003). Pang (2005) described students’ reaction to the treatment of Rosa Parks as being a motivating force behind their desire to search out contemporary issues of injustice. The students felt the need to take action wherever action was needed. It is confronting injustice that inspires action. The children in this study confronted injustice during that particular read aloud. This shows that global literature can be used to work toward the social action approach. Further research using global literature that highlights contemporary social issues would provide further insight in the potential of global literature to be used to implement curriculum at the highest level.
described by Banks to achieve the goals of multicultural education, which parallel the goals of global education.

**Final Thoughts**

Global children’s literature is an under-utilized educational tool with many potential benefits. Although there is a substantial body of scholarship advocating for the use of this body of literature in the classroom, there is very little research documenting children’s reactions to global children’s literature in the classroom. The children in this current study have one thing in common with all the other children in the United States’ classrooms. They are all members of an increasingly global society. The children in the current study have shown evidence that global children’s literature is a tool to help introduce children to global cultures. It is also a tool to help children work through their misunderstandings about the cultures that inhabit this world. The children in this study were able to enjoy the read alouds while at the same time, work on language arts and social studies objectives. The findings in this study suggest that global children’s literature should be used in a format that allows for discussions and responses with the teacher working as the facilitator. Through discussions and responses, the students in this study were able to bring their understandings and misunderstandings to the surface. They were also able to work through misunderstandings as a group. Finally, the children in this study demonstrated an important reason as to why teachers should use global literature in their classrooms. In their responses, the children showed that they were capable of displaying empathy toward people from cultures outside of their own. Empathy toward
others is an enormous step toward living harmoniously in the global society in which we all inhabit.
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