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IN-DEPTH BOOK DISCUSSIONS OF SELECTED
SIXTH GRADERS: RESPONSE TO LITERATURE

DISSERTATION

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

By

Roy Russel Wilson, Jr., B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1975

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer feels a debt of gratitude for all those who have contributed to this final effort. They include Dr. Charlotte Huck, major adviser as well as major motivator; Dr. Martha King and Dr. Alexander Frasier, committee members whose concern was a source of inspiration; Bonnie Chambers, Gay Pinnell, and Nan Platt, friends and colleagues who advised, reacted, and provided much needed support; Iris Bodman and Dave Heigle, the two teachers who endured many interruptions; the eight subjects without whom there could be no study; Ann Reeves, a most patient and tireless typist; and for all the help, support, and love of my wife Thelma and daughters, Jennie Lou, Margie Jo, and Mary Beth.
TO MY PARENTS

WHO CARE SO MUCH
### VITA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
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<td>1972 - 1975</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### PUBLICATIONS


**FIELDS OF STUDY**

**Major Field:** Language Arts and Children's Literature

- Studies in Children's Literature - Professor Charlotte S. Huck
- Studies in Language Arts - Professor Martha L. King
- Studies in Early and Middle Childhood Education - Alexander Frazier
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Response Studies Utilizing Literary Selections</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And/Or Whole Books According To Grade Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Response To Survey Of Voluntary Reading</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Information Gained From Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part I</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Age, Mental Maturity And Reading Achievement</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 A Look At Literature: Test Data</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Amount Of Talk Generated By Child-Groups And By Leader For Five Books</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Initiating Strategies Related To Book Titles And Identification Of Group Size/Membership</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Total Responses To Five Books By Literary Categories</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Frequencies And Percentages Of Response Categories And Subcategories In Terms Of Initiating Strategies</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Response Patterns By Discussion Groups Of Varying Sizes</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Classification Of Subjects' Constructs And Contrasts</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 The Books I Enjoyed Most</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Most Like The Books I Usually Read</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Something In The Book That Is Most Like Me</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Books That Stretched The Imagination Most</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Genre Choices</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Relationship Range For Repertory Grids Of Eight Subjects</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Background of the Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Importance of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Procedure of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Scope and Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Definitions of Terms Used</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Organization of the Study</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE ON RESPONSE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- General Response Studies</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interpretation and Appreciation Studies</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Responses Dealing With Specific Aspects of the Literary Work</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Response To Poetry</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Process of Response</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reading Aloud and Language Development</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use of Whole Books and Discussion</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. PROCEDURES</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Population</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sample</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Selection of Books To Be Discussed</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction to Fantasy Within a Realistic Story</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thumbsucking</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship of Illustration to Theme</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. PERSONAL RESPONSE</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining Constructs and Contrasts</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classification of Constructs and Contrasts</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-Theme and Theme</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-Genre</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking the Books According to Constructs and Contrasts</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre Choices</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repertory Grid Analyses</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct, &quot;Most Like Me&quot;</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered Comments</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary Observations</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes of the Study</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Procedure</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Observations</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations For Classroom Practice</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX

A. Survey of Voluntary Reading                   | 240  |
B. Summaries of Books                            | 243  |
C. The Personal Constructs of the Eight Subjects | 249  |
D. Sample Discussion Protocol                    | 266  |

BIBLIOGRAPHY                                     | 288  |
CHAPTER I
THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem

Little attention has been given to literature as literature in the elementary school. In the 1960's Jerome Bruner's bold hypothesis, "that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage" (1960, p. 33), led to the development of the "disciplines" approach to the study of literature at both the secondary and elementary school levels. This approach reached its fullest development in three federally funded curriculums: Project English, the Nebraska Curriculum developed at the University of Nebraska, and the Wisconsin Language Arts Curriculum developed under the leadership of Robert C. Pooley and Leonard Kosinski.

In Wisconsin, Pooley and Kosinski directed a statewide curriculum study in the English language arts with monies from a grant from the U. S. Office of Education. The Wisconsin model was symbolized by a triangular shape with Literature, Language, and Composition, each representing one of the sides. Within the triangle resided the four essential aspects of all language arts experiences: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (1968).

Federal monies were also extensively used to develop the Nebraska Curriculum for English. This program was founded on the oral approach
to literature as a basic for language, literature, and composition. Through the use of carefully chosen literary selections the young child would be exposed to and helped in discovering form and structure which then the child would use as models in writing.

Children can learn to control a wide variety of the grammatical and lexical resources of the language in their compositions and a wide variety of the symbolic and representational resources offered by the literary forms if they are offered a sequence of literary models and invited to do model writing based on the sequence. The models offered for student emulation may represent syntactic, rhetorical, or literary forms (University of Nebraska, 1966, p. xxi).

The Dartmouth Seminars, in which English and Language Arts educators from both Great Britain and the U. S. met to study the state of teaching and learning in the communication skills area, led to disagreement about this approach to literature. An essential result of the Dartmouth Seminars was increased attention given to the student, to his language competencies and to his interests as a necessary basis for developing his use of language and enjoyment of literature.

There developed a professional interest at the secondary school level in the student's response to literature. The landmark study at this time was that of Alan Purves who analyzed and categorized the written responses of students to literary works (1968). A pioneer study which came out prior to Dartmouth was James Squire's examination of ninth and tenth grade student's oral responses during the reading
of four selected short stories (1964).

The focus of literature in the elementary school has generally been upon subsidiary values rather than on those inherent within the literature itself. One is not likely to hear the secondary or college teacher talk about teaching literature because of its benefits to a student's reading and language skills. Yet, that has been the usual support for literature in the elementary school. Here the emphasis has been upon the use of literature rather than the value of literature. For example, Dorothy Cohen's study, a year-long program of reading "good" books aloud to second grade children and following up with some extending activity, reported the strength of such a program in terms of the significant growth in vocabulary and reading comprehension which those children made over the control group (Cohen, 1968).

Statement of the Problem

This study of responses of selected sixth grade children to literary selections had four major purposes: 1) to examine and describe the in-depth discussions of specific books in an attempt to characterize the nature of their responses; 2) to compare four strategies which were employed for initiating the different discussions; 3) to discover the range of personal involvement which sixth graders may have in literature; and 4) to examine one discussion leader's role.

More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:
1. Who talks in book discussions?
2. What is actually said in such discussions?
3. Can the talk in book discussions be characterized?
4. Is there a consistent or varying pattern when the same persons meet to discuss different books?
5. What influence do varying sized groups have upon discussion groups?
6. How do different initiating strategies effect the responses of the children?
7. In this particular study what constraints were imposed consciously or unconsciously by the leader?
8. Is it possible to stretch children's literary understanding through discussion?
9. Can children express personal constructs when evaluating books?

**Importance of the Study**

The teaching of reading is a major concern of the elementary school. For the primary teacher this generally means that over half of each school day is devoted to reading instruction. Throughout the elementary school years the focus is usually upon the skills necessary to be able to read, but little attention seems to be given to developing the habit of reading. Little is known about what makes one a lifetime reader, yet authorities in the field deplore the one-sided effort seen in research and practice which emphasizes how one learns
to read while desire or commitment is generally ignored.

At the outset of the 1970's James E. Allen, then U. S. Commissioner of Education, spoke out forcefully for a united effort to reach the essential goals of reading.

It must be recognized also, however, that for the majority who do acquire the basic reading skills, there can also be a barrier which limits the fulfillment of their right to read. This barrier exists when the skill of reading is not accompanied by the desire to read. We fail, therefore, just as much in assuring the right to read when the desire is absent as when the skills are missing (Allen, 1972, p. 9).

Allen goes on to state:

As U. S. Commissioner of Education, I am here-with proclaiming my belief that we should immediately set for ourselves the goal of assuring that by the end of the 1970's the right to read shall be a reality for all -- that no one shall be leaving our schools without the skill and the desire necessary to read to the full limits of his capacity (Allen, 1972, pp. 9-10).

When one looks at what is necessary for developing lifetime readers the focus becomes the literature itself and the reader's involvement with the literature. In Walden, Thoreau spoke of reading as a "noble exercise" and he seems to implore us to strive for meaning in what we read.

Most men have learned to read to serve a paltry convenience, as they have learned to cipher in order to keep accounts and not be cheated in trade; but of reading as a noble intellectual exercise they know little or nothing; yet this only is reading, in a high sense, not that which lulls us a luxury and suffers the noble faculties to sleep the while, but what we have to stand on tiptoe to read and devote our most alert and wakeful hours to (Thoreau, 1946, p. 85).
In a study of the language acquisition of 36 children between the ages of six and ten, Carol Chomsky investigated linguistic competence with respect to complex aspects of English syntax. In a second portion of the study she "wished to consider the relation of the amount and complexity of what children read to rate of linguistic development" (Chomsky, 1972, p. 22).

In gathering information a literature inventory was administered to determine children's previous exposure to literature. This inventory was developed by Charlotte Huck as a means of determining a child's knowledge of the content of sixty widely read books, poems, and stories (Huck, 1966). A positive relationship was discovered between the Huck inventory and the linguistic stages as described by Chomsky. "In other words, the higher the Huck score is, the higher, in general, is the child's linguistic stage in our data" (Chomsky, 1972, p. 23). Chomsky further examined the amount of time spent reading aloud to the children in the study during a one-week period. She found "that at each age, reading or hearing books read is a strong factor" (p. 28). Chomsky concluded the report of this study with a firm indication that increased knowledge of the language can, in some significant part, be attributed to a child's exposure to the more complex language which comes from reading (p. 33).

The conclusions of the Chomsky study are exciting for the educator who concerns himself with the need to have children's literature take a prominent position in the elementary curriculum. But, again, the
results point to the benefits for the development of language, and so turn one's attention away from the benefits of literature as literature.

At present there appears to be growing attention to encouraging children to do wide reading. This is particularly apparent in the popular sustained silent reading approach commonly referred to as SSR in which a specific time is regularly set aside when everyone, children and teachers, are quietly engaged in reading self-selected material (McCracken, 1972). There are entire schools which have established SSR time, and the entire school personnel uses this time to read, including secretaries, custodians, and cooks.

Even with this added interest in providing school time for the act of reading little is known about children's responses to what they read. The most common source of the teacher's knowledge appears to be the oral book report, yet this generally follows a rather limited pattern of reciting title and author and a brief summary of the plot. Another common means of tapping the child's response to his/her reading is to ask each child to keep a record of the books that have been read. In this way teachers are able to determine how many books have been read, and through some classifying procedures they can also find out the kinds of books that have been read. The third way in which educators usually get at a child's response to his reading is through interest inventories in which the child attempts to say what he does or might like to read. This has been one of the most common areas for research in the field of literature for children.
It will be briefly discussed in Chapter II.

These ways of getting responses of children to what they read are rather superficial, for they fail to get at the child's feelings about the book, the story, the characters, and about the themes which are developed during the course of the book. There is a need for in-depth discussions of books by children in order to provide for deeper, more meaningful responses of children to books. There have been a number of studies of responses to literature, but they have been carried out under quite different circumstances from the in-depth discussion, and they have generally been done with high school, junior high school, and college students. Again, these studies are examined in Chapter II.

Little is known about the experience of discussing books in depth. This seems to be an activity that one assumes will occur naturally whenever more than one person has completed the same book. How often this does, in fact, occur in the school is not known and would be worth investigating. It may be that the opportunity to talk about a book almost always occurs in the form of an oral report - a situation in which discussion (where all those present talk in a give-and-take manner) does not take place, and in which it could not take place because of the unlikelihood that all of the listeners have read the same book.

It also may be that when the teacher does talk with a class about a book read in common it is done in the manner of a comprehension
check: the teacher asks questions to determine if the class has remembered the details of the book, and children are called upon to respond, individually, to the questions raised. Answers rarely lead to expansions upon ideas, for it seems essential to the teacher to follow his/her prescribed list of comprehension questions. The opportunities to elaborate or to "emote" are not encouraged, recognized, nor permitted.

A discussion seems rather awkward with a class of 30 to 35. In such a situation it is quite unlikely that one could expect more than a third of the group to be able to actively engage in talk. Discussion requires a setting where each participant has the opportunity to enter in frequently. If each member of a class of 30 spoke once for one minute, half an hour would be spent before anyone could again join in. Such constraints must necessarily force classroom discussions into lecturing with questions and answers and/or demonstration of discussion where those few who truly discuss serve as an example for the rest of the class. It would seem that in-depth book discussions need to take place in small group settings, probably with no more than 5 or 6.

In-depth discussions are highly personal and necessarily must occur in very small, intimate groups. No one would be testing for comprehension or looking for proof that the book had been read. Instead, everyone would be sharing a book as fully as possible. The leader would attempt to enrich the book experience by helping the
group explore in greater detail the aspects of the book that stood out in his mind as essential, pertinent, thought-provoking, or confusing. A record of children's responses to books when given this setting and mode seemed worthy of investigation.

Procedure of the Study

In this study eight sixth grade children were exposed to five books of different genres followed by a discussion of each book. Seven of the children heard the book read aloud to their class as a daily, continuing experience by their classroom teacher. The eighth child, from another class in the same building read the books to herself. The students were identified by their teachers as able readers with varying degrees of enthusiasm for reading. They came from an upper economic community and attended the same school. Since so little has been determined about children's responses to books, it was decided to use children who were able readers and have always had ready access to books.

The discussions were conducted by the investigator in groups of 1, 2, or 3 students. The discussions were tape recorded and later transcribed so that a closer look would enable the investigator to determine categories of response, the role of the discussion leader, an understanding of the books, possible relationships between children of varying degrees of interest in reading and their responses and subsequent understandings of the books, and to make suggestions for future discussions of books. The investigator further chose to talk
with the same individuals about five different books. One book was discussed from the genre of historical fiction, two from realistic fiction, and two from fantasy.

In order to maintain the natural character of discussion it was determined that there should be no set body of questions. A discussion leader needs to be free to follow the direction of the children's responses.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study of selected sixth grade children's responses to literary selections during in-depth discussions was subject to some limitations with regard to the sample and procedures. A description of the restrictions and limitations within the investigation now follows.

1. The study was limited to eight sixth grade children.
   Though identified as able readers, they ranged in their personal commitment to reading as a voluntary activity.

2. The study was limited to the particular children chosen by the classroom teacher. She interpreted the criteria for selection as prescribed by the study to include students she felt needed the experience.

3. The investigator was limited to 30 minute discussion periods which were necessary to accommodate to the teacher's daily schedule.
4. The children came from a classroom described as "informal", one in which a variety of activities were ongoing throughout the year. These activities were partially or wholly designed by the students, and so whenever the investigator came to lead a book discussion it was quite possible that the subjects of the study had to leave an activity of high interest.

5. Five book discussions spread over an entire school year made it impossible for the investigator, as an outsider, to develop as personal a relationship with the subjects as may have been desirable in order to lead the most productive discussions.

6. Discussing books which were selected by the investigator may have effected the interest of some of the subjects. The students may have felt less involvement in the whole experience than might have been true had they suggested the titles to be discussed.

7. The study was limited to the discussion of 5 books which was necessary because of the subsequent demands of time required to transcribe and analyze the tape recordings.
8. The number of genres was limited to three, namely fantasy, realistic fiction, and historical fiction. Though these books were felt to be representative of the main genres read by sixth grade children, specific book types which this age group might consider of great interest, such as biography, humor, and folklore were not considered.

9. A study of response to literature which analyzes only the responses collected in adult-led discussions must acknowledge that these are only part of the possible responses one probably has to a literary work since other dimensions of response need to be considered including those collected and analyzed from:
   1) student-led discussions, 2) non-directive adult-led discussions, 3) free response situations, both oral and written, and 4) various directed written responses.

10. This study was limited to four strategies for initiating discussions and does not imply that these are the only possible strategies nor even the best ones.

11. This study limited itself to eight subjects and four discussion groups which varied in size from 2 through 4. This was necessary for conducting as thorough an analysis as possible.
Definitions of Terms Used

Certain terms were used throughout the investigation. For the purpose of this study, they are defined as follows:

Construct - An idea which has been synthesized from examining and comparing several books.

Genre - A broad classification or type of literary work.

In-depth Discussion - A conversation between 2 or among as many as 4 individuals in which ideas were explored as fully as possible.

Initiating Strategy - An oral request specifically designed to call forth certain responses at the beginning of a discussion.

Literary Work - A book-length piece of prose recognized by authorities in the field of children's literature as being well-written and containing significant ideas.

Response - Interaction between reader and literary work and expressed as a reaction, opinion, comment, or question.

Theme - Describes "a topic or problem which is found in the action of the book and which seems authentic and significant in our own experience with the world of reality" (Rosenheim, 1961, p. 91).

Organization of the Study

A review of related research is presented and summarized in Chapter II. An explanation of the procedures employed to gather
personal data, to conduct the in-depth discussions, and to analyze the resulting transcribed material are discussed in Chapter III. Chapter IV presents the personal information on the eight subjects as well as word counts of student and leader talk during the book discussions. Chapter V presents data on literary response. The subject's responses were classified according to the Squire model, and the various themes which were discussed by the subjects are presented. The development of personal constructs with regard to literature is presented in Chapter VI. The final chapter includes a summary of the study and suggestions for classroom practice and further research.

Summary

Since researchers generally have looked at children's reading in terms of acquisition of skills, it was felt that there was a need to look into some aspects that may more closely relate to contributing to an interest in reading. This study focused upon children's response to literature. It would appear that literature has often served as a vehicle for other communication skills such as writing, and so this study placed its attention upon a literary basis. The investigation consisted of in-depth discussions of five selected books with four small groups of sixth grade, able readers. The primary objectives of the study were: 1) to examine and describe the discussions in order to characterize the nature of the subjects' responses; 2) to compare strategies which were used to initiate the discussions;
3) to discover some of the personal constructs sixth grade children may have which are related to literature; and 4) to analyze the role of one discussion leader.

The discussions were tape recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Eight sixth graders were chosen on the basis of being able readers though they ranged from highly committed to disinterested in reading. The subjects met in groups of 2, 3, and 4 for each of five discussions. The sample and procedures were subject to some limitations.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE ON RESPONSE

James Squire, in his foreword to the revised edition of Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature As Exploration* (1968), insists "that the teacher of English at any level . . . must concern himself with three aspects of the literary experience - the work itself, the reader, and the interaction of the book and the reader" (p. v). It is this "interaction" that seems to be at the core of Alan Purves' definition of response.

Response is best defined as the ongoing interaction between the individual and the work, an interaction that may continue long after the individual has finished reading. This response is never made fully explicit, for one could not tell of all the associations, ideas, feelings, and reflections that take place as one reads a novel say, or after one has finished it. (1973, p. 36)

It would appear to this investigator that such interaction between literary work and reader may manifest itself in four basic ways: orally, either in the form of answers to questions or in a variety of conversational settings such as discussion, question raising, and informal conversation; the written form in such writing as answering questions, reporting, and modeled writing; the artistic form of expressing the response such as the use of various art and craft media but also expression through bodily movement, dance, music, and drama; and further reading, particularly the increased desire to read widely.
frequently, as well as the need to turn to reading material related in some way to the work that initiated the response.

The research in the field of response to literature has generally confined itself to studies in which readers have either used the oral or the written mode for expressing their responses, or some combination of both. The assessment of reading interests would rightly be a part of the reading mode, the fourth form referred to in the preceding paragraph. Historically, the earliest studies of response were in the area of reading interests. A pioneer study in this area was carried out by Thorndike (1941) who devised a list of fictitious book titles and annotations from which subjects were to select titles that they would be interested in reading. In the same era was Ruth Strang's (1942) study of 112 persons between the ages of 13 and over 50. This study is noteworthy because it was an early effort to utilize a series of individual case studies. In the next decade came the influential study by Norvell (1958) who analyzed reading preferences of 50,000 students in grades 7 through 12 and of 24,000 children in grades 3 to 6. A significant study in the 60's was that of Ennis (1965) who examined the reading interests, time spent in reading, and amount of books read by adults. The results were based upon 18 in-depth interviews.

More recently there has been a renewed effort to assess reading interests. Schulte (1967) again used fictitious annotated titles as the basis for a reading interest inventory which was administered to 6,568 students and 243 teachers in thirty-two schools in Delaware,
Florida, Ohio, and Texas. Terry (1974) conducted a national survey of the poetry preferences of children in the upper elementary grades. Brown (1971), using 233 randomly assigned subjects from 5th grade classes in Leon County, Florida, compared the results of determining reading interests from two methods. One method had the children listening to annotations of 30 actual books; the other provided the actual hard-bound books for the subjects to handle. A further variable was introduced in order to determine possible influence of format by substituting paperback editions for 15 books for one group in the study.

It is beyond the scope of this study to present a full review of the interest studies which experienced its earliest surge in the 1920's and 1930's under the leadership of Teachers College, Columbia University beginning, perhaps with Jordon (1921). Other significant research into reading interests can be attributed to Waplea and Tyler (1931), Milam (1932), Carnovsky (1936) who examined reading interests of graduate students, Center (1936) who looked at high school students, Rankin (1944), Wollner (1949), and with the advent of television Frank (1957) assessed reading interests in relation to the impact of TV, Stanchfield (1960) examined boys' interests, Peltola (1967) asked 3100 4th and 6th graders to name their favorite book character and the title of the book in which the character appeared, Monson (1967) examined humor, and Roderick (1967) sought relationships between creativity measures and students' indicated preferences. And from the 1930's into the 1960's, Paul Witty with
various associates assessed different aspects of national reading interests, radio listening, and later, television viewing.

In order to bring this review into focus upon the present study, it is necessary first to take a brief look at the numerous directions in which response to reading, or literature, has taken. A few studies have examined response in general. Other studies have focused upon interpretation and appreciation. The bulk of the research has dealt with response to various aspects found within the literary material such as the reader's reaction to the illustration, characters, specific situations, humor, and violence. A number of studies have investigated the responses of readers to poetry which may well be explained in that a poem, or even several poems, usually provides a much more manageable situation for collecting responses since the poems generally chosen are brief and require a rather short time from exposure through response. Another direction of response studies were those which attempted to examine the process of response. In this area were studies which have used differing methods for collecting response such as the use of structured questions and comparing written responses to oral responses. Closely allied to this aspect are the studies which have examined the effects on children of being read aloud to and also studies which seek to look at language development as a result of various reading experiences. Before considering studies which most closely relate to the present study, namely those which used whole books and discussion, a brief description of some of the more representative studies from the previously
mentioned research will be made.

General Response Studies

Most of the response studies have been done with mature students in high school and college. Wilson (1963) analyzed the free responses written by 54 college freshmen before and after the study of three novels, *Catcher In The Rye*, *Grapes of Wrath*, and *Farewell To Arms*. Quantitative analysis of the responses based upon the Squire categories revealed significant increases in Interpretational responses. The categories of Literary Judgment, Narrational, Associational, Self-Involvement, and Prescriptive Judgments all decreased during the study. Qualitative analysis of the responses of 9 subjects revealed no striking trend not already indicated by coding results.

Grindstaff (1968) collected written responses of three groups of tenth-grade students to four novels, *Swiftwater*, *Fahrenheit*, *Up The Down Staircase*, and *A Separate Peace*. Immediately following the reading of each novel all three classes wrote one free response. Each of two groups then studied the novels in a specified manner. The first group used the structural analysis approach; the second group was taught by the experiential reflective analysis approach. The third group served as the control by receiving no instruction on any of the novels. The experimental classes again wrote free response compositions post-study. The control group wrote its second composition seven days following the first writing. The compositions were broken down into 13,455 individual response units which were coded.
into the seven Squire categories. Grindstaff found that the responses varied according to the kind of novel and according to the kind of approach in teaching the novel. Experiential reflective analysis tended to be superior to structural analysis. The structural analysis group showed a superiority in expository prose evaluation while the experiential reflective group showed a superiority in making mature literary judgments.

Merts (1972) compared responses to three short stories by three different groups of subjects, 160 tenth grade students, 52 college students from a College of Education, and 52 English teachers. Among the findings were: 1) no differences in the response patterns of the college students and the English teachers; 2) major differences apparently exist between the responses of the adults and those of the adolescents; 3) higher proportion of students in the low socio-economic division selected the Perception category for all three stories whereas more high socio-economic students selected Interpretation and Evaluation categories; 4) there appeared to be no relationship between response to the stories and years of teaching experience, amount of time teachers spend on teaching literature, or amount of graduate work completed by teachers.

One portion of the first National Assessment of Literature (1972) was directed toward responding to literature. Nine-, 13- and 17 year-olds as well as adults were sampled throughout the nation. They were asked to respond both verbally and in written form to specific literary selections of prose and poetry. The 4 major Purves (1968)
categories were used in analyzing the responses with the addition of a fifth category for Retelling Verbal Responses were elicited by asking the subjects to say what they most wanted to about a selection, what they noticed in particular, and their feelings about it. For the written response the subjects wrote an essay. With the verbal responses, all statements were categorized, whereas the entire essay was categorized as a total, single response. For the 9-year-olds, a full-length book, Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine by Evaline Ness was used along with 2 poems. The 13-year-olds responded to 2 poems, and the two older groups were given a single poem. The results indicated that 62% of the 9-year-olds made Engagement Involvement and Evaluative responses to the book and only 2% Perception responses. With one poem the 9-year-olds made 30% Perception responses and 17% with the second poem. Retelling responses accounted for 43% with the book and 35% and 50% respectively for the two poems. Interpretational responses were low for all three literary pieces: 28% for the book, 19% for one poem, and 9% for the other poem. Percentages were highest for two subgroups, the affluent suburb group and for children whose parents had more than a high school education.

**Interpretation and Appreciation Studies**

Foreman (1951) developed an instrument to evaluate the literary appreciation of adolescents which could be used by teachers of English in junior high schools. Foreman defined literary appreciation in terms of the ability of the child to elaborate the details of a story;
also to be able to see the characters as real people; and finally to be able to sense the purpose and continuity of the story.

Andresen (1967) set out to provide an effective method of teaching high school students a reading skill for the evaluation of themes in literary works. The focus was on the profundity of literature which was defined as the degree toward universality which the theme of a literary work reflects. Andresen identified five planes on his profundity scale: 1) physical, 2) mental, 3) moral, 4) psychological, and 5) philosophical. These were used as the basis for structured instruction for the experimental groups. The control groups were taught by informal discussion of guide questions provided in the literature anthologies that were used as texts. The findings were only partially supportive of the researcher's hypotheses in that just the girls of the experimental groups showed significant gains. The experimental boys tended to show gains but not at a significant level. Various limitations of the study might be overcome in subsequent efforts to implement the profundity scale in literature instruction.

Sanders (1970) studied the effects of instruction in light of literary interpretation as revealed through the responses of 94 ninth grade students to 8 selected short stories. In two experimental classes six of the stories were read with instruction while two were read independently. In the two control classes all 8 stories were read independently. Students wrote free response essays immediately following the reading or study of each story. Significant differences favored the experimental groups both in quality and overall response.
pattern. It seemed that knowledge of the process carried over to the stories read independently.

Responses Dealing With Specific Aspects of the Literary Work

A number of studies of response focused upon some quality or characteristic found within the literary material including humor and race. Heaton (1950) and Meckel (1946), both considered the more broad aspect of incidents occurring within a story.

Group membership incidents provided the basis for the study by Heaton in which children's self-reference statements concerning the story were compared. The study appeared to confirm the frequently expressed convictions of teachers that literature experiences enable children to see something of themselves and their problems in the story incidents.

Meckel sought to learn what were the situations in the novel Fortitude to which high school seniors responded most vividly. He also looked at the aspects of the novel that were most liked and disliked and sought to find relationships between personality predispositions and the pupils' responses. Data was collected prior to any discussion and was in the form of free writing, responses to a test, and by rating selected events, situations, and ideas from the novel.

Looking at pupils' reactions to humor in literature has been the subject of a number of studies, including Landau (1955) who asked sixth grade students to indicate what part of each story excerpt was funny and to give reasons for their choices. The most significant
differences in reaction occurred for the middle class children.

Another study of note which looked at responses to humorous situations in literature was that of Monson (1966). Fifth grade students were used and five different types of humor were represented in the excerpts which were read to the subjects. This study found few differences in the choices of categories of humor made by sex, intelligence, socio-economic status and reading level. The more structured response situation provided for more boys and children of low socio-economic standards to judge the humor of selections.

An increasing area for study has been the response of readers to various ethnic material. Sherrill (1972) tested 193 adults, Black and Puerto Rican, with an instrument containing passages written by Black and Puerto Rican authors on cultural themes common to ghetto areas of these ethnic groups. The respondents were instructed to register their emotional responses to each passage on four semantic differential scales. It was found that the members of each cultural group demonstrated greater response intensity toward their own literature. Anthony (1974) shared two versions of Snowy Day to 228 kindergarten and third grade children. Half of each group was white and half was black. One version of the book contained the original black characters while the other version had the characters altered so that they appeared to be white. On the day following the sharing of the book a story recall inventory was administered and also an attempt was made to measure the subjects' identification with the story characters. There was no significant difference between the means of
groups on measures of story recall. The results on measures of identification were not as definitive. Out of 16 requested comparisons, 9 had no significant differences, 6 were significant in the expected direction and 1 was significant in the opposite direction.

Briefly, other aspects within literary material which have been used to gather response include children's fear of the dark (Neill, 1969), the effect of illustrations in picture books (Curtis, 1968), violence in contemporary fiction (Davis, 1973), and heroes in short stories (White, 1973).

Response To Poetry

Skelton (1963) asked 270 children in grades 4, 5, and 6, who were above average in intelligence, reading ability, and socio-economic status, to write as fully as possible as to what each of 4 poems meant. The poems ranged from simple or obvious to more complicated. The results indicated that the subjects largely ignored the intentions of the poets. Also, the response patterns were dominated by repetition and subjective responses.

Morris (1970) met with each of 15 college juniors and seniors who were enrolled in a teaching methods course in secondary English. Each student was given a copy of the poem "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" by Wallace Stevens and asked first to read it and then to say out loud everything the subject was thinking and feeling. The investigator maintained a noncommittal attitude in order not to sway the subject by either negative or positive reactions. Later the interviewer asked
32 questions which attempted to assess the subject's attitude toward the procedure and also gathered poetry reading information. Morris devised his own category system which included twelve areas, six were designated as "Poem-centered", five as "Non-poem centered", and one as "Quoting from poem." Morris found there was no category in which the subjects consistently produced a stable, characteristic percentage of response.

Ehrenkranz (1973) set up three differently directed interview situations, affectively-oriented, cognitively-oriented, and non-directive and then asked each of 192 students aged 15 and 16 to read and respond to two poems. The findings indicated that directive treatment narrows the student's responses, whereas nondirective treatment widens the frequency of responses in many categories. Terry (1964) surveyed 45 classrooms, grades 4 through 6, in four states to determine children's responses to tape recorded poetry selections. The responses to 113 selected poems were noted on a five-point scale from "hated" to "great." Among her findings were: 1) the subjects most preferred the limerick, 2) the narrative poem was a popular poetic form, 3) the haiku was one of the most disliked forms, 4) humor and familiar experiences in poetry were preferred, and 5) no traditional poems were identified in the subjects' list of twenty-five most popular poems.

The Process of Response

Squire (1956) pioneered a technique of studying comprehension
as it takes place, by developing a technique of classifying responses. These were broad enough to be useful in similar studies of widely differing types of literature. Usually studies of response to literature are made after the reading. Final reactions can indicate what students think and feel about a literary selection, but do not always show how the students came to think and feel in a particular way.

Four short stories were used with 52 students in tenth grade. Thirteen were chosen randomly from the 52 for more intensive case studies. Each story was divided into six parts. During a single sitting and interview situation, each story was read. Oral responses were immediately recorded after silently reading each of the 6 divisions of the story. The investigator followed the usual procedures of non-directive interviewing. Analysis of the 14,494 responses produced 7 categories: Literary Judgment, Interpretational Responses, Narrational Responses, Associational Responses, Self-Involvement Responses, Prescriptive Judgments, and Miscellaneous Responses. Squire found that more than 42% of all responses were coded as Interpretational. Fewer than 4% were coded as Associational, Prescriptive, or Miscellaneous. Sex differences seemed slight with respect to these patterns of responses. Socio-economic status did not seem to be related to the responses.

Purves with Ripper (1968) developed a category system for writing about a literary work. This grew out of early efforts to design an international study of literature and attempted to go beyond the broad categories of the Squire study. Thirteen-and 17-year-old students
were chosen as the sample. There were four basic categories: Engagement-involvement, Perception, Interpretation, and Evaluation. Within each category was an elaborate series of numbered elements.

Cooper (1969) presented three short stories to 117 eleventh grade students. After hearing each story the subjects filled out a response sheet indicating his/her preferred mode of response by choosing an essay topic worded to correspond to one of the four response categories as developed by Purves, i.e. engagement, perception, interpretation, and evaluation. In a follow-up study a fourth story was presented to selected students from the main study. Informal interviews were conducted to ascertain the student’s reactions to the stories and to the task of the response sheet. Teachers also were interviewed regarding literary study in their classes. It was found that 3/4 of the students had a preferred mode of response to short fiction; interpretation was the most popular mode, and the perceptive mode was the least. This agreed with the original Squire study. Teachers indicated a variety of methods and goals in literature instruction, and this did not seem to influence the student’s preferred mode of response.

Fischman (1971) placed 75 college sophomores randomly in one of three groups: 1) a literature group who read five short stories, 2) a sociology group who read five sociological articles, and 3) a control group who read no materials. All three groups participated in the testing and interviewing that followed. Among the findings it was discovered that the oral responses of the literature group revealed
emotions more openly whereas the sociology group tended to be abstract and analytical. Also the literature group made many more references to other works of fiction and art than did the sociology group who noted far more non-fictional references. Both literature and sociological articles succeeded in conveying sociological information, though it seemed that the literature group was not aware that they were learning, whereas the sociology group was.

Purves (1973) reported on an international study of literature. Students from nine countries, Chile, England, Finland, Iran, Italy, New Zealand, Sweden, the United States, French-speaking Belgium, and Flemish-speaking Belgium. The students were 14 and 18 years of age. Data was gathered on the students' abilities to read specific short stories, on the pattern of response that the students chose to express for each selection, or interest in reading, on the degree of transfer from literary selections that were read to the student's own life, and information on the schools, the teachers, and the students. Among the many findings were: 1) ability to comprehend or interpret literature seemed to have little relationship with schooling; 2) schooling also apparently had little to do with interest in reading literature, 3) reading interests across cultures were similar and remained fairly consistent with past interest studies, 4) the pattern of response for any one student varied depending upon the story being read, and 5) there were marked cultural patterns of response.

Barnes, Churley, and Thompson (1971) tape recorded small groups of 15-year old students as they talked about a novel. The students knew
they were being recorded. They were asked to talk about the book in any way they chose. The students had not received any instruction on the novel being discussed, and no teacher was present for the tape recorded discussions. Barnes, et. al reported on seven groups from 4 British secondary schools. This represented 2 1/2 hours of recording. They found that all groups had to devote time to establishing what happened in the story and in what order. The talk in these groups was quite unlike that of formal literature class lessons. Most of the groups needed to re-experience various episodes in the story, particularly in the early stages of the discussion. It was "as if the pupils were enjoying them again and strengthening their responses by sharing them together, perhaps in part confirming them."

There seemed to be a more uninhibited expression due to the small group size and the absence of a teacher. Limitations were also noted including the often circular and inconclusive movement of the discussions. The investigators stated that some of the best insights passed by without notice. There were no efforts to summarize, to pull together, the various ideas that had developed. The investigators concluded by expressing the concern that teachers often expect the adolescent reader to begin talking about a literary work at too high a level and by so doing prevent the necessary opportunity to sort out and re-experience which these students evidently needed as preliminary to teacher-led instruction.

Applebee (1973) examined response to literature in terms of the spectator role, one of two major roles for language according to the
Britton model, the other being the participant role. The Applebee study included two main approaches. The first was an examination of original stories from children between ages two and five in an effort to determine a possible developing pattern for a sense of story. The second aspect of the study was the development of Repertory Grids for children ages 6, 9, 13, and 17. The investigator provided 19 constructs such as, "Very good," "well-written," "long," and "for people older than you." The constructs were developed to relate specifically to the four major categories of response which students reflect when writing about a literary work as organized and defined by Purves. The children, during individual interviews for the 6-year-olds and some 9-year-olds and during the writing of a questionnaire by the remaining 9-year-olds as well as the 13- and 17-year olds, provided their own contrast to each of the constructs. Then the children had to identify 8 different specific stories (stories and/or books) based upon categories the investigator had determined including, "favorite," "recently heard," and "most moving." Finally a subject would rate each of his stories according to the various constructs on a 1 to 5 scale. Applebee found developmental patterns in the spectator role in terms of responding to literature. A sense of story was identified in children as young as two and it appeared to develop from using a formalistic beginning ("once upon a time") through consistent use of the past tense to formalistic endings ("They lived happily ever after") Applebee identified four major dimensions of response and submitted evidence of their developmental nature both in definition and importance: evaluation, simplicity, realism, and seriousness.
Reading Aloud And Language Development

The effect of being read aloud to and studies of language development as a result of literature experiences are research areas which have received growing attention.

Chomsky (1972) found that there was a significant relationship between a young child’s linguistic maturity and knowledge of literary characters and stories as assessed by a literature inventory. This study was discussed more fully in Chapter I.

Cappa (1958) gathered reactions from 2500 kindergarten children which were expressed spontaneously to storybooks read to them by their teachers. Thirty-eight percent of the responses were a desire to look at the book followed by twenty-seven percent which were requests of the teacher to re-read or tell the story.

Cohen (1966) selected twenty second grade classes in Harlem which were matched on the basis of age, sex, socio-economic class, and placement of top, middle, or low within the grade according to reading level. Each experimental class received fifty books chosen on the basis of appropriateness for child development and criteria for good literature. The children were read aloud to every day, and then asked to respond to the books through discussion, drama, art or some activity to make the book memorable. At the end of one year, significant increases for the experimental group over the control group were noted in vocabulary, word knowledge, and reading comprehension.

Both Elkins (1968) and Pinkham (1968) have focused on written expression. Eighth grade students in the Elkins study were divided
into two experimental groups which spent 9 weeks in intensive reading and another 9 weeks in intensive writing and two control groups which spent the same time with a combined technique of reading and writing. There were no significant differences as all four groups gained in both writing and reading.

Pinkham's subjects were 180 fifth grade students. For a period of fourteen weeks the experimental groups received weekly writing lessons based on models of literature. The control group used an equal amount of time for listening to literature and for producing written expression through a less structured pattern. There were significant differences found in favor of all experimental classes in areas measured by the STEP Writing Test.

Cullinan, et. al (1974) studied the effects of a literature-based oral language program on the ability of Black children to reproduce standard English structures. The program prescribed daily oral reading by teachers from 50 books selected on the basis of 1) representing ethnic groups favorably, 2) appropriate content and concept levels of the kindergarten and primary aged child, 3) having potential for stimulating oral language activities, 4) containing a variety of language patterns, 5) including characters with whom the children could identify, and 6) of acceptable literary criteria. Also, the program required that the children participate in at least one oral activity which had been planned for each book. The focus of the activities was on the natural use of language, not on the forms of language. Three more structured language activities were included in order to provide
opportunities for the children to practice specific standard English. These were choral speaking, role playing of characters, and "Peter Parrot" - where a parrot puppet insisted that certain sentences from the stories be repeated by the children. The researchers found that kindergarten children in the experimental groups made significant growth in their ability to repeat standard English forms on a bili- dialectal proficiency test.

Use of Whole Books and Discussion

The present investigation was primarily concerned with gathering children's responses to several whole books. Responses were collected within the context of in-depth discussions. Both dimensions of the present response study, discussion and full-length books, seem to have been rarely used in studies carried out under the specific area of response to literature. In a search of Dissertation Abstracts published since 1950, this investigator identified only eighteen dissertations of note, exclusive of reading interests studies, which made use of whole books and only seven utilized discussion. In reviewing the research literature there appeared to be only three studies with elementary school aged children where whole books and discussion were both considered. Of the studies using whole books six have been previously described in this chapter (Wilson, Cohen, Curtis, Grindstaff, Neill, and Anthony). There now follow 9 other studies in which whole books were used.

Blount (1963) working with ninth and tenth graders, used the junior novels, The Sea Gulls Woke Me, Street Rod, and Swiftwater and
three adult novels, *Ivanhoe*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *Silas Marner* along with several instruments to measure attitude toward the "ideal" novel. The focus was upon the concept of "novel" not upon the various stories, nor the literary experience, nor the development of specific characters.

Roderick (1967) identified 100 sixth graders for whom scores on the *Minnesota Test of Creative Thinking* were available. Over a three month period the students read from a list of 30 books. Since the findings dealt with relationships between liking to read and creativity, little attention was given to specific responses to the books, though a content analysis was made of the responses, and it was found that while the judges spoke more of character, reader involvement, and external influences, the children commented more on factors relating to the literary components and format of the books.

Donahue (1969) carried out a study somewhat similar to the Anthony study. Nine kindergarten classrooms in which four books of similar themes were used. Two of the books had Negro characters and the other two had white characters. Experimental reproductions were also made where the race of characters were changed to the opposite race. The books were read to the children and, with no subsequent discussion, a pictorial questionnaire was used to ascertain liking for story and main characters. On the fifth day each student was asked to rank the four books according to preference. There were no significant differences in preferences for books which featured either Negro or white story characters.

Bissett (1969) had 190 fifth graders keep records of the books
they read during a 15 week period. There were seven randomly assigned classrooms to one of three treatments, one simulating normal classroom procedures, one with increased accessibility of books, but no program to recommend or inform children about the books, and one in which 90 minutes was devoted to teacher and peer recommendations of books in the classroom library. The mean number of books read was greatest with the third group. This was significant at the .01 level. No significance in the gains in vocabulary and comprehension were found. This investigator cannot resist speculating on the impact for extending and enriching the children's reading experience had book discussions been included in the study.

Cox (1969) compared the use of structured questions with non-structured questions on self-selected trade books by 90 fifth graders. Analysis of the data failed to indicate significantly greater gains in comprehension and vocabulary with the use of structured questions.

Jones (1971) used tape recorded stories to accompany the display of illustrations from the books. Pre-school children, ages 4 and 5, were observed over a four week period to determine the number of children who chose to look at the books as a free choice activity. There was no significant difference between the number of children in the experimental and control groups who chose books as a free choice activity after story treatment. This investigator would raise the issue of the lack of intimacy in using tape recorded stories. Also, it would be interesting to increase the range of response possibilities, such as talking about the stories, dramatizing the story, or requesting the story be re-read.
Strickland (1971) attempted to extend the Cohen study. 120 kindergarten children were chosen from lower socio-economic areas. In the experimental group there was a literature-based oral language program which consisted of reading aloud daily to the children from selected books followed by an oral language activity. Experimental treatment offered strong evidence that educationally disadvantaged black, kindergarten children can expand their language repertoire through exposure to literature to include standard English without negating the native dialect of the child.

Sirota (1971) also built her study upon the research of Cohen. 275 fifth graders were in the study. All classrooms (6 experimental and 6 control) were equipped with 50 books selected by a panel of judges. In the experimental classes teachers read aloud daily to the children. All students recorded their voluntary reading. Indications were that a planned program of daily oral reading can have a significant effect upon the quantity and quality of children's voluntary reading.

Gould (1972) developed an informal measure, Literature Response Instrument, as a means of assessing creative oral responses of 74 fourth grade, lower socio-economic, black children to a realistic children's picture book. No statistically significant relationships in the area of literature were found.

Five studies emphasized discussion as an essential aspect.

Casper (1964) set up discussion groups of 12 to 15 participants
with trained adult leaders patterned after the Junior Great Books Program. There were 103 fifth graders in the experimental group and 104 in the control group. The students had IQ scores of 120 or more. During one school year the participants read and discussed selected classics including *Tom Sawyer*, *Peter Pan*, *Tanglewood Tales*, and *Call of The Wild*. The emphasis of the discussions was on the attitudes, ideas, and principles presented by the author. Eighteen tests devised by J. P. Guilford for specific factors in intellectual operations of cognition, divergent production and convergent production were administered at the conclusion of the study. The study suggested only a limited relationship between the intellectual factors as represented by the tests and the observed effects of the Junior Great Books Program.

Lewis (1967) selected eleven short stories which portrayed the desirability of nurturance and the undesirability of aggressiveness and selfishness. 216 sixth graders were divided into four groups, two read the stories over a six week period with one group discussing the stories and values, a third group which did not read the stories but did discuss the values, and the fourth group which neither read the stories nor discussed the values. Lewis developed a Test of Values, a semiprojective test in story form which was administered before and after the experiment. The finding supported the basic assumption that literature affects values, although not in the direction hypothesized.

Telford (1968) combined a collection of original poems and stories with discussion as the basis of a value-oriented unit with 303 students in three high schools, one in the suburban area with an all
white population, and two urban schools where one was all Negro and one was integrated. Results of responses to an attitude questionnaire indicated there were no appreciable differences between the urban and suburban schools regarding their reading preferences. The results also seemed to indicate that each selection had some value for someone.

Haught (1970) studied 253 high school students and compared classes with teacher-led discussions of literature to classes with student-led discussions. She found below average students spoke least in both situations, but their verbalization increased 194% in student-led discussions. More personal identification with characters, situations, and truths appeared to take place in student-led small groups. Students of below average ability, when grouped together, were not able to sustain discussion as long as average and above average ability groups.

Beach (1972) randomly divided 36 college upper classmen into three groups, one taped oral, free-association responses to a poem, a second wrote a free association response, and the third merely read the poem. Approximately two weeks later the same procedure was repeated with the three groups rotating their tasks, and again two weeks later with a third rotation. Each time a different poem was used. All of the poems were contemporary and similar in length. Following each assignment, each group discussed the same poem. Assignment and discussion responses were coded using a modification of the Purves categories. It was found that discussion following free association assignment had more
Interpretation and less Digression than discussions without previous preparation. The taped assignment increased Engagement and the written assignment increased in Interpretation.

**Summary**

Table 1 is an attempt to summarize the response studies, exclusive of those pertaining to reading interests. It becomes quite apparent that there is a dearth of response studies using the discussion as a primary means of eliciting responses. It is equally apparent that few studies have examined the responses of students to full-length books. And though there are a fair number of studies utilizing middle elementary grades as subjects there appears to be only one study which also utilized whole books and discussion. The present study will be based upon children's responses to whole books during an in-depth discussion period. Responses will be analyzed by use of the Squire categories for literary response, by examining noteworthy themes from the books that were discussed, and by use of the Repertory Grid for personal constructs.
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CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Population

The sample for this study was chosen from a public elementary school in an Upper Middle Class suburb of the capital city of a mid-western state. Since the city is the home of a state university and several other universities and colleges, one finds many college instructors living in this suburban community. It also is an area where many professional people live.

The public school from which the sample was taken is one of 7 elementary schools in the community. There are also 2 junior highs and one high school. This particular elementary school consists of a main building and three one-story buildings built in pods. Each pod contains four classrooms. All of the classrooms in this auxiliary situation are part of a district-wide project of Informal Education which is offered to the community as an alternative program. The children enrolled in the "informal" classrooms are there by choice, the combined decision of child and parents. In the informal classroom units there are approximately two of each grade level from grade one through grade six. The children in the informal classrooms use the library in the main building as well as the gym, the stage-auditorium, and the cafeteria. There are special teachers in music, art, and physical education for all children, both in the main building and in
the informal classroom units. A district-wide administrator is assigned to the informal educational program. This person maintains a close relationship with the teachers of the project and provides in-service, counsel, and supervision.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of eight children from the sixth grades in the informal classroom units. Seven of the children came from one room and the eighth child came from the other sixth grade. The students were identified primarily as able readers. They varied in their commitment to reading. With the aid of the classroom teachers, students with a range of interest in reading were selected. They ranged from avid, fully committed readers to very reluctant readers.

Since there have been very few studies of elementary children's response to in-depth discussions of selected books, it was felt that engaging students who varied widely in their commitment to reading rather than selecting all avid readers would reveal a fuller insight into children's responses to books. If one of the ultimate goals in any classroom literature program is to increase each child's interest in reading, then there is merit in examining the responses of children who differ in their personal interest in reading. To identify the reluctant readers the investigator suggested the following guidelines:

1. The student seldom sits down voluntarily with a book to read.

2. The student seldom mentions reading a book.
3. The student is not too likely to purchase books through the Scholastic Paperback Book Clubs.

4. The student seems to have a limited home book collection.

5. During SSR the student appears to be a page-flipper, rather than becoming engrossed in reading.

The teacher who provided seven of the subjects followed these guidelines in selecting the students she would permit to participate in this activity, but she also felt an obligation to include specific students she felt especially needed the personal, near-one-to-one relationship which such discussions would allow. This accounted for the inclusion of Cal and Joe. The opposite relationship of each of the preceding guidelines was used to select the avid, able readers for the study.

Sixth graders were chosen for several reasons. This is often the peak of reading in one's life. Russell (1961) has indicated the pivotal position of the twelve-year old reader:

If a child does not have the habit of reading by the time he is twelve years old, the chances are pretty good that he is lost as a regular reader. . . . It isn't much help to a parent or a school faculty, or to children themselves, if they make good scores on reading tests but never open a book of their own accord. Reading skills are important, but the joy and usefulness of books and magazines probably affect reading habits more completely and permanently. (p. 28)

The amount of voluntary reading generally begins to drop off after sixth grade. We do not know why this happens. It could be the
increased demands of school assignments and social expectations. But since there seems to be no solid evidence of literature-based curricula in most upper elementary schools, it is quite possible that schools are failing to capitalize upon this peaking of reading interest in ways that increase the desire to read. It well may be that if children had opportunities to discuss books of quality in depth more of them might be "turned on" to reading in their coming school years, and this might then contribute to a large adult population who placed reading high on the priority of life's activities.

This particular study, exploratory in character, attempted to provide a broader foundation for future studies which could be directed toward the major area of voluntary reading. By carefully examining actual in-depth book discussions with children the examiner hoped to gain clues about what it is children respond to when talking about a book and what happens as a teacher attempts to get those same children to think more fully about specific aspects of a book. If book discussions are going to serve children as the means of making a book memorable and to pique their interest in future reading, then we must begin to know exactly what can take place in actual discussions.

Sixth graders were also chosen for this study because this is a time in a child's life when his/her spoken language has reached enough sophistication to deal with more complex vocabulary and concepts. Also, the literature available to this aged child is beginning to face crucial issues such as the paradoxical harsh treatment of a loving father (Our Eddie) or the senseless, evil treatment of slaves which
contains all those involved (The Slave Dancer). Such themes des­erved to be discussed in depth.

Eight students were chosen in order to work with a manageable number. The major aspect of this study was to engage children in discussion and then to analyze the tape recorded discussions. Dis­cussions necessarily must be held with small numbers. The larger the group the less likely discussion will take place and, instead, a certain few will dominate and/or the leader is more inclined to lecture and allow only question-and-answer activity. A discussion should al­low for extended expression, some rambling, and an opportunity for all participants to become involved.

In this study the investigator, who acted as discussion leader, met with four separate discussion groups. They varied in size from 2 to 4, including the investigator. Each discussion was approximately thirty minutes long, and there was a total of twenty group meetings, thus this study represented 10 hours of discussion time. The groups varied in size largely because of specific problems arising within the classroom, and since the investigator took the children to another room for the discussions, it was necessary to acquiesce to the class­room teacher's wishes. Having various sized groups, though, has been fruitful as the analysis of the data will show.

Selection of Books To Be Discussed

Five books were discussed during the school year beginning in October and ending in May. The books fell into three main genres:
historical fiction, realistic fiction, and fantasy. For historical fiction *The Slave Dancer* by Paula Fox was chosen. It tells of the African slave trade from the point of view of a young white boy who was kidnapped and forced to play his fife on the ship for the purpose of "dancing" the African natives. The first realistic fiction book was *The Bear's House* by Marilyn Sachs. Here a ten-year old girl tells of the grim life of her family since her father deserted them and her mother has withdrawn into a state of depression. It also relates the girl's fantasy life at school when she goes back to enjoy the teacher's doll house which contains the Three Bears and Goldilocks. The second realistic fiction book was *Our Eddie* by Sulamith Ish-Kishor and tells of a young boy's struggle with his ambitions as well as his growing physical handicap and a father who seems more concerned about maintaining his Hebrew school than the personal needs of his family. For fantasy the first book was *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man* by Lloyd Alexander. When the Magister's cat gets his wish to be a man he discovers both the advantages and disadvantages of being human. Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* was the other fantasy. This is a rather complex tale of evil, The Dark, attempting to conquer the good forces in life, the Light. (A fuller description of each book will be found in the Appendix).

It was believed that these three genres would be representative of the major kinds of books being written and published for the young reader. The books were chosen primarily because they contain material worthy of discussion. They are stories with more than a
simple plot and considerable action. They have themes of consequence and they deal with characters in various dimensions.

Collection of the Data

Two instruments were administered at the outset of the study. One was the NCTE Cooperative Test (1969): "A Look At Literature". This was designed to assess a student's ability to interpret literary selections. Form A of the test was given in September and Form B was given in May. The test was intended for use with children in grades 4, 5, and 6. Since in-depth discussions about books will likely elicit interpretive comments, it seemed appropriate to administer this particular test. The format of the instrument consisted of two parts, one which was read aloud to the students by the examiner and a second section where the students read silently. Each part contained seven literary selections from quality prose and poetry written for children. Each selection was followed by several multiple choice questions designed to examine three basic response modes, translation, extension, and awareness. The following is an example from the instrument:

Two paragraphs from Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink are printed as the literary selection. It is representative of a realistic narrative. Question 1 (Translation item):

"Something polite and ladylike in Miss Parker snapped."
This means that suddenly she
A. was injured.
B. became angry.
C. felt ashamed.
D. felt weak.

Question 2 (Awareness item). Why do you suppose the author says that Miss Parker is a small woman?
F. To let you know that she is a young teacher.
G. To hint to you that Obediah is a small boy.
H. To surprise you by what happens at the end.
J. To have you think that she doesn't rule the school.

Question 3 (Extension item). Obediah "set his bearskin cap straight on his head." This gives us a hint that he
A. cared about how neat he looked.
B. expected the cap might fall off.
C. was ready for what might happen.
D. didn't want to be in school.

A second instrument was a Survey of Voluntary Reading designed by the investigator and was used to determine the child's interest in and commitment for reading. The student responded to 18 statements on a five-point scale which ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Several examples included were:

1. I usually read only when there is nothing else to do.
2. I don't read much because it is hard to find anything that interests me.

Near the end of the school year in which the study occurred each student again responded to a Reading Background Survey. Also designed by the investigator, it consisted of a brief interview which was tape
recorded. The survey consisted of 23 questions such as:

1. Does someone presently read aloud to you at home?
2. Can you name some favorite books?
3. Who is most likely to give you a book as a gift?

In a second part the student was asked to respond by indicating a position on a five point scale.

1. Compare yourself with your classmates:

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General information, i.e. reading test scores and IQ test scores were secured from the school officials.

How Books Were Presented

Seven of the eight subjects heard the books as they were read aloud to the entire class in which the students were enrolled. It took approximately two weeks for the teacher to read each book aloud, reading to the class daily for a thirty minute period. The eighth subject was asked by the investigator to read each of the books.

Discussion Format

An in-depth discussion of a book should allow for all respondents
to interact, to react, and to reflect with both what is said and with the ideas and content of the book. It was hoped that the discussion would progress naturally with much of the conversation building upon what was being said. The discussion leader did not insist on a prescribed set of questions since this would make it difficult for unexpected directions of the conversation to occur. This is not to suggest that the leader should come into a book discussion without some specific areas that he/she feels are of value for consideration by all of the respondents. The leader needs to be very familiar with the book to be discussed and to have thought through the strengths of that book as well as those aspects which, through discussion, might take on fuller or added meaning. It is also unrealistic to expect that a single period of discussion will be able to exhaust the areas of consideration. Particularly with young children, the discussion period must be brief enough to prevent boredom or the feeling that the book is being picked apart, and long enough to increase the potential for enjoying the book, once it has been read, and for remembering the book.

In this present study the investigator acted as the leader for all discussion groups. Each discussion was expected to last approximately thirty minutes. The students left their regular classroom and met with the investigator in one of two designated areas, depending upon their availability. One was the teacher’s lounge and the other was an office of a school administrator.
Initiating Strategies

Four different strategies were employed for initiating the discussions. They included 1) calling for general reactions, 2) retelling, 3) remembering a most vivid memory, and 4) reactions to a specific character.

Both *The Slave Dancer* and *The Bears' House* were initiated with a request for the subject to express general reactions. It was during *The Slave Dancer* that the investigator had expected to implement a nondirective approach but was forced to abandon it before all four groups had discussed the book. The strategy of starting the discussion by recalling, or retelling the story was employed for the book *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man*. For expressing a most vivid memory from a book, the discussion of *The Dark Is Rising* was used. And it was *Our Eddie* in which the discussions began with the investigator asking the subjects to share their reactions to what happened to the title character.

Added explanation of the strategies along with examples will be found in Chapter IV.

Record Keeping

Each discussion was recorded on audio tape and subsequently transcribed by the investigator. The handwritten transcriptions were then typed into protocols.

The interviews of the Reading Background Survey were tape recorded also and the resulting information was charted. It was felt that this
background data would be more useful if it was gained via interview rather than responding to a printed questionnaire since the interview allowed the child to comment.

**Treatment of the Data**

The protocols of the twenty discussions were subjected to a variety of analyses. Each discussion was examined in three different ways: 1) as a single experience, 2) in comparison with the other discussion groups on each book, and 3) in comparison with the other discussions of the same group. In each instance word frequencies were determined including total number of words per discussion, number of words generated by the children of each group and the discussion leader (the investigator of this study). The responses of each child were categorized in two ways: according 1) to the Squire categories, and 2) to content categories within the Squire system as determined by this investigator. The protocols were also examined for themes and concepts from each book which more than one group discussed. Finally there was an effort to secure a more personal response to literature by examining each subjects' reactions to the Repertory Grid.

**Word Counts**

In an attempt to examine the whole dynamic of in-depth book discussions, the investigator submitted the data to various word counts. It was believed that a summary of the amounts of leader talk and student talk might give some indications concerning the impact of the speakers on the responses, the content of those responses, and the nature of those responses.
Total word counts were determined and then two major subtotals were identified, one was a total word count for the discussion leader and one was a total word count for the students. Such totals were established for each book discussion. In addition, since every discussion group met on separate occasions to discuss each of five different books, grand totals were computed for the words generated during every meeting of a group as well as grand subtotals for both the leader and the students for all five discussions of each group.

In addition to raw word counts, these frequencies were converted into percentages in order to compare the within-single group dynamic, the between-single group dynamic, and the between-other group dynamic aspects of these discussions.

The Category System

A review of the literature revealed few models for the analysis of in-depth book discussions. The usual procedure for collecting responses of individuals to literature has been either to write or speak (often only in the presence of a tape recorder) one's reactions, feelings, impressions, thoughts aroused by and/or related to the literary work or works being used as the basis for the response experience.

The Purves study continues to be the model for the identification of categories of response when students have been asked to write while the Squire study remains the guide for collecting oral responses during and after the reading of a literary work. But in both cases
the respondent operated in a "free" situation where the student was encouraged to say (or write) all he could regarding the literary work without any substantive reaction from a teacher, investigator, or other third party, to the content of the respondent's remarks.

The present study is markedly different in that the students and the investigator engaged in in-depth discussions of books familiar to all participants. It was the intent of this investigator to analyze the student's responses generated in the discussion situation.

In attempting to analyze the students' responses in this study it was difficult to use either the Purves or Squire categories because the responses of the students in this study were made in direct relation to the questions and comments of the adult leader (the investigator). Also these students were younger than those used by Purves and Squire. Nevertheless, there seemed to be sufficient relationship between the Squire categories, since they were oral responses, and the oral responses of the students in the discussions conducted in this study. It was necessary to adapt the Squire system by reinterpreting some of the definitions of the Squire categories. The investigator also considered an analysis of the content of the categories.

In identifying the nature of each response, the study employed the seven categories as developed by Squire: Literary Judgment, Interpretational Responses, Narrational Reactions, Associational Responses, Self-Involvement, Prescriptive Judgments, and a category of Miscellaneous Responses which were those that could not be coded elsewhere.
Literary Judgments were those responses that seemed to refer to the work in terms of literary and aesthetic qualities. This would include such a statement as, "I liked it," or "It was okay." Also reactions to the language, style, and characterization were considered to be Literary Judgments. But judgmental remarks on specific situations in the story were not since they seemed to refer to less than the whole work.

Interpretational Responses were "reactions in which the reader generalizes and attempts to discover meaning of the stories, the motivational forces, and the nature of the characters" (Squire, 1964, p. 17).

Narrational Reactions were simply details or facts in the story which the reader mentions without any accompanying interpretation.

Associational Responses were responses in which the reader seemed to be associating the experiences and ideas of the story with his own life, with the exception of relating a character to himself. When references were made to other literary works, either past or present they were also considered as Associational Responses.

Self-Involvement responses were those in which the reader reacted personally to a character in the story.

Prescriptive Judgments were "responses in which the reader prescribes a course of action for a character based on some absolute standard" (Squire, 1964, p. 18).

The investigator identified a number of content subcategories for each major response category. Literary Judgments were mainly general
or they referred to Language, Style, or Characterization. In several instances it was determined that the Literary Judgment response was made in relation to Other Literature or to a Theme in the book.

Interpretational Responses referred, in content, usually to Characters and Plot, but there were also those which made reference to Theme, the Setting, and "Visual Reconstructions of scenes which seemed to represent visual interpretation of specific facts" (Squire, 1964, p. 18), and several that referred to Language in a specific part of the work rather than of the total work. There were two Interpretational Responses which were uncodeable.

Narrational Responses were primarily confined in Characters, Plot, and Setting. There were several which seemed to fit the definition of Narrational Responses which referred to Language, Theme, or Style.

Associational Responses were grouped into the following content areas: Ideas or Themes, Events, Places, People, and Other Literature. One response seemed to fit the content area of Style and one was uncodeable.

Self-Involvement Responses were general in content, or they referred to the Character's Behavior and/or Emotions.

Prescriptive Judgments were not divided into subcategories since there were so few that it did not seem useful to do so.

Personal Constructs of Literature

In an effort to ascertain greater insight into the aspects of the literature that had meaningful significance for each individual subject, a procedure known as the Repertory Grid was employed with the
students in this study. It was based upon the work of George Kelly in personality and refined by Donald Bannister of Kent, England. The writer of this study has followed guidelines for the Repertory Grid as described by Robert Monaghan (1972). The salient feature of this procedure is the eliciting of personal constructs and contrasts which have particular meaning to the individual. In studies of reading interests and responses one generally imposes someone else's terms upon the subject. For instance, the researcher or teacher may identify through observation that a particular child shows a preference for fantasy when selecting books to read, but "fantasy" is the outsider's term whereas that child, when asked to talk about those he/she prefers may refer to "how real magical kingdoms always are," thereby indicating an actual preference for realism, which presently she/he is finding in books with magic or far away places. Through use of the procedures for the Repertory Grid it may be possible to identify more accurately just what is meaningful in one's reading.

The procedure carried out in this study began with a selection of ten books which the students had heard or read during the school year. The following books were used by seven of the subjects in developing their personal grid score matrix:

The Pushcart War - Jean Merrill
* The Bears' House - Marilyn Sachs
A Proud Taste of Scarlet and Miniver - E. L. Konigsburg
* Our Eddie - Sulamith Ish-Kishor
* The Slave Dancer - Paula Fox
The starred titles were those used for the in-depth discussions of the present study. All of the above books were read to the children by the classroom teacher during the school year.

The eighth subject used the following books for her grid score matrix, in addition to the five starred titles from the preceding list:

- The Yearling - Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
- Julie of The Wolves - Jean George
- Johnny Tremain - Esther Forbes
- Watership Down - Richard Adams
- Jane - Emily - Patricia Clapp

The investigator met with the subjects individually. The books were placed before each subject. Three titles were placed together and the student indicated how two of the books were alike in some important way and then stated how the third book was different from the other two. This procedure was repeated a number of times. Whatever the subject said about the two books was considered a construct and the comments about the third book were the contrast. Any books could be grouped and titles were repeated. This process was continued until a list of approximately ten constructs and contrasts were determined.

After the list of constructs was developed, the subject was directed
to arrange all ten books for each construct in descending order from the book which most fit the construct down to the book which least fit it. For example, one of Cora's constructs was "has an air of supernaturality." She selected The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man as the book most with an air of supernaturality and The Yearling as the book least with that quality. In using this procedure, arbitrary adult constructs may be included.

During this ranking activity, therefore, the investigator introduced four constructs to be considered. These constructs were:

1. The books I enjoyed most;
2. The books which were most like the ones I usually read;
3. The books that have something in them that is most like me; and
4. The books that helped to stretch my imagination the most, or helped me to imagine the most.

The rankings of the books for each child for each of his/her constructs and for the arbitrary constructs introduced by the investigator were noted. During this time the investigator had the tape recorder running to order to 1) verify the constructs and contrasts the child identified, 2) verify, the rankings of the books according to each construct, and 3) to catch any clarifying or additional information the child might add as he/she was engaged in ranking the books. For example, if the child could explain what he/she meant by "most like me" when ranking the books for that particular construct it would provide added meaning to what the child finds of import in books. In
general, each of the eight subjects proceeded through the ranking task with almost no hesitation. The investigator had expected that the arbitrary construct, "stretched the imagination," might be met with confusion, but all of the eight subjects responded to this one immediately without any indication of misunderstanding. Time limitations prevented engaging each child in conversation regarding his/her rankings.

Correlations between constructs were computed with the aid of the university's computer, using the Pearson Product Moment. The coefficients were converted to Grid scores and a total variance score for each construct was computed. The correlations have been multiplied by one hundred, since the coefficients are not linear, for a percentage of common variance between pairs of constructs (Monaghan, 1972, p. 46).

**Summary**

This chapter has described the population from which the sample of eight sixth grade subjects was chosen. The rationale and criteria for selecting the subjects was explained. Various procedures for gaining background information and for eliciting the subjects' responses to selected books was then presented in this chapter. The procedures for four analyses of the data were then described. They included tabulation of the number of words generated, a classification system of response units according to literary categories and content subcategories, the identification of concepts and themes which were discussed, and a procedure for eliciting individual children's responses through the development of personal constructs.
CHAPTER IV
ELICITING THE RESPONSES

Introduction

This chapter will include pertinent information about each of the subjects, a discussion of the various strategies that were employed in the effort to elicit response to the selected books and specific observations of the talking behavior of the subjects.

Reading Background of Subjects

In order to have some understanding of the subjects' interest in and attitudes toward reading, an instrument, "Survey of Voluntary Reading," designed by the investigator, was administered at the outset of the study. This consisted of 16 statements to which the subject responded on a five-point scale from Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree, to Strongly Disagree. The results of the survey are presented in Table 2.

There was a wide range of attitude and interest toward reading among the eight subjects. The least amount of range occurred when the seven subjects either agreed or strongly agreed to enjoying the opportunity to talk about books after reading them, and seven either strongly disagreed or disagreed that it was difficult to find something of interest to read. In both instances only one subject felt quite differently from the others. Mike indicated he did not like to talk about books after
Table 2
Response To Survey Of Voluntary Reading

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<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>NOT SURE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. At school I like to have time to read for pleasure and information.</td>
<td>Cora</td>
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<td>2. I have a collection of my own books.</td>
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<td>3. I usually read only when there is nothing else to do.</td>
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<td>Cora</td>
<td>Ken</td>
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<td>4. I usually have a specific book to read.</td>
<td>Cora</td>
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<td>5. There are some books I have read more than once.</td>
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<td>6. I can remember some books that were read aloud to me.</td>
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<td>7. I don't read much because it's hard to find anything that interests me.</td>
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<td>8. Most teachers</td>
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<td>I've known do</td>
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<td>Mike</td>
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<td>10. I frequently</td>
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<td>use the public</td>
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<td>11. Presently I</td>
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<td>13. If it's a choice</td>
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<td>between a TV program</td>
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<td>I like and reading,</td>
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<td>14. I frequently</td>
<td>Ken</td>
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<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
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<tr>
<td>15. I enjoy having someone read to me.</td>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Mike</td>
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<td>Ken</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. I like to talk about books after reading them.</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reading them, and Joe agreed that he found it hard to locate reading material that interested him. Joe remained fairly consistent with a negative approach to voluntary reading. He evidently had no personal collection of books at home, or it was minimal. He made very little use of the school library, though he indicated more frequent use of the public library. Television viewing generally took precedence over reading for Joe. At the time of the survey Joe did not have a book he was reading, and he was ambivalent when it came to indicating whether he usually had a specific book to read. Joe was equally unsure whether he wanted time at school available for reading either for pleasure or for information. Despite this rather negative picture, Joe agreed there were books he had read more than once and that he would like to talk about books after reading them. It was interesting that Joe seemed to view most of his teachers as people who enjoyed reading.

Another child who seemed to have a negative view toward reading was Mike. Though he indicated he had a book to read at present, he also noted that usually he did not. Mike strongly agreed that reading was something to do only when there was nothing else to do, but he was less sure when it came to choosing a television program over reading. Mike also indicated he liked to have time to read at school. He was rather definite about not enjoying being read to and preferring not to talk to anyone about books after reading them.

At the opposite end of the continuum there were several subjects who had very positive feelings about reading. Cora, in particular, liked to read, had her own collection of books, always had a book to
read, had no difficulty finding something of interest to read, preferred reading over television, enjoyed being read to, and liked to talk about books she had read.

Meg and Fay both indicated positive reactions to reading, also, though they were much less sure about preferring reading over television. And Meg seemed to be less sure whether her friends preferred other activities over reading.

Five of the subjects indicated their friends preferred other activities instead of reading. Six subjects did not view reading as a last resort activity.

During the study, the investigator conducted a brief interview with each subject in order to gather more information about their attitudes and interest toward reading. The first portion of the interview consisted of questions which the subject could respond to either by remembering titles or identifying specific people who read or influenced the child's reading. The second portion was an instrument where the subject located himself on a five point scale. The information gained from the interview is reported in Table 3.

Six of the subjects responded that they had read one or more series books. Series books were identified as books which had the same characters or were written by the same author such as the Paddington Bear Books, the Henry Huggins Books, The Laura Ingalls Wilder Books, the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boy Mysteries. Of the six subjects, it was learned that Cal could only remember one series and that turned out to be an information book on football. For the other
Table 3

Information Gained From Interviews: Part I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERIES BOOKS</th>
<th>MEMBER OF FAMILY WHO ENJOYS READING</th>
<th>AN ADULT WHO LIKES TO READ</th>
<th>A PEER WHO LIKES TO READ</th>
<th>CURRENTLY BEING READ ALOUD TO AT HOME</th>
<th>REMEMBER BEING READ ALOUD TO AT HOME WHEN YOUNG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>Yes - 1 Brother</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes-Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Yes - 5 Father</td>
<td>The investigator of this study</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes-Both parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>Yes - 4 Sister</td>
<td>Mrs. Barr</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Yes - 5 Older Sister</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Val</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes-Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Yes - 3 Mother</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes-Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Yes-Sisters, Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Yes - 1 Sister</td>
<td>Mrs. Witt</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>Yes-Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Yes - 1 Sister</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes-Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Received Books As Gifts</td>
<td>Favorite Books</td>
<td>Books Re-Read</td>
<td>Favorite Authors</td>
<td>Most Treasured Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes-2+</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4+</td>
<td>Yes-3+</td>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>Yes - 3+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes-3</td>
<td>Yes - 2</td>
<td>Yes - 1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes-1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>so many</td>
<td>Yes-1+</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes - 1+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>can't say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes-1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes - 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continuation of Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO YOU READ NEWSPAPER?</th>
<th>DO YOU READ COMIC BOOKS?</th>
<th>NO. OF BOOKS READ THIS YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>Yes - 2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>35*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Yes - 2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Yes - 1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Yes - 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Yes - 1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Where the name of a series was given instead of individual titles.

* = Cora said, "Plus all the other books I've mentioned to you when we have talked."
Continuation of Table 3

Information Gained From Interviews: Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Look forward to silent reading time each day:</th>
<th>Not Really</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the silent reading time:</th>
<th>Too Short</th>
<th></th>
<th>Too Long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Meg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you had to lose an activity once in a while, the silent reading time would be:</th>
<th>Definitely would want to lose</th>
<th>Definitely not want to lose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Zeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Fay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Ken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Mike</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare self with classmates:</th>
<th>One of least avid readers</th>
<th>One of most avid readers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Cora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Zeb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mag</td>
<td>Fay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>Ken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Continuation of Table 3

Information Gained From Interviews: Part II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After reading a good book:</th>
<th>Would rather not talk with anyone about it</th>
<th>Would like to talk with someone about it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>Cora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Mike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Own books:</th>
<th>Less than 10</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>75</th>
<th>100 or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Cora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of public library:</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>Fay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TV Habits:</th>
<th>Watch almost none</th>
<th>Watch a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
five, the series mentioned were fiction, though with further questioning of Mike it was learned that the only series he had read were two books by William Armstrong, Sounder and Sourland. Then Mike corrected himself and said he had just begun Sourland, and had not yet finished it. He did not complete the book. Joe was the only child to indicate he had not read any series books.

All eight subjects indicated at least one other member of the family who enjoyed reading, though Mike revealed that the person who enjoyed reading was his sister in first grade. When asked to identify an adult, not necessarily in the family, who like to read, Joe, Meg, and Ken could not name anyone. Zeb and Cal, with some hesitation, thought their fathers did. Zeb pointed out that his father was a college history professor and had to read for his work. Fay named a special projects teacher. Mike named a friend of his mother, and Cora identified the investigator without hesitation. When asked to name a peer who liked to read, seven subjects named either a classmate or a neighborhood friend. Joe could not name anyone. He apparently did not consider naming a classmate. It may be that he was only thinking of his friends, and in that group there evidently was no one who liked to read.

When queried as to whether each subject was presently being read aloud to, seven said they were not. Only Cora was being read to, and she and her two younger brothers were read to by both parents. All of the subjects with the exception of Fay remembered being read to when they were very young by one or both parents.
All eight subjects stated they received books as gifts and seven indicated they usually received such gifts from a relative including the parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Only Joe said he received the books as gifts from friends who lived across the street. Mike, Cal, and Meg could not name any titles of the books they had received as gifts.

The subjects were asked to name their favorite books. Joe and Mike could not name any titles. When requested to identify books that had been re-read, six were able to supply the titles including Mike who, though unable to name a favorite, cited Jonathan Livingston Seagull as a book he had read more than once. Joe and Cal could not think of any books they had re-read.

Six subjects could not name a favorite author. Fay chose E. L. Konigsburg and Laura Ingalls Wilder. Cora found it difficult to name a favorite because she felt one book by an author might be very good or interest her, but another one by the same author might not interest her. She seemed reluctant to be forced into selecting a favorite author, though in later conversations she expressed a strong desire to read all of Susan Cooper's books (Cooper's The Dark Is Rising was one of the books used in this study), and her grandmother's recommendation of Mary Stewart's The Crystal Cave had led her to The Hollow Hills by Stewart.

The subjects were asked to consider why authors write books. There were such responses as, "It's their job," "To make money," "For entertainment," "So others may learn," "Just to have something to do," and "they like to write."
The subjects were asked to think about the books they owned and to select those which they considered to be their most treasured books. Cora’s list was long and varied from The Little House books to The Yearling and The Silent World of Jacques Costeau. Fay named the Louisa May Alcott books, and Ken named the Alfred Hitchcock Investigator Series. Mike and Cal named old books that had belonged to their fathers. Meg and Joe had no books they considered their most treasured.

All of the subjects looked at some magazines including Cricket, Redbook, Boys’ Life, Mad, National Geographic, and Sports Illustrated. No one seemed to spend much time looking at the newspaper. Those who did usually read the comics or sports or a headline particularly when fulfilling a school assignment for current events. Very few comic magazines were mentioned. Cal read Peanuts and Meg enjoyed Dennis the Menace and Mr. Magoo. Ken said, “I’m beginning to grow out of them,” and Cora pointed out that they were not too accessible and that she preferred not to spend her money on them.

When the subjects came to the interview they were each asked to bring a list of the books they had read during the school year. Cora had a list of thirty-five titles and then remembered two poetry books to add, one by Eve Merriam and one by Kaye Starbird. Cora was the only subject to list poetry. Fay provided a list of forty-four books, and Meg had twenty-one. Cal and Joe each listed nine titles and Ken named seven. Mike had a list of five titles, but he pointed out that he had “started” four of them. Only one, Sounder, had he finished.
Zeb listed only four books.

On the second portion of the interview where the students responded to the questions on a five-point scale, they all looked forward to the regularly scheduled silent reading time very much. Three of them felt it was definitely too short, two thought it might be too short, two felt it was just right. Cora said, "It's usually about right because I can always go on reading if I want after that." Only Mike felt that the period seemed "a little long."

In comparing themselves to their classmates, Cora, Zeb, Fay, and Ken felt they each were one of the most avid readers. Meg and Cal chose the second position on the scale and so felt that they, too, were avid readers. Mike picked the third position which presumably placed him as an average reader, and Joe marked the fourth position which probably meant he saw himself as nearly one of the least avid readers.

Observations Concerning the Reading Background of Subjects

1. In general the subjects found it easy to locate books of interest to read.
2. There was a wide range of attitude and interest toward reading among the eight subjects.
3. The child who seemed least interested in reading had a consistently negative profile on the Survey of Voluntary Reading instrument including almost no personal collection of books, little use of the school library, a strong preference for watching television over reading, and little family interest in reading.
4. The child who seemed least interested in reading indicated a desire to talk with someone about a book after reading it.

5. Another child with a fairly negative attitude toward reading indicated no desire to talk with someone about a book after reading it.

6. The child who seemed most interested in reading had a consistently positive profile on the Survey of Voluntary Reading instrument including her own extensive book collection, almost total disinterest in television, and considerable family interest in reading.

7. The children who were most interested in reading had read series books. Those identified as the most reluctant readers have not read any series of fiction books.

8. Generally those subjects who seemed to be avid readers could identify adults who read.

9. Only one child was still being read to by the parents.

10. In general both avid and reluctant readers received books as gifts.

11. All but the two most reluctant subjects could name one or more favorite books.

12. In general both avid and reluctant readers could not name a favorite author.

13. The subjects found it difficult to explain why authors write.

14. Half of the subjects either did not have any books they considered "most treasured" or could only name one very old, obscure title.

15. All subjects spend some time reading various magazines.
16. Almost no subjects read comic books regularly.
17. In general the number of books freely read during the year was consistent with the child's degree of interest in reading.
18. Generally the subjects liked to have a time regularly set aside at school for silent reading.
19. In general the subjects were fairly realistic in comparing their interest in reading to that of their classmates.

Test Information

As a regular part of the school district testing program, the sixth grade students took the Stanford Achievement Test Battery in October. The eight subjects of this study were included in this testing program. These students also were administered the California Test of Mental Maturity during their fourth grade year as a part of the testing program of the district. Table 4 provides the most useful information regarding the eight subjects' age, mental maturity, and reading achievement.

The youngest subject was Cora who was eleven and a half at the conclusion of the study. Ken was the oldest at age twelve and six months. The lowest IQ score was Cal with 107 and the highest was Zeb with 136. At the time of the administration of the Stanford Achievement Test the norm used was grade 6.2. Only Cal scored below the norm with 5.7 for total reading achievement. His reading comprehension was 4.4, but his vocabulary score was 6.5. Only Joe scored within the sixth grade range on total reading achievement and his
Table 4

Age, Mental Maturity And Reading Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>BIRTHDATE</th>
<th>AGE ON 6/1/75</th>
<th>CALIF. MENTAL MATURITY</th>
<th>STANFORD ACHIEVEMENT RDG.</th>
<th>COMP.</th>
<th>TOTAL RDG.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>4/25/63</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>12/17/63</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>10/20/63</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>7/12/63</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>12/4/62</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>1/26/63</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>12/17/62</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cal</td>
<td>1/5/63</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mark was 6.8. Mike and Ken scored 7.8 and 8.5 respectively, and the remaining four subjects had scores of 10.5 which is the highest score possible on this particular test. In general the subjects scored higher on reading comprehension than on vocabulary with the exceptions of Mike, Cal, and Ken who each performed better on vocabulary.

At the beginning of the school year in which this study was undertaken, the investigator administered the ETS/NCTE test, "A Look At Literature" to the eight subjects. A second form of the same instrument was administered to the subjects at the conclusion of the study. There was a total possible raw score of 50 points. Table 5 records the results of the two forms of the test for each of the eight subjects.

Raw scores represented the number of correct test items. Since raw scores on the two different forms were not directly comparable because no two forms could be equal in both content and difficulty, it was necessary to convert the raw scores after being statistically equated to a common scale. Such common scores then were as nearly comparable as possible. The converted scores have been computed by the publishers and appear in the Handbook for "A Look At Literature." The maximum converted score for Form A was 80, and for Form B it was 79. It is also important to note that the test has not yet been standardized.

Examination of Table 5 reveals gains for all subjects except for Cora and Zeb, yet Cora made the highest score among the subjects on both forms. Most notable were the large gains made by Mike, Cal, and
Table 5
A Look At Literature: Test Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>FORM A (9/74)</th>
<th>FORM B (5/75)</th>
<th>CHANGE IN SCORE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>RAW SCORE</td>
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<td>Fay</td>
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<td>Joe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zeb</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cora</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ken. Zeb, though failing to gain, was a high scorer on both forms. Joe made one of the least gains during the year, and his scores are among the lowest.

Observations Drawn from Test Information

1. With the exception of one subject, all students were reading at or above grade level.
2. The mental maturity of the subjects ranged from 107 to 136.
3. The youngest subject was the most avid reader of the group.
4. The four students identified as avid readers all scored at the top of the Stanford Achievement Test for Total Reading.
5. Students who were in the middle of a continuum of avid-to-reluctant readers tended to make the greatest gains on a test designed to measure a student's understanding and interpretation of literary selections.

Eliciting Responses from the Subjects

In an exploratory study such as this, it was felt that a variety of strategies might be used in order to elicit a variety of response modes. Since there were few research studies concerning responses to in-depth book discussions with middle grade students, this investigator decided to approach each of the five discussions in a slightly different way. In all discussions the leader (investigator) did not follow a pre-set arrangement of questions because it was believed this would take away from the desired spontaneity of genuine discussion. Nevertheless, the discussion leader came prepared with specific topics which he
considered noteworthy when discussing each book. As each discussion on a particular book progressed the leader kept those topics in mind, with the aid of brief notes, and introduced them at appropriate moments depending upon the direction that a discussion was taking.

In general, the different strategies centered upon the leader's first comment or question which began each discussion. At the outset of the study, it was thought that the most non-directive way to begin a book discussion would be to call for general reactions by the discussants. This appeared to be a comfortable approach for encouraging the subjects to begin talking. None of the subjects had ever engaged in such intimate, intense conversations at school regarding books. This was a new experience with no precedence for either the leader or the other discussion participants to fall back upon. And though the teachers of these students did talk with the entire class during and after the sharing of many books, it was not possible to engage an individual's thinking much beyond a surface level.

It must be noted, though, that the conversations with Cora revealed the definite likelihood that she frequently had opportunities to talk in more depth about books when her grandmother came to visit, for Cora spoke warmly about her grandmother as being a major source of books and one with whom she enjoyed talking about books. The general ease and apparent delight in discussing a book with the investigator was very different from the tenor of all the other discussion groups.
The Slave Dancer was the first book to be discussed. Since the investigator expected to begin the discussions of this book and of The Bears' House with eliciting general reactions, he thought that in this first group of discussions he would provide a non-directive approach, one in which he tried to curtail his influence by only picking up on what was said either by repeating a subject's comment or requesting further elaboration.

EXAMPLE

Child: I think the book was pretty good.
I liked it, in other words.

Leader: You liked it, in other words.

EXAMPLE

Child: . . . the story itself was good but some of the pictures weren't as good . . .

Leader: I see. So you had a feeling about the pictures that was different from the story itself.

EXAMPLE

Child: Well, uh, they're supposed to, like, give the feeling of dark

Leader: Why would they want the feeling of dark?

Child: That's the way the story was.

Leader: The story was dark, is that what you're saying?
Child: Yeah
Leader: What do you mean when you say the story was dark?

The non-directive approach seemed difficult to sustain, particularly with students who had not discussed books in depth by any approach before. The thirty minute maximum time limit for each discussion made it difficult to pursue all leads in any depth. For example, the leader had hoped to touch upon several important aspects of the book *The Slave Dancer* including the themes of survival and friendship and some comments regarding the type of story which was historical fiction. It was not possible to talk about all these aspects within a 30 minute period when the leader employed a non-directive technique.

When the leader began the discussion of *The Slave Dancer* with the second group he still hoped to follow the non-directive approach but soon realized that the time would get away without much discussion of the areas the leader felt should be considered, and so he found himself becoming a more active, directive leader. This pattern was then followed for the remaining two discussion groups.

The second set of discussions were on *The Bears' House* and the approach was directive, allowing the leader to bring up various topics which he thought were the strengths of the books. Again, the leader began each group with a call for the students' general reactions. At the conclusion of these discussions, an informal assessment was made of the initiating strategy of asking for general reactions to *The Bears' House*. One group of two students wasted some time over who
should start talking which may have been an indication of how they felt about the book. The other three groups had specific reactions which were judgmental in nature.

**EXAMPLE**

Mike: Well, at first I thought, you know, the book wouldn't be real good. I thought it was kind of, you know, like a fourth, fifth grade book. But then it turned out to be all right.

Ken: Uh, I thought it was sort of funny . . . the way she, uh, she was, sucked her thumb and, uh, did whatever people told her to do, and things like that, and things like that, sucked her thumb, and everybody calling her Thumbsucker and smelling bad.

Cora: My general reaction was that there was a bunch of big problems that weren't solved that ought to have been.

In the examples cited it appears that Mike tried to indicate how he felt when the book was just starting and Cora was reacting to what she considered to be an unsatisfactory conclusion of the book. Ken reacted to the humorous potential throughout the book. This led to discussing whether in this book it was the character or the reader who was engaged in experiences that were funny.
For the third set of discussions, which were on *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man*, a different strategy was used. The groups were asked to begin by "recapping" the story. This strategy was chosen for several reasons. The leader was concerned that he might be doing too much talking, and retelling the story would be an appropriate way to get the children to do more talking. Also it was thought useful to examine whether the nature of the responses would be different. In addition, it was of interest to note whether the discussion points, which the leader had earlier determined, could be brought out within this particular strategy.

In the discussions of the fourth book, *The Dark Is Rising*, another strategy was employed. The discussions were initiated with the leader requesting that each student identify his/her most vivid memory from the book. It was believed that this particular book, complex in structure and symbolically sophisticated, might lend itself well to such an opening request. Though the leader had some specific points he hoped to raise, it seemed reasonable to think that the students might bring more to the discussion as well as gain more from it if he/she shared an outstanding memory as a place from which to begin the discussion. It was not difficult in the course of each discussion to deal with the points which the leader had determined during his preplanning.

One final strategy was used as the initiating procedure for the fifth and last set of discussions. These were on the book *Our Eddie*. This time the leader began by saying, "Were you surprised with what
happened to Eddie?" This question focused one's attention immediately upon the most startling event in the story, the sudden and unexpected death of the main character some time before the conclusion of the book. The obvious surprise or shock is shown in the following examples:

EXAMPLE

Child: Most books, they don't, they just don't happen like that.
Child: . . . I didn't think he'd die, the main character would die.
Child: He seemed like he was all right except for his leg.
Child: \text{I was surprised} that they let it happen.

In summary, five different strategies were used in these discussions, four were varying ways to begin the talking sessions and one was an attempt to effect the entire discussion period. This was the non-directive approach which seemed a more useful one when there would be a longer time available for the discussions. The four initiating strategies included 1) calling for general reactions to the book which would permit students to focus their attention on the whole book, the specific event, the conclusion, or certain characters; 2) retelling the story which could serve both as a quick review and a way for the students to do more of the talking; 3) sharing a strong memory from the book; and 4) reacting to a specific character's experience.
Observations for Eliciting Responses from the Subjects

1. The non-directive approach for conducting a discussion with sixth grade students who were inexperienced with both the approach and in-depth book discussions was not appropriate within a thirty-minute time limit.

2. It was possible to generate discussion using the four initiating strategies of this study.

3. The leader does not need to follow a pre-set arbitrary set of questions for discussion of a book to take place. It is sufficient for the leader to have some general ideas of importance drawn from the book available for discussion.

4. It was possible for the leader to have discussion on the points he considered noteworthy in all groups.

5. When asked to give general reactions to a book, children responded in various ways, i.e. one commenting on the beginning, another speaking about the conclusion, and a third reacting to the book as a whole.

6. When students are asked to retell a story, it is still possible for the leader to include the various topics he had hoped to discuss.

7. The initiating strategy of recalling a most vivid memory was useful for discussions of a more difficult book.

Observing Behavior of the Subjects

In order for the analysis of the children's responses to be more clearly understood, certain general observations of the subjects during the discussion periods need to be made followed by a detailed
examination of the amount of talk that was generated.

**General Observations**

It was the intent of the investigator to work with a variety of able readers. Able readers were identified as students who read near grade level or above as determined by the judgment of the classroom teachers. Referring back to Table 4, it appears that this criteria was well met with the possible exception of Cal whose reading comprehension score was 4.4 and total reading score was 5.7. This total score was close to grade level (6.2 at the time of the testing), and Cal's vocabulary score was fairly strong at 6.5.

It was somewhat difficult to draw out only several children from the classroom for a thirty minute discussion partly because these students were in Informal Classrooms where they were usually pursuing a wide variety of activities. Generally these activities were of high interest since the students had chosen them and/or contributed significantly to the structuring of the activities. Also it was probably difficult for the students to feel enthusiastic about meeting to discuss a book because it was not possible to become personally well acquainted with the investigator. Both he and the students felt the restriction of time and so could not devote energies to small talk. The investigator had the disadvantage of being an outsider, someone who was not viewed as a part of the instructional team.

Of the eight subjects, Meg was the most reluctant to come. She always seemed to be enthusiastically engaged in an activity with two
or three close girl friends, none of whom were a part of this study. Fay, who joined her for the discussions, did not seem to be a particular friend of Meg. It was quite possible that this lack of a strong bond of friendship contributed to their silences and ensuing struggles to discuss the books. With the boys there was some feeling on the part of the investigator that they welcomed the opportunity to leave the classroom, but for most of them they did not seem eager to be engaged in the hard work of thinking through the potential of the books. They generally did not seem to delight in talking about the books. Ken was an exception. He usually arrived at the room where the discussions were held before the other two boys in his group. In fact, he sometimes would spot the investigator on the playground during the recess just prior to his discussion group's time, and would run over and greet the investigator. During the discussions Ken was eager to talk. Of all the subjects, Cora was the most interested in discussing the books with the investigator. She greeted him with a smile and usually had something to say about the book or some other book as soon as she entered the discussion room. She confided to the school administrator how much she enjoyed talking about books with the investigator.

**How Much Talk Was Generated**

In an effort to describe the amount of talk which was generated during the discussions of this study, total word counts per discussion groups and accompanying percentages were developed and compared with
those of the leader for all five books. This data is reported in Table 6.

Looking horizontally across Table 6, one can draw a comparison of words generated by each of the four discussion groups for any one of the books used in the study. A vertical examination or looking down the columns, permits one to compare a single discussion group's performance on all five books.

For the entire study a total of 71,515 words were produced. This is a combined total of the words of the discussion leader (investigator) and the student participants. Though the main focus of this study was on the children's responses, it should provide a fuller perspective to see the influence of the leader in terms of words generated during the discussions.

The total figures for the book The Bears' House need to be interpreted with caution since only the beginning 15 minutes of the discussions with the group made up of Zeb, Ken and Joe and the group of Meg and Fay were recorded due to a mechanical difficulty of the tape recorder which was not discovered until after the discussions on that particular book were completed. A book discussion on the same book cannot be repeated for all spontaneity would be lost. Also, the children's school schedule made it inappropriate to conduct those discussions again. To further complicate the data collection and subsequent analysis of The Bears' House discussions, after only ten minutes with Cora she realized that she had to hurry in order to leave school for an appointment. Thus, for these reasons the following commentary on
Table 6

Amount of Talk Generated By Child-Groups and By Leader for Five Books

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<th>BOOK #1</th>
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<th>LEADER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>MIKE-CAL</th>
<th>LEADER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>ZEB-KEN-JOE</th>
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(numbers in parentheses represent a forty minute period)

(numbers in parentheses represent the full half hour discussion)
Continuation of Table 6

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<th>MEG-FAY</th>
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<th>TOTAL</th>
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<th>ALL LEADER TOTAL</th>
<th>TOTAL WORDS</th>
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words generated for the books includes only equalized information on
The Bears' House, i.e. the first half of Mike's and Cal's discussion.

One other caution needs to be pointed out before proceeding to
a more detailed explanation of Table 6. Usually thirty minutes were
available for each discussion. But on the day that the investigator
and Cora discussed The Dark Is Rising they ran over approximately
ten minutes. In order to compare the different groups it was decided
that the maximum thirty minute time should be used, and so the total
word count for all four groups on The Dark Is Rising includes thirty
minutes of Cora's discussion period rather than the actual forty
minutes which elapsed.

A comparison of words generated for each of four books (The
Bears' House is being excluded as previously explained) indicated
that close to 25% of the total words was produced for each book. The
total amount of talk for the subjects resulted in an average of 36%
of the words generated and for the leader this produced an average of
64%. The subjects were responsible, at the most, for 46% of the words
in the discussions of The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man, and the leader's
portion represented 54% in that book.

An examination of each discussion group indicated that both
groups with two students had considerably lower amounts of child talk
than did the group with three and the group with only one. The
leader's total for Our Eddie (68%), The Slave Dancer (69%), and The
Dark Is Rising (70%), were almost equal. For the first fifteen
minutes of The Bears' House, the leader generated 59% of the words and
the children were responsible for 41%.

Meg and Fay talked the least of any group when discussing The Dark Is Rising (19%). These same two children also talked the least with the discussion of Our Eddie (21%). In The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man discussions, Meg and Fay talked the most with 52%.

In examining the word totals by groups it appears that the group with one child and with three children both averaged approximately the same percentage of words, 42% and 44% respectively. Both groups with two child participants averaged 30% of the words for all five discussions.

Observations Concerning the Behavior of the Subjects

1. In-depth discussions are difficult for an outsider to conduct with children who are actively involved in interesting school activities.

2. In-depth discussion of a book should be with children who want to engage in such an activity.

3. In-depth discussions should not be limited to one period.

4. Children should be grouped for discussion with individuals who are more likely to stimulate each other.

5. In-depth book discussions may not necessarily be interesting to students because of the opportunity to talk about a book, but rather may be viewed simply as a chance to talk with someone who seems interested.
6. In discussions where the leader takes an active role, the students generally talked one third of the time while the leader used the other two thirds.

7. When asked to retell a story the amount of child talk increased considerably.

8. Groups with 2 subjects talked much less than either the group with one child or the group with three children.

9. The leader's amount of talk increased when the book was more difficult or dealt with more mature topics.

Summary

This chapter has provided information on the subjects of the study including their reading background and appropriate test data. The background material was gathered through the use of a paper and pencil survey and individual interviews. IQ and reading achievement test scores were presented as well as the results of a test designed to measure one's ability to interpret literary selections. A discussion of the various strategies used to elicit responses to selected books was described in this chapter. In conclusion, general observations were made regarding the discussion behavior of the subjects as well as an examination of the amount of talk generated by the children and the discussion leader.
CHAPTER V

CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

The responses of the children were examined in terms of literary response and response to specific themes.

LITERARY RESPONSE

The protocols of the tape recorded book discussions were analyzed for the literary response categories which were developed by Squire, and for content subcategories which were developed by the investigator from the Squire system. The development and description of the category system as used in this study was described in detail in Chapter III.

Each child's utterances were divided into response units which were then assigned to a category and subcategory. The following is a list of those categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Judgments</th>
<th>Interpretational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Plot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Theme</td>
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<td>Character</td>
<td>Setting</td>
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<td>Other Literature</td>
<td>Visual Reconstruction</td>
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<td>Themes</td>
<td>Style</td>
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<table>
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<th>Association</th>
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<td>Setting</td>
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<td>People</td>
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<td>Theme</td>
<td>Other Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specific Examples

A response unit was defined according to Squire (1964) to be "the smallest combination of words which conveyed the sense of a single thought (p. 17)."

In this present study, responses of "Yeah," or "Uh-huh," or "Huh-uh," were identified as response units, and it was necessary to read the preceding comments to determine the meaning of such single utterances.

EXAMPLE:

Leader: ... So that he was deceiving, uh, Jessie.

Child: Uh-huh

It was determined that the child by agreeing was making an Interpretational Response since the book does not say the character was being deceptive, and the content of that response referred to Character.

There now follows examples of each of the response categories and the subcategories of content:

LITERARY JUDGMENT - GENERAL

Child: No, I can't think of any reason why anyone would just write a story like that for just, for kicks.

(Our Eddie)
LITERARY JUDGMENT - LANGUAGE

Leader: ... was this a hard book to listen to?
Child 1: Well, some of the things are really, you know, there are words in there.
Child 2: Hard to understand

(The Dark Is Rising)

Both of the children's responses were considered references to the language, and they seemed to be judgmental. The first child's response was marked as one unit, though it may appear to be two when read. It was necessary to interpret the oral delivery of those words. By listening to the tape one could tell that the child did not make a definite break after "really" but was groping for words to complete his thought. It is likely that Child 2 provided what he thought Child 1 wanted to say.

LITERARY JUDGMENT - STYLE

Leader: ... why didn't she [the author] just let Sybil tell the whole story?
Why have Hal tell any of it?
Child 1: Well, cause, because
Child 2: A different point of view...
Child 1: See, you get a, get a more complete view of what's going on.

(Our Eddie)

Both references to point of view were each considered a stylistic
judgment of the literary work. Also, the first comment of Child 1 above was not considered a response unit since it fails to convey any meaning.

LITERARY JUDGMENT - CHARACTER

Leader: Would you say that there's a story of friendship in this book?

Child: Jessie and the other boy.

(The Slave Dancer)

This was considered a Literary Judgment since the question referred to the book, not any specific instance. Had an incident been used as the basis for a question regarding whether there may have been a friendship developing, then this child's response would have been categorized as Interpretational - Character.

LITERARY JUDGMENT - OTHER LITERATURE

This subcategory was only used by one subject in one discussion who had made what was considered a stylistic literary judgment by saying, "I didn't like it at first because it was a little boring" in referring to The Slave Dancer. Her next statement was, "Books are normally like that, you know. They start kind of boring and then you get to the exciting part." These responses might have been considered Associational but since they referred to books in general it was decided to place them in the category of Literary Judgment.
LITERARY JUDGMENT - THEME

Leader: So, the author may be saying something to you . . . about what?

Child 1: How you act as a kid towards, you know, so don't always put away things in your mind.

Child 2: About caring . . ., and loving.

(Our Eddie)

The children's remarks seemed to be responding to the overall meaning or purpose of the author for the entire book. These might appear to be Interpretational, but that would only hold for comments directed at specific incidents within the book.

INTERPRETATIONAL - CHARACTER

Leader: Why do you think he did that instead of wishing to be back with the wizard?

Child: Cause he, cause he liked Gillian, and he was worried.

(The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man)

If the text had said that Lionel liked Gillian and that he was worried, then these two response units would have been coded as Narrational. In the above excerpt the child clearly is expressing an opinion which was her interpretation of Lionel's actions.

INTERPRETATIONAL - PLOT

Leader: Can you tell me any more about the bears' house? . . .
Child: She thought she was — went into the bears' house.

(The Bears' House)

Plot refers to action taken or occurring in the story. Entering the bears' house would be an action by the main character, Fran Ellen, but since the text never specifically stated that Fran Ellen entered the house, this was coded as Interpretational rather than Narrational.

EXAMPLE:

Leader: What did Fran Ellen think about her father's feelings about the children in her family? . . .

Child 1: That he didn't care . . .

Leader: How do you know that that might be true?

Child 2: He left

(The Bears' House)

The first child's response was Interpretational - Character since it referred to a possible feeling the father had. The second child's response was coded Interpretational - Plot because it tells of a character's action and is given as a possible explanation for the father's feelings.

INTERPRETATIONAL - THEME

Child: Somebody [in the book] said something about there being a Ben Stout on every ship . . .

Leader: Now what does that, what might that mean?
Child: It would mean that, uh, there was always somebody like that who was mean and too lording it over.

(The Slave Dancer)

In the preceding excerpt the child's first response was coded Narrational - Theme because this was a retelling of the text. But the second response was Interpretational - Theme because the child was trying to provide meaning for the first statement. Both referred to the subcategory of Theme since they spoke of a universal quality.

INTERPRETATIONAL - SETTING

Child: The reason, probably, maybe she did the bears' house a lot cause, um, it was a perfect home, and she had a broken home.

(The Bears' House)

This was coded as two Interpretational - Setting responses. The child is generating an explanation and both his references are to specific places.

INTERPRETATIONAL - VISUAL RECONSTRUCTION

Child: As pictures I don't like them much . . .

it's not the kind of picture I like . . .

these have . . . too much darkness.

(The Slave Dancer)

It was determined that this would be the most suitable category for the interpretive comments concerning the illustrations. There
were only reactions to the pictures in The Slave Dancer. Nothing was said about the illustrations in the other books.

INTERPRETATIONAL - STYLE

Leader: But a wishbone was a perfect choice for the author wasn't it?
Child: Uh-huh

(The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man)

There were very few references to style that could be considered Interpretational. In this case, the child merely agreed with the Interpretational response of the leader, but it did seem to be stylistic in content due to the reference to the author.

INTERPRETATIONAL - LANGUAGE

Only one subject accounted for the few codings in this subcategory. These all occurred as the discussion was concluding, and she picked up The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man and looked for specific examples of Dr. Tudbelly's "Latin." Whenever she attempted to provide a meaning for one of the doctor's phrases it was coded Interpretational - Language. For example, she read, "Suffers from an attack of delusionus cattabus," and she explained, "Uh-huh, a delusion that he is a cat."

NARRATIONAL - CHARACTER, PLOT, AND SETTING

These were direct references to the details or facts of the story without interpretation. The following examples all came from
the same book, *The Dark Is Rising*.

**CHARACTER:**

*Child:* I don't recall who Farmer Dawson is.

*Child:* Something about Will being a seventh son of a seventh son.

**PLOT:**

*Child:* Somebody from the Dark comes along.

*Child:* He does that thing with the stick.

*Child:* Somewhere along there he had to de-memory the preacher.

**SETTING:**

*Child:* It wasn't thundering or lightning, it was just raining.

*Child:* It was on a boat.

*Child:* In a clock.

*Child:* The Book of Gramarye.

*Child:* And the birds all flying away, or calling very loudly.

*Child:* There's a lot of stuff in the beginning about the static on the radio

**NOTE:** Setting included not only location but objects, even creatures where they were referred to as part of the scene, and any thing that seemed to contribute to establishing that scene.
NARRATIONAL - THEME

There was only one instance of this category. The child said, "Somebody said something about there being a Ben Stout on every ship." (The Slave Dancer). This was discussed within the example under Interpretational - Theme.

NARRATIONAL - STYLE

Responses of this subcategory only occurred with one group when discussing Our Eddie. They all referred to the three parts in which the book was divided and were factual, not interpretive nor judgmental.

Child: Because Hal said the first one, Sybil said the second one and Hal said the third one.

ASSOCIATIONAL - IDEAS

Leader: . . . what would you say about a lion? . . .

Child: King of the beasts

(The Dark Is Rising)

The child was probably relating to past experiences with either television or common expressions.

Leader: They don't use this word, but it's what's called a progressive disease. Now, what do you think I'm, what I mean by that?

Child: The disease gets worse.

(Our Eddie)
Here the child's association was with her past knowledge of a particular vocabulary item.

ASSOCIATIONAL - EVENT

Child: Like yesterday. I'm out sick, went home. My mom came home for lunch from work and she let me stay cause she trusted me.

(The Dark Is Rising)

This occurred when a child recounted a personal experience as an example in an effort to relate the meanings in the book with his life.

ASSOCIATIONAL - PLACE

Child: Well, I love looking at the ocean and lakes and quiet water like streams. I love it when it's clear.

(The Dark Is Rising)

This resulted from a conversation about the flood and the destructiveness of water which prompted the child to share her own personal associations with water which generally seemed to be positive in nature.

Child: Well, at night, dark isn't always scary.

(The Dark Is Rising)

Here the child wished to indicate that though one might think of night and darkness along with bad and evil, her experiences included good memories.
ASSOCIATIONAL - PEOPLE

Child: ... well, it's moms are the ones that make the kids stop sucking their thumbs or fingers?

(Our Eddie)

Leader: ... how did we find out about how they treated the slaves . . .?

Child: Like people wrote diaries and stuff.

(The Slave Dancer)

Both of these comments reflect some past information not gained from the book.

ASSOCIATIONAL - OTHER LITERATURE

All references to other specific literary works as well as general ones about different genres such as folktales, legends, and fairy tales were coded in this subcategory.

SELF-INVolVEMENT - GENERAL

Child: I'd forgotten about Sparks

(The Dark Is Rising)

Child: I just kind of think, poor kid

(Our Eddie)

SELF-INVolVEMENT - BEHAVIOR

Child: I don't like it at the end where all the slaves have to jump overboard

(The Slave Dancer)
SELF-ININVOLVEMENT - EMOTION

Child: I understand that because I'm, I get teased for being different sometimes.

(The Bears' House)

PRESCRIPTIVE JUDGMENT:

Child: See, if he'd allowed him to go to a doctor, given him some money to go to a doctor, at least.

(Our Eddie)

Leader: What would their parents' job have been that they weren't doing? Could you describe what that should be?

Child: Taking care of them. Making the money in the family, uh, and, in her mother's case, coming out of the mope.

(The Bears' House)

Both the Self-Involvement and Prescriptive Judgment categories are very personal ones and fairly obvious to identify in the protocols though they did not appear very often.

Analysis of the Responses

The analysis of the literary responses has been made in terms of the specific variables of the study, namely 1) the variation in size of the discussion groups, and 2) the four different strategies which were used for initiating the discussions. There were four separate
groups, and they represented three different sizes. Cora and the investigator constituted a group of two; Mike, Cal, and the investigator provided a group of three, as did Meg, Fay, and the investigator, and finally there was a group of four composed of the investigator, Zeb, Ken, and Joe. The four initiating strategies included calling for 1) general reactions, 2) retelling the story, 3) the most vivid memory, and 4) specific reactions to one character. These strategies are generally represented in the data by the title of the different books since the investigator employed a different strategy with each book. Originally there had been five strategies planned, one of which was not only for initiating purposes but was intended to influence the entire discussion procedure. This was the non-directive approach, but it was found to be inappropriate under the conditions of this particular study as explained in Chapter IV.

Table 7 identifies the books, the group sizes, and the initiating strategies.

Total Response Units

Table 8 presents the total response units listed by literary categories, and it also includes the percentage of response for each category. It should be noted that the data growing out of the discussions of The Bears' House was equalized. This meant using only the first half of the data provided by Mike and Cal's group, since that was the only group to be recorded for a full thirty minutes. Also, the data from Cora's discussion of The Dark Is Rising reflects
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOOKS</th>
<th>INITIATING STRATEGIES</th>
<th>GROUPS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Slave Dancer</td>
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<td>Cora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bears' House</td>
<td>General Reaction</td>
<td>Mike - Cal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cat Who Wished To Be A</td>
<td>Retelling</td>
<td>Meg - Fay</td>
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<td>The Dark Is Rising</td>
<td>Most Vivid Memory</td>
<td>Zeb - Ken</td>
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<td>Our Eddie</td>
<td>Specific Reaction To A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Participants Including the Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

Total Responses To Five Books
By Literary Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literary Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literary Judgment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretational</td>
<td>1222</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrational</td>
<td>1496</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associational</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Self-Involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prescriptive Judgment</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3933</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
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</table>
the first thirty minutes and not the full forty, again in order to allow the data to be compared.

A total of 3,933 response units were identified in the twenty discussions which were conducted for this study. It took twenty discussions in order for each of four groups of subjects to talk about the five books selected for the study. Narrative responses represented the greatest number with a total of 1,496 or 38%. The second highest number of responses were Interpretational with 1,222 which represented 31% of the total. Thus 69% of the response units were either Narrative or Interpretational in nature. The third highest total was considerably less with Associational responses accounting for 543 units, or 14%. Nine percent of all 3,933 response units were coded as Literary Judgment. Self-Involvement and Prescriptive Judgment responses together represented three percent of all response units.

Response Categories and Subcategories for Each of Five Books

Table 9 provides both frequency data and percentages of all seven response categories. Within each category there are included the data for the various subcategories of content. The table is further divided so as to permit one to determine frequency and percentage information for each of the five books which was used in the study. In looking at the data for each book, one is also looking at data in terms of the four initiating discussion strategies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>GENERAL</th>
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Table 9
Frequencies And Percentages Of Response Categories And Subcategories In Terms Of Initiating Strategies
Continuation of Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>GENERAL REACTION</th>
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Literary Judgment

The greatest number of responses in this category were found in *Our Eddie* with 30% and next was *The Slave Dancer* with 27%. Both *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man* and *The Dark Is Rising* were considerably less with 14% and 13%, respectively. It would appear that in this study strategies which called either for a specific reaction to a character or for general reactions produced a greater amount of Literary Judgment responses. In looking at the content subcategories it appeared that general Literary Judgment responses were highest also for *Our Eddie* with 32% and *The Slave Dancer* with 28%. Literary Judgment responses referring to Style were greatest for *The Slave Dancer* with 31%. References to Character in terms of Literary Judgment responses were concentrated in *Our Eddie* with 59%. This would be expected since the specific initiating request was to react to the title character. One might conjecture that sixth grade children interpret a request for a reaction either to a whole book or to a character to be, in part, a request for some comment regarding the literary qualities of the work, and thus this would account for the high number of Literary Judgment responses for *The Slave Dancer* and *Our Eddie*. An examination of the protocols gives some support to this idea with *The Slave Dancer*, but it does not seem to hold for *Our Eddie*.

In *The Slave Dancer* the investigator began with asking for a general reaction, and all four discussion groups immediately responded with comments that were coded Literary Judgment. Such remarks included, "it was kind of exciting," "in some parts . . . it was kind of sad . . . then at the end it was happy," "I didn't like it at first
because it was a little boring," and "I think the book was pretty good."

In Our Eddie the Literary Judgments did not occur at the outset of the discussion, and when they did take place they were the direct result of the investigator asking the students to consider why the author chose to write a book in which the main character dies before the book's conclusion. Thus, in this instance it was the leader's follow-up question which directly led to responses of a Literary Judgment nature.

Interpretational Responses

These responses appeared to be fairly well distributed in all the discussions with the exception of The Dark Is Rising where only 16% were coded in this category.

In examining the content subcategories of Interpretational Responses, one finds that interpretational references to Character were greatest with Our Eddie and The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man, receiving 31% and 30% respectively, of the total, and references to Plot were highest in The Slave Dancer with 39%, and Setting references received the most responses in The Dark Is Rising with 36%.

These results seemed to fit the various genres in expected ways. Our Eddie and The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man were books primarily about specific characters whereas the plot of stealing, selling, and shipping natives from Africa for the American slave trade seemed of considerable import in The Slave Dancer, especially in the eyes of young readers.
The overall low percentage of Interpretational responses which occurred in *The Dark Is Rising* was somewhat unexpected since it might be assumed that a complex fantasy dealing with sophisticated symbolism would, by its very nature, be a book that would need interpretation. It may be that the very complexity of this book prevented these sixth grade subjects from more interpretational responses. As will be seen in the remaining analyses, other response categories were more frequently identified for *The Dark Is Rising*, and so it may be that Interpretational Responses are less likely to occur when a reader is still sorting out the narrational and associational aspects of a book.

**Narrational Responses**

The most responses in this category were found in the discussions of *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man* with 42% of the total. Since the initiating strategy for this book was a request that the students retell the story, the high percentage of responses in the Narrational Category was to be expected.

The second highest frequency in this category was in *The Dark Is Rising* with 28%. It was the opinion of the investigator that, though the students generally liked this book, it was a difficult book for them to understand, and therefore more difficult to discuss. The investigator would suggest that the fairly high occurrence of Narrational Responses for this book were partly due to the need to clarify and re-establish the specific details of the story. It should also be noted that the initiating strategy for *The Dark Is Rising* called upon the participants to share a most vivid memory, and
in all four groups the memories mentioned were of specific details in the story, and therefore coded Narrational.

Narrational Responses were much lower in the other books with only 12% identified in the discussion of Our Eddie, and 9% in The Slave Dancer. It would appear that when the leader does not request a retelling and the book is reasonably easy to understand, the participants of a discussion do not find it necessary to recount the details of a book.

A brief survey of the content subcategories indicated that in most instances it was again The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man which received the highest frequency. The one exception was the content area of Setting which was considerably greater in The Dark Is Rising with 52%. This was probably due to the particular interest everyone showed in the strange weather and the unique accouterments of the story, namely the various signs, fire, the birds, and the great doors which seemed to lead into another time.

Associational Responses

The discussions of The Dark Is Rising contained 34% of the total Associational Responses. This was considerably more than any of the other book discussions. It is unlikely that the initiating strategy could account for this, since no strategy was purposely employed that might have elicited such responses.

In terms of the content subcategories, the ones of Ideas, Events, Places, and People were most frequently identified for the
discussions of *The Dark Is Rising*. This may be explained by the fact that the investigator found this book the most difficult for all subjects to discuss, and so he made numerous efforts to aid the children's thinking by encouraging them to make connections with their own lives. This was especially true in his attempts to discuss situations in one's life where dark and light seemed related to things bad or good. The unusually high number of responses referring to Place, 84% of the Associational Responses for this book, grew out of fairly extensive conversations about the various children's associations with night and its potential for bad, scary, or spooky things to occur. This aspect is discussed in fuller detail in the section, Responses To Themes.

Of particular interest were the large number of responses in the subcategory of Other Literature for the discussions of *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man*. Here were recorded 50% of the Associational Responses for that book. This was due to the leader's attempt with each group to relate the action in the story of Dr. Tubbly and Lionel as they went from merchant to merchant to invite them to a feast with the folk tale of *Stone Soup*. This led to some comparisons between the two stories. Also, in discussing the author's choice of a wishbone for one emergency wish led to some remarks about the various objects in traditional literature that have been used for wishing.
Self-Involvement Responses

There were only 67 responses in this category for all five books. Forty-eight percent of them were in the discussions of Our Eddie. Though the subcategory of General Responses was rather high with 43%, it was the subcategory of Behavior which was the most frequently one to be coded. It received 56% of the Self-Involvement Responses for the book Our Eddie.

This was a very personal story and one that shocked the children because of the death of the main character. This is not unusual in books for young people. The children's responses were rather intense when they reacted to young Eddie's death and to his father's strange manner toward the family throughout most of the book.

Prescriptive Judgments

Very few responses were coded in this category. There was a total of 27 for the five books. There were none identified for either The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man or The Dark Is Rising. Again, as with Self-Involvement, this category was highest for Our Eddie with 63%.

It was interesting to note that though only half of the discussion time for each group for The Bears' House was available for analysis, both categories, Self-Involvement and Prescriptive Judgment were so highly represented. This story also was a strongly personal story about adversity to the youthful main character, and it had two parents who had failed the children. Thus, there were numerous
personal reactions to Fran Ellen, her habit of thumbsucking, and some very definite feelings about what the parents should have done.

Varying Sized Discussion Groups

Table 10 lists the response categories for each discussion group. The categories are arranged according to frequency of responses with the greatest frequency first and continuing down to the least frequently noted category, with the exception of the Miscellaneous category which has been placed last in each case.

The frequency of responses for each category were extremely similar between groups. Narrational Responses ranged from 396 to 359, a difference of only 37. Interpretational Responses ranged from 382 to 246, with the difference being 136. Though this seems to be a considerable difference, it should be noted that three groups ranged between 382 and 312. It was only the group with Meg and Fay who had a much lower number of Interpretational Responses (246). There was nothing in the data to account for this. The investigator can only conjecture that these two particular students found so little in common with each other that they did not attempt to help each other bring meaning to the books under discussion. The investigator noted that Meg usually was actively engaged in a classroom activity with several friends but never with Fay. They were thrown together for these discussions but not by their own choice.

Associational Responses for the four groups ranged from 166 to 112 with a difference of 54. Literary Judgments ranged from 136 to 59 with a difference of 77. It would appear that the group of four
Table 10
Response Patterns By Discussion
Groups Of Varying Sizes

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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<td>Narrational</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>ZEB - KEN - JOE (4)</td>
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<td>34</td>
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(including the leader) generated the Most Literary Judgments (136) and the group of two provided the least (59). It may be that a larger group provides a situation where reactions to the literary work are more likely to occur.

Self-Involvement responses ranged from 40 to 8. Here the highest frequency occurred with the smallest discussion group (2 participants). It may also be more conducive for a child to react personally to a character when that child does not need to wonder what her/his peers might feel or think.

It should also be noted from Table 10 that the ordering of categories for each group is almost identical. Narrational Responses were the most frequent followed by Interpretational, then Associational and Literary Judgment. In three groups Self-Involvement preceded Prescriptive Judgment, in the fourth group those two categories were reversed.

These findings vary somewhat from those of Squire who found Interpretational Responses the dominant form of response followed by Narrational and Literary Judgment. Associational Responses in the Squire study represented fewer than 3%, whereas in the present study, Associational Responses accounted for approximately 14% of all responses (Squire, 1974, p. 20). One should be cautious when attempting to compare the results of this study with those of Squire since there were distinct differences including number and age of subjects and conditions in which responses were elicited.
Observations on Literary Response Section

1. Narrational Responses are considerably less if there is no request for retelling a story.

2. When a book is difficult or complex there are noticeably more narrational responses.

3. Literary Judgments were highest for the book in which the initiating strategy was a request for general reaction.

4. Literary Judgments for the other strategies may need to be elicited specifically by the leader.

5. Associational Responses appear to occur primarily as a result of the leader eliciting them.

6. Interpretational Responses appeared to be fairly well distributed with the exception of the book which was strong in symbolism. The Interpretational Responses in that book were noticeably fewer.

7. Self-Involvement and Prescriptive Judgments occurred in books where young characters were in deep difficulty with the world: parents, school.

8. Self-Involvement Responses were identified most frequently with the initiating strategy of calling for reactions to a specific character.

9. Size of group may influence Literary Judgments and Self-Involvement Responses with a large group (4) generating more Literary Judgments and a smaller group (2) generating more Self-Involvement Responses.
10. The initiating strategy of calling for one's most vivid memory from a book appeared to result in a high number of Narrational Responses.

RESPONSES TO THEMES

Ideas ranging from a specific action or activity within the body of the literary work to the more complex concepts of character and character development found in the work were discussed by the students and the investigator.

Eight ideas were discussed in sufficient detail to warrant their inclusion in this study. They were ideas that recurred in more than one group, and they included the following topics: friendship, survival, sacrifice, author's purpose, the meaning of certain symbols, a fantasy situation within a work of realistic fiction, a unique characteristic of one character, and the illustrations in one book.

Friendship

Whether one could consider The Slave Dancer to be about a friendship came out during three of the discussions. In response to the investigator's request that each child mention his/her most vivid memory from the book, Meg said hers was of the young boy, Ras, when he had to leave Jessie and presumably embark on the Underground Railroad to the North. The investigator asked if the girls could elaborate on that scene:
Leader: Because that, to me, was a very touching scene. Now, why do I use the word touching?

Fay: Because, uh, Ras and Jessie are being split up and they'd been friends (inaud)

Leader: And, uh, so they, they almost have to say a goodbye without even having the words to say goodbye.

Fay: Uh-huh. Cause they, like, communicating without really talking that much.

Later in the discussion Fay imagined what Jessie might have said to his family about his friend Ras:

Fay: He might say like, well, "Ras was one of the black boys they had on the boat and when the boat shipwrecked, Ras and I both swam to shore." Or something.

Leader: Was there anything, uh, do you think they helped each other in that swim to shore, in a sense, do you think that by the two of them being there they helped save each other?

Fay: Yeah, well, they gave each other confidence.

In two of the discussion groups the leader raised the question, "Would you say that there's a story of friendship in this book?"

The responses of Mike and Cal began as follows:

Mike: Between Jessie and Ras . . .
Leader: Okay. Was there anything unusual about that friendship?

Mike: Well, yeah, because, um, they couldn't speak each other's language.

Leader: Okay. Do you think that, uh, Ras trusted Jessie?

Mike: Yeah.

Leader: And what would make him trust him? None of the other white men were treating

Cal: Cause he saved him, like he would have gotten thrown overboard when those other ships came.

Leader: Okay

Cal: And saved him.

Then the leader tried to have the two boys recall when this friendship probably had its beginnings. They were unsure, and so the leader read from the book about the little native girl who had been brought on board. When the white men discovered that she had apparently died they flung her overboard. Jessie cried out and was knocked to the deck by one of the sailors for doing so. Jessie saw the boy, later known as Ras, staring at him when he got up:

Leader: Jessie screamed about it. It upset him, didn't it? It didn't upset anyone else.
And that's the first time we hear about the boy Ras. Do you think that helped in their friendship, in building the friendship?
Mike: Yeah, kind of, cause he was concerned about the Negroes, too.

Leader: Okay (pause)

Cal: Like he was kidnapped and he didn't want to see the slaves be kidnapped.

Mike: Yeah

Cal: And killed, too

The question of a possible friendship was raised earlier in the discussion period with Cora and so there was more opportunity for elaboration:

Leader: Would you say that there's a story of friendship in this book?

Cora: Jessie and the other boy.

Leader: You remember his name? (pause)

Cora: R-A- something

Leader: Yes, Ras

Cora: Ras, yes.

Leader: That was an unusual friendship, wasn't it? (pause) How would you say it's unusual?

Cora: People in those days just didn't make friends with black people.

Leader: And what else about the friendship in particular, what made it difficult to have a friendship develop?
Cora: Because Jessie was - in an enterprise, against his will, of course, but still he was in an enterprise to make the slaves unhappy.

Leader: Yes

Cora: Not purposely but

Leader: But that's the way it

Cora: Worked out.

Leader: Now what else made it unusual to, in order for a friendship to develop? (pause)

Cora: It was, Jessie couldn't get down into the hold to see him, and also the captain wouldn't have liked it at all.

Leader: No. (pause) Now he did get down once, didn't he? How did that happen?

Cora: His fife - you get the impression that Stout threw it down.

Leader: Uh-huh

Cora: And then he blames it on Purvis.

Leader: Uh-huh. And what do they do, then to Jessie?

Cora: Make him go down after it.

Leader: And so Jessie gets a real experience in the hold, doesn't he? Now where does he, does he find the fife?

Cora: Yes, I think so.

Leader: Remember?
Cora: He doesn't, but somebody else does.
Leader: Do you remember who gave it to him?
Cora: Purvis, I think.
Leader: Down in the hold?
Cora: No, not down in - maybe it's the boy.
Leader: I, I think he gets it from Ras. I think that's right.
Cora: I'm not sure
Leader: Cause that's where we get this - maybe that's a friendship. It's a strange friendship because usually when you have a friend what do you do with a friend?
Cora: Have fun.
Leader: They certainly aren't having fun, are they?
Cora: Gosh, no.
Leader: Now they, where else do they get to develop their friendship in this story, at what other point?
Cora: In the water and with the old man.
Leader: Okay, after the storm. Now what's difficult about developing a friendship between them even there?
Cora: They can't talk to each other.
Leader: But that, uh, they're still able to have some friendship, aren't they?
Cora: Yes. Which is interesting.
Leader: Why?
Cora: Because - it shows some of the qualities of mankind.
Leader: For instance? Like what?
Cora: Well, the ability and the need to make friends.
Leader: Uh-huh. And it, what? What relationship does it have with language, say?
Cora: You can speak without speaking, in a way.
Leader: And so a friendship can develop - even when you, what?
Cora: Even when you speak different languages or some other similar handicap
Leader: Now how did the friendship strengthen itself during the, uh, the storm? I mean, how did, uh,
Cora: They had to survive together with that one piece of whatever it was that they hung on to.

Cora's response revealed considerable sensitivity to the topic of friendship. She was aware of the unlikelihood of a friendship developing between any white and black person in those particular times. She realized, too, that young Jessie actually worked for the whites against the natives. Her initial explanation for this being an unusual friendship had to do with the notion that friends usually "had fun" together, and, of course, this was far from even a possibility for
these two young boys. And she also noted the fact that their friendship developed even though they could not speak each other's language. This took her to a more sophisticated level of thought when she pointed out mankind's need to make friends. The topic of friendship seemed to be more fully developed than in the other groups.

**Survival**

A second topic of note in *The Slave Dancer* was that of survival. Mike and Cal mentioned several incidents that seemed to them to be examples of survival:

Leader: Would you say that, uh, that *The Slave Dancer* is a story about survival?

Mike: Hm

Cal: Yes, you could.

Mike: In a way, kind of.

Leader: Okay. In what ways would -

Cal: Like in the way they, um, swam to shore.

Leader: Yes. All right. Were there any other times in the story where survival was a problem?

Mike: Yeah. Like, you know, being nice to the captain, so he wouldn't throw you over board or something.

Leader: Oh, that's interesting, isn't it? That was survival. Any other times or people who had to worry about their survival during the story?
Cal: Yeah. He had to be - obey orders or else.

Mike: (inaud) Yeah.

Leader: Say that again, Cal, they had to -

Cal: He had to obey orders or else -

Mike: They'd kill him.

Leader: Okay. And then you, Mike, you were saying the whole crew - what?

Mike: Yeah, the whole, you know, they had to be aware of the wind and everything and the wind direction and stuff like that.

Mike's comment about the need to be nice to the captain is interesting, for that is not suggested in the book, but it may reflect the twelve-year old's related experience with captains and ships through television and pirate movies. Mike's later consideration of the need to keep track of the wind is also interesting since it is obvious that life on board an ocean going vessel would depend upon the weather for its survival.

At this point the discussion changed direction to the punishment Jessie received as well as the punishment of one of the sailors. Later the leader turned the talk back directly to survival, but with a new focus:
Leader: Now you've indicated that, that the sailors and the captain (pause) and that Jessie and Ras all had - had problems of survival sometime in the story. Now, how about the natives themselves in the hold, did they have a problem of survival?

Mike: Yeah, yeah they had to try to eat as much food as they could get and they could stay alive.

Leader: and

Cal: And, uh, like uh, eat (inaud) only at a certain time

Leader: And can you picture in your mind what the conditions were like down in the hold?

Mike: Yeah, probably real

Cal: Scrunched in

Mike: Yeah real

Leader: Crowded?

Cal: Yeah.

Mike: Yeah, real crowded and everything.

Leader: And did some natives die?

Cal: Yeah.

Mike: Yeah, pretty many of them did.

Cal: Some were thrown overboard when the other ships came, most of them.

Mike: Yeah
Thus at this point, the two boys were more aware that all of
the people on the ship struggled to survive. The boys had thought
mainly of the sailors and Jessie with regard to survival, but with
the leader’s question concerning the natives the boys began to
consider the precarious situation of the slaves as well.

Now Cora also spoke of survival in response to the leader’s
question. It is interesting to note that she quickly thought of the
natives, but was less sure of the crew’s possible struggle for
survival. And so the leader attempted to enlarge upon that
possibility:

Leader: Now who has to survive, who struggles
to survive in this?

Cora: Jessie, mostly.

Leader: Jessie does. Anyone else? (long pause)

Cora: Well, uh, the slaves certainly not. They
didn’t want to survive. Judging from the
example of that one we just

Leader: Well, for that one, but now most of them,
most of us want to live.

Cora: Yes.

Leader: So, it is a struggle to survive. Now the
conditions that the slaves were under may have
made it difficult to survive.

Cora: Yes.
Leader: But, uh, wouldn't you guess that most of them wanted to live?

Cora: Pretty much. Although some of them, pessimists.

Leader: Yeah (pause)

Cora: And they thought it might have been worse, might get worse. And in some cases, of course, it would.

Leader: Do you think that, that Stout and Captain Cawthorne and the ship's crew also struggled to survive? In their lives? (long pause)

Cora: Perhaps at the end, the great big storm and

Leader: That was a life and death survival. How about, uh, the fear they had that slaves might die of disease or they might just die by willing it or they might get stolen? Was that a fearful thing for the ship's crew to face?

Cora: How would they get stolen?

Leader: Oh, I was thinking if some other ship came along, a pirate ship.

Cora: Oh.

Leader: I'm just thinking of different, was their cargo important to them?

Cora: Yes
Leader: And why?
Cora: Money
Leader: Money in order, why do they need money?
Cora: In order to survive.
Leader: Yes. So, it's a survival story for them, too, isn't it?
Cora: Pretty much.
Leader: So that some of what they are doing we may not approve of.
Cora: Definitely not.
Leader: But they saw it as their way to survive, right?
Cora: Yes

The leader's guidance suggested another point of view that Cora had not considered.

Sacrifice

The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man seemed a fitting book for some discussion of the theme of sacrifice. When the leader asked about sacrifice, each group responded with examples, though at no time did the leader define the term. Evidently the children felt familiar with the word and were successful in recalling appropriate incidents from the book.

Leader: Do you remember, uh, his, Lionel having to make some sacrifices? Anybody sacrifice or offer to sacrifice?
Fay: Gillian

Meg: And, uh, the peddler sacrificed to pay the toll fare, um, Lionel, so he wouldn't get killed.

Leader: That's right

Meg: Going over the toll gate.

Leader: I'd forgotten that. What was the one about Gillian?

Fay: She said, you know, she'd, she didn't care about the, about the Crowned Swan. She'd just be with Lionel.

Leader: And didn't she offer to, with the wizard, to, uh, to change her to a cat?

Fay: Yeah, just so she could be with Lionel.

Leader: But now, Lionel made an offer at one point. He offered - why did he do that - the wishbone to Tuddelly? (pause)

Fay: So Tuddelly could be saved.

Leader: That was during the, during the, the

Fay: Jail. When they were

Leader: When they were in prison, wasn't it?

Fay: Yeah,

Leader: And he'd give him that. Now Tuddelly made an offer, too, to Lionel.

Fay: His Armamentarium.
Meg: Yeah.
Leader: In fact he did, he sacrificed. What did he do?
Meg: He sacrificed. He burned it.
Fay: He burned it.
Leader: He gave the whole thing up, didn't he?

Meg and Fay were able to think of quite a number of examples of sacrifice. All of the groups mentioned Dr. Tudbelly giving up his armamentarium, his box of potions. They all commented on the girl Gillian who volunteered to become a cat in order to stay with Lionel. Cora thought of the sacrifice which Lionel offered to make by suggesting that his friend, Dr. Tudbelly, take the wishbone and use its one wish to escape. Ken was the only one who thought of the sacrifice that Magister Stephanus, at the very end of the book, made in giving up Lionel.

The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man was a lighthearted fantasy, yet it had some deeper meanings beyond the adventures of cat-changed-into-a-man. Since the tone was generally light and the situations usually humorous, it did not seem appropriate for the leader to go into any depth concerning the underlying meanings contained within the book, and so the issue of sacrifice was not labored. It was encouraging that all of the children could think of suitable examples quickly, and it was hoped by the leader that having touched briefly on possibly more serious implications, the book would be remembered longer and more fully than in the case with most humorous stories.
Author's Purpose and the Development of a Character

In the discussions of Our Eddie, the leader asked this question of each group, "Why would an author write a book about a boy who is going to die before the end of the book and make him the main character?" This was difficult for two groups. Zeb, Ken, and Joe never came up with a satisfactory answer. They suggested the author just wanted to be different and later could only think of rather unlikely reasons such as Zeb's comment, "She didn't want to write a whole series so she had to make the character die." Mike and Cal also could not give a suitable answer. They also thought the author might have done it to make the book "a little more interesting."

Fay started to respond to the question with what seemed the most likely reason and then altered her remarks slightly, yet it was probably safe to assume that she was very close to the explanation of the author's choosing to write such a book, and the leader carried her idea slightly further which may have aided Fay in understanding the possible intent of the author more fully:

Fay: So that we could realize about how much the father, I mean, so the father would realize how much he had treated Eddie, and how bad he had treated him.

Leader: Oh, that's interesting. Maybe it gets us to think about somebody else in the book, huh? Cause that's what you've just done, is think about someone else in the book.
Cora groped momentarily for an answer to the leader's question. Her final response seemed to be quite accurate:

Leader: Do you think the author was, or could you get at what she might have been trying to tell us in this book? Why did she pick this story? This certainly is not a happy story.

Cora: No (pause)

Leader: What do you think she wants us to go away with in our mind?

Cora: I don't know. That's a rather difficult question.

Leader: Uh-huh (pause) You know, she must have had some strong reason. Do you think it was just a story that, uh

Cora: No, I can't think of any reason why anyone would just write a story like that for just, for kicks.

Leader: Yeah. That's why I guess I feel that she is really trying to tell us something more than just a story about a boy and what happens to him.

Cora: I think - one of the clues to what she's trying to tell us is something about his father.
For the two girls' groups it was easy to lead into discussion of Eddie's father and the development of his character. Though the boys did not see the father as a pivotal character when considering why the author had young Eddie die, the leader also guided the boys into consideration of the father. The leader hoped to have the students better understand the father. Cal conceded that the man probably loved his son but did not want to face the fact of his son's possible illness. Ken felt the father was trying to abide by strict Hebrew laws, and he spoke of the man's desire for Eddie to follow in his footsteps and become a Hebrew teacher. Joe felt the father liked his job more than his family but he also seemed to want to believe the father cared for his family. Meg felt the way the father acted at the end after Eddie died showed that he did love the boy, but that it did not seem like it during Eddie's lifetime. She really could offer no substantial explanation. Cora reacted the most sympathetically toward the father:

**Leader:** Oh, (pause) What do you think, uh, what can you say about Eddie's father?

**Cora:** I don't know. In the beginning I didn't like him much. But in the end, began to feel a little bit more sympathetic.

**Leader:** What accounts for that change, do you think, in your feeling?
Cora: Well - she gives you a reason, the author does, to think about how he must be feeling or have been feeling.

Leader: What, you remember what that reasoning is?

Cora: Because - he's awfully sad about Eddie (pause) after that.

Leader: What accounts for his acting the way he did, you know, during Eddie's lifetime? (pause) How would you describe the way he acted as a father? You know, as the head of the house?

Cora: He just didn't, I guess he just didn't realize that - he needed more.

Leader: Uh-huh. Uh, how did he treat Eddie? (pause) Can you characterize, say, how he was - what kind of a father would you call him? (pause)

Cora: Well, I don't like to call him a neglectful father, but, because he didn't really want to be - a neglectful father.

Later she agreed he had been a successful teacher and then made the following remark which again points up Cora's sensitivity to people:

Cora: Yes, sort of - he was sort of an idol among the children.
Leader: So he was very successful, wouldn't you say, as a teacher?

Cora: Yes, as a successful teacher. Maybe he wasted, not wasted but used all his success on the school, then didn't have much left for home.

Symbolism

One does not expect sixth graders to have extensive experience in their reading of literary works which are strong in symbolic language. They are just approaching the formal operational level of thinking, a time when the child will be increasingly more able to deal with the possible as well as the real (Richmond, 1970, p. 58). Symbolic language in literature is actually suggesting possibilities for the real world. The near-adolescent may be ready to cope with some symbolism in what he is reading.

Leader: Well, what are we talking about when we talk about the Dark? Does that mean night's coming? (long pause) I mean, if I said that to someone in my family, I said, you know, 'It's getting dark.' That's how I would say it, I'd be talking about evening coming, wouldn't I? Now did they mean that here?

Meg: They meant a gloomy time, I think.
Leader: Gloomy (pause) Does the Dark represent anything?

Fay: Evil.

Leader: If it represents evil, Fay, what represents good in this story?

Fay: The Light.

Leader: The Light, okay. What are some times in the story when we have light? Do you remember? (pause) Any times when light is important?

Fay: The fire.

Leader: The fire, yeah, a number of times. Fire, candlelight. (pause) Uh, what are some things that are tied in with dark that seem to represent evil? What are some dark things that happen?

Meg: The snowstorm and the house turned real cold.

Leader: Uh-huh. (pause) How about those birds?

Fay: Uh-huh.

Leader: What about them?

Fay: They covered the sky.

Leader: Yeah, and what color were they?

Fay: Black

Leader: Huh?

Fay: Black
Leader: Yeah, so, you know, she didn’t choose bluebirds, did she? Why do you think she didn’t choose bluebirds? (pause) Why did she want them to be black birds? (pause)

Fay: Cause they represent the Dark more.

Leader: Yeah. Now, why would dark be something to represent something bad or evil? (long pause)

Fay: It makes it seem like -

Leader: Huh?

Fay: It makes it seem gloomy and everything.

Meg: Gloomy and everybody thinks being bad -

Fay: Yeah.

Meg: Gloomy and everybody thinks being bad -

Leader: Dark makes it gloomy, is that what you’re saying?

Fay: Yeah, it makes it, yeah.

Meg: Everybody turns to God when (inaud)

Fay: It’s not like a gay color.

The preceding excerpt displayed the range of the conversation regarding the symbolic use of dark and light. Note the reference to the author: "Why did she want them to be black birds?” In this way the discussion leader reminded the students of the author’s careful, purposeful planning in writing the book. There was also an effort by the leader to relate some of the ideas with one’s own life.
This was even more apparent in the following:

Leader: Well, why would something bad work better at night?

Meg: Cause you can't

Fay: It can't be seen as much.

Leader: Okay, so how does that help a bad thing?

Meg: So it can creep up on you.

Leader: Okay, that's right, you could creep up. That would be one way for something bad to happen. There's that element of surprise then, isn't there? (pause)

And then, near the close of this discussion the leader tried again to relate one of the basic ideas personally to the lives of the girls:

Leader: Do you ever have a personal struggle between what's good and what's wrong? (pause) Ever have to struggle that way yourself? (pause) Can you give me an example? Even a simple one.

Fay: Like when my friend, like doing something wrong. You know, I wasn't sure whether to tell her not to do it or just let her go on doing it.
Leader: Okay. (pause) Think of anything, Meg?
(pause) Do you ever find yourself tempted to do something that you know you shouldn't do? Huh?

Meg: Yeah.

Mike and Cal made some suitable comments as the leader tried to get them to attach meaning to the Dark in the book. Then the leader assumed the students were thinking the same way he was, only to be surprised by their responses. Finally it became necessary for the leader to state what he believed to be happening in the book with regard to the Dark:

Leader: Is there any other way you can describe, uh, what the Light stood for and what the Dark stood for? (pause) Could you use any other words to mean the same kind of thing?

Cal: (inaud) Night and day.

Leader: Night and day, okay, that's where we see light and dark, isn't it? At least where we live. (pause) Are we going to like, are each of us probably going to like one better than the other? (pause) Go ahead, Mike.

Mike: Well, I was just thinking that, you know, that since the story went around for the Light, you know, the Light would be, you know, like the good guys and (inaud)
Leader: Okay. I think, I think that's it, Mike. I think that really what Susan Cooper is doing is telling a story about good and bad. Things that are evil and things that are good. And who's trying to have all the power?

Cal: Um, well, both of them are.

Leader: Yeah and the struggle in this book is, is what mainly?

Cal: Is getting all the signs together.

Mike: Signs

Leader: Yes, it is. Now, the book is called The Dark Is Rising, uh, can, why? You got any guesses as to why?

Cal: The Dark is about to take over all the signs and -

Leader: Okay. I think it was taking over more than just the signs, but I think that's right, Cal. What was it trying to take over?

Cal: (inaud)

Leader: Yeah, all those are the signs. Uh, wasn't it trying to take over just the whole, the whole world that they knew of?

Cal: Yeah

Leader: Yeah. (pause) And so it, it says that, that dark, or evil or bad is, is on the uprise.
At this point the leader felt he should encourage the boys to relate the struggle of evil to their own lives. When the leader asked for an example of people fussing about bad things happening today, Mike's response was unexpected as it did not seem really close to the boy's daily life, yet obviously it held some importance for him. Mike's example was, "Well, like Vietnam . . . always complaining about that." After some discussion which seemed necessary about Vietnam and the probable implication that, in our nation's view, "free is good and communism is the evil or bad," the leader again tried to have the boys relate a personal experience:

Leader: It's pretty hard sometimes to know what's right and what's wrong, isn't it? Does that ever happen in your life? (pause) Do you remember a time when you weren't too sure whether something was right or wrong?

Child: Yes.

Leader: Can you think of an example? (long pause)

Cal: Well -

Leader: What, Cal?

Cal: Doing something in a baseball game and then after you do it, you realize that -

Leader: Okay, what's a something you might have done?

Ned: Well, like if an outfielder got the ball, he might throw it to the wrong base.
Leader: Okay. Now, that's a mistake, isn't it?

Cal: Yeah

Leader: Is that as bad as if, uh, - well, how do you decide whether it's bad rather than just a mistake? Or are those the same things? (pause)

This led to a detailed explanation by the two boys and the leader about the baseball game incident and a somewhat amusing reaction by the boys in that Mike felt that only a mistake had been committed and Cal believed that it was something really bad. There followed a discussion in which each boy attempted to explain his position on this question of values. Though the talk moved a long way from the book which was the basis for the whole discussion, it seemed appropriate for these boys to think through their own personal differences. The leader hoped this could help the boys attach more meaning to this book which they seemed to find fairly difficult to understand. It was the responsibility of the leader to bring the discussion back eventually to the book itself. In this particular situation, the leader finally summed up the boy's talk and turned the focus back to the book with the following:

Leader: And so we do, we do disagree sometimes. And you can't always tell what's bad and what's good. Now, in this book are there, is there ever a time, can you remember ever a time where something seemed good really turned out to be bad? (long pause) Think of anything? (pause)
The several pauses should be understandable since the leader was actually asking the boys to shift mental gears and change their train of thought.

This group also considered the effective use of dark for representing evil and the fact that night, a time of darkness, is an appropriate time for bad things to happen:

Leader: Why do you think the author picks dark to represent bad or evil and light to represent good? (pause)

Cal: Well, there, uh, the horror movies, they have

Leader: The what, horror movies?

Cal: Yeah, They have all these monsters come out at night, and everything.

Leader: Why do they have them come out at night? Why don't they have them come out in the daytime?

Cal: Seems more spooky.

Mike: Yeah.

Leader: What makes it spooky at night?

Mike: It's darker.

Cal: You can't see.

Mike: You can, you know.

Leader: You can’t see, and that makes it spooky.
Mike: Well, most people get kind of nervous in the dark.
Leader: Yeah, but why do you get nervous in the dark? Is it what Cal's saying, that you can't see?
Mike: Yeah. Well, not all the times. You can see, but it depends what time, really, um, some people are just scared to go out at dark because they think (inaud) Martians going to come up and zap them or something.
Leader: Yeah, but why do they think that at night rather than right now in the daytime?
Cal: Cause you can see around you.
Mike: Yeah.
Leader: And that seems, why does that make a difference? (pause) Why does it matter that you can see?
Mike: Uh, they don't want people seeing the, seeing
Cal: You only get, uh, burglars that, they, uh, break in places at night.
Leader: They do? Why do they break in at night?
Cal: They don't want people to see them
Mike: To see them.
In the discussion with Zeb, Ken, and Joe, it was Ken who immediately identified the Dark, "The Dark it's evil. The Dark is evil." Joe disagreed but it soon was apparent that for him evil implied an element of gore, cutting off hands and gouging out eyes. The evil in The Dark Is Rising was on a plane that probably was too mature for him to comprehend. Ken later went on to explain his meaning for evil as depicted in the book:

Ken: What I meant as an evil is - somebody who didn't, that is, um, well, the, um, Dark, you got, I kept the impression that Dark was trying to, um, come into power so it could rule and, um, like um, like the Dark was like all the, um, kings, you know, how they used to be. Like all them kings. Not that, um, type of evil you'd think about today, no, but

Leader: Well, I think she's talking about today's evil, too, now

Ken: Yeah

Ken agreed but he never really elaborated nor suggested any examples of "today's evil." Later the leader tried again, and though Ken's reply was well stated, he never backed up his statement with an example:

Leader: Well, I think she's trying to tell you something about good and bad . . . In your life
Ken: Yeah, the good always defeats evil, but it's not always, but it's not always very easy.
Leader: I think, Ken, that's very well put. That, that's one of the things she's saying. It's quite a struggle all the way through.
Ken: It's hard, yeah, it's hard, it's hard for good to, uh, destroy evil, but good always wins.

Reviewing the typed script of the discussion revealed that the leader did not urge Ken for an example.

Cora also was quick to describe the Dark and the Light as "good and bad." Then she reflected, "Dark isn't always bad," and so the leader encouraged her to suggest some instances when dark is not bad. This led to considering the author's use of dark to represent evil:

Cora: Well, at night, dark isn't always scary. It can be quite comforting at times.

(long pause)
Leader: How about light? Is light necessarily always good? Can you think of a time when it doesn't seem to be good?
Cora: There are times. Like if you happen to want to hide.
Leader: Uh-huh
Cora: For the same reason that dark is comforting or good, light would be sometimes -

Leader: You mean light would show up something if you were trying to hide, is that what you're saying?

Cora: Possibly that, or also there are all sorts of things that could be - sometimes it's -

Leader: Why do you think that Susan Cooper, or many people, not just Susan Cooper, find that the dark is a very useful, uh, idea to represent evil or bad?

Cora: Well, that's what they always used in the old legends.

Leader: Yeah, but now, they always used it, but why do you think it works so nicely? Why is it appropriate?

Cora: Because - oftentimes dark is - scarier and bad, worse than light.

Leader: Why would it be scarier?

Cora: It's - you can't see, and you can't perceive things so well.

Leader: Don't you think that has a lot to do with it? Even though we can find nice things about the dark?

Cora: Yeah
Leader: When there's something bad happening it's much easier to have it sneak up on you and surprise you, cause you can't see it.

Cora: Yes

Leader: There'd be that kind of thing in the dark, wouldn't there?

Cora: Yeah, on the other hand, well, yeah, a lot of things that sneak up and surprise you in the dark can see in the dark.

Cora was able to talk rather freely about dark as useful for representing evil. Yet, in the overall discussion even Cora, who was the most enthusiastic about the work and had already read two other books in the pentology, seemed not to have grasped much of the deeper meanings. She needed reminding of incidents and guidance frequently from the leader. Despite the apparent difficulty of this book, she still found much in it to enjoy. This may be due to her enduring love of reading, an almost innate recognition of an outstanding piece of writing, and that such writing can be read on several levels of appreciation.

Reaction to Fantasy Within a Realistic Story

Though The Bears' House is realistic fiction, an essential part of that book deals with Fran Ellen's fantasizing when she is in the back of the classroom sitting near the doll house of the Three Bears and Goldilocks. The transition from the real life of the classroom
to Fran Ellen's imagined life in the bears' house is always abrupt. This was probably a stylistic decision by the author intended to catch the reader's attention and to add a strong sense of reality to the fantasy life. It seemed an aspect worthy of consideration during the discussions.

Mike and Cal, though they held several inaccurate recollections, did appear to recognize the imaginary function of the bears' house:

Leader: Well, what was the whole deal about that bear's house or that doll's house? Why, why was she using that?

Cal: She thought it was like her home and she pretended it was her home.

Leader: Okay

Cal: And it was all old and beat up, too, like her old house.

Leader: Say that again. It was what?

Cal: All old and beat up.

Leader: It was beat up?

Cal: Yeah, like the house they used to live in.

Leader: You think the doll's house was beat up like, uh, uh, her own home. Is that what you're saying?

Cal: Yeah

Leader: You don't think so, Mike?
Mike: No, because it said in there that the windows weren't as broken as her other doll house that she had before and -

Leader: Oh, you're talking about another doll house. Is that what you mean?

Mike: Well, she said that - yeah, I think it said in there that um, the windows weren't broken like in - old doll house - something like that.

At this point it was necessary to clear up the age of the bears' house and thus note the thirty years of considerate care given the house by many school children. Then the discussion about the relationship between the bears' house and Fran Ellen's home was resumed:

Leader: So how can you compare the doll house or the bears' house to Fran Ellen's home?

Mike: Well, every now and then - well, whenever she sits down, like when Fran Ellen does something bad or something, um, the bears kind of, like, repeat it.

Leader: Okay. And so it's like, uh, who is she in the bears' house?

Mike: Um, like, I think Goldilocks is like Fran Ellen.
Leader: Do you remember one thing that, uh, Fran Ellen says to Goldilocks? She scolds her about something?

Mike: Oh, yes, sucking her thumb.

Leader: Yeah. Which is what?

Mike: Same as she does.

Leader: And other people, what?

Mike: Yell at her.

Leader: Yeah, yell at her. Okay, now how about, uh - Compare the mama and father bear with Fran Ellen's parents. (long pause) Now when you compare something you can tell me how they're alike. You can also contrast, you can tell me how it's different.

Cal: Um, the parents - Fran Ellen's parents don't really pay that much attention to them.

Leader: Okay

Cal: And, uh, the bears do.

Here the investigator had felt he should introduce to the children the possibility of making contrasts as well as comparisons. It then developed, as the boys spoke of Fran Ellen's father, that they held some inaccurate conceptions about the father, and it was necessary to spend some time establishing where the father was and why he had left the family. It was also necessary to refer to the book and read aloud what Papa Bear said to Fran Ellen about always
Leader: So how is this father different from her own father?

Cal: He liked her.

Mike: Yeah.

Cal: And Fran Ellen's father didn't.

Leader: Now where did this father come from? The father bear? (pause) I mean, when she goes back there, is that bear really saying those things to her?

Mike: No, it's just these little wooden dolls and she pretends they come alive and so

Leader: So, what's she doing?

Cal: Playing

Leader: Yeah, she's playing, and what is she doing when she gets - when she says that the father bear said that?

Mike: She - she pretends he says that.

Leader: Why does she pretend he says those things?

Mike: Cause it has to do with her life, kind of.

Leader: Okay.

Mike: (inaud) the same things.

Cal: [she wished] like her father would say that to her.
Then the leader turned the discussion to a brief consideration of the mother who spent her time withdrawn in the bedroom only coming out to check the mailbox each day. The leader felt it might be useful to suggest that the mother also lived in a fantasy world:

Leader: So what's the mother pretending?

Cal: That the father is going to write some day.

Leader: All right. The mother is pretending, and the mother is - what do you think she's doing all the time she is lying in bed sort of crying and not talking to anybody?

Cal: Thinking about -

Leader: And what do you think she's imagining in her mind?

Cal: That, uh, her husband is going to come back some day.

Leader: All right. Now, it's pretty serious with the mother, isn't it, cause the mother is not facing reality. Do you think it could be serious with Fran Ellen if she always played in that doll's house and pretended everything was happy there and that was where her life really was? (pause)
Yeah. Because, uh, things that didn’t happen there she’d get all (inaud) and everything.

What’s the thing in Fran Ellen’s life that keeps her hanging on to real life? That right now the mother doesn’t have. What is the most real thing to Fran Ellen?

Her baby

Her baby -

Sister

Her baby sister, right?

Yeah.

That’s a real thing to her.

Like if she lost her it would just be like her mother.

Right. That’s right. So Fran Ellen has got something real to hold on to. And right now the mother doesn’t have anything to hold on to - she’s let go, so she’s pretending all the time.

There seemed to be the implication that it might be all right to fantasize as long as one was able to face reality, and so the leader indicated that the mother had ceased to accept the real world but that Fran Ellen still had some hope.
When Zeb, Ken and Joe talked about the bears' house they began with rather vague explanations of what happened there and why:

Leader: Can you tell me any more about the bears' house - the house?

Joe: Well, she got it. She always went to it when she got finished.

Ken: When she finished math ahead of time she went back there, and, uh, went back there and just sort of daydreamed about it.

Leader: Daydreamed. Why did she daydream about things at the bears house?

Joe: Cause she didn't have anything else to do.

Zeb: Cause, um

Ken: It was funner than just playing with it

Leader: Did we know what her daydreams were?

Ken: Um

Zeb: Yeah

Ken: Yes, because she told us about them.

Leader: Okay. Were her daydreams maybe different from what other children might have had if they were back there playing with the bears' house?

Zeb: Yes

Joe: Probably

Leader: How were they different?
Ken: Because she didn't touch the house or move it or anything like that.

Leader: All right.

Ken: She just sat there and thought.

Leader: And what kinds of things did she think?

Ken: Happy things.

Zeb: It was, um. I think she daydreamed

Joe: She thought she was - went into the bears' house and she was in there.

And then Zeb narrowed in on the essential point:

Zeb: The reason, probably, maybe she did the bears' house a lot cause, um, it was a perfect home and she had a

Leader: It was what?

Zeb: It was a perfect home.

Leader: Yes

Zeb: And she had a broken one.

Leader: That's interesting. Perfect as opposed to broken. How was her home broken?

Zeb: Father left

Joe: Her mom was sick and

Zeb: Well, not really sick.

Leader: Yeah, what about it, Zeb. You say not really sick, what, uh?

Zeb: Well, yeah
Ken: She was in sort of a trance.
Zeb: A trance?
Ken: Yeah
Leader: Well, what had she done?
Zeb: She was crying all the time cause, uh
Leader: Now how was the bears' house a perfect one?
Zeb: Cause, um, she imagined one like it.
Leader: What did she imagine that made it perfect?
Zeb: Um, there wasn't, you know.
Joe: Any fighting
Zeb: Their dad was there.
Leader: What?
Joe: Fighting
Leader: There wasn't any fighting. Anything else?
Zeb: Yeah, and uh, everyone was there.
Leader: Who
Zeb: Everyone was there.
Leader: What do you mean by everyone was there?
Zeb: Well, you know, Goldilocks and the bears.
Joe: (inaud) The dad.
Leader: Well, but how does that make it a perfect home, huh?
Joe: Well, it makes it a family.
Leader: If what?
Joe: If they're all together.
These boys appeared to have had a clear understanding of the essential aspect of Fran Ellen's imaginings, and so they probably understood the major theme of *The Bears' House*. The leader continued the discussion in this direction in order to determine what the boys might have meant when they called life in the bears' house a perfect home.

Leader: It isn't that there were three bears in that house that made it a perfect home. Your home would certainly be imperfect if it had three bears in it. Now what made it a perfect home? (pause) You're on to it, come on.

Ken: Because nobody, um

Zeb: Nobody hated her.

Leader: Okay - now who was there? (pause)

Joe: The bears.

Leader: And what were those bears? (pause) One of them was, and one of them was, and one of them was?

Ken: There was a mother and father and they were both happy.

Leader: That's it, right?

Joe: Yeah.

Leader: There was what - what makes a perfect home?
Ken and Joe: Happiness

Leader: Yeah, but 'happiness' is too big and doesn't mean anything. What makes it a 'happiness home'?

Zeb: Both parents

Leader: All right, if you've got both parents and if they what?

Joe: Like each other.

Leader: Like each other and if they?

Joe: Like each other

Zeb: Like Fran Ellen

Leader: Or, instead of saying Fran Ellen, like who?

Zeb: Or anybody.

Ken: Like uh, like Fran Ellen -

Leader: If the parents like -

Ken: The children.

Cora, again, revealed a fairly mature insight into the story and its characters, though even she developed her thinking about the function of the fantasizing in this book as she and the leader talked:

Leader: Tell me a little bit about what you think the significance of the bears' house in the story is, has. What does that serve, what purpose does that serve?
Cora: Uh, well, the main thing it seemed to me, kind of, was Goldilocks, so that she would have someone to look down on for awhile.

Leader: Uh-huh

Cora: And then, be kind of a parent to, in a way.

Leader: To Goldilocks?

Cora: Yeah

Leader: Uh-huh. What kinds of things?

Cora: Someone who has the same problems as herself, um, and then, when she has stopped those problems

Leader: Oh

Cora: After she's, like, the minute, the minute she stopped the thumbsucking it turned out that Goldilocks, um, you know, like, a little while after, she stopped the thumbsucking, Goldilocks stopped it, too.

Leader: Uh-huh

Cora: So, it's kind of a double. Someone to - rule over, be a parent to, look down on, or

Leader: What were the, uh, mother and father bear like as far as Fran Ellen was concerned?

Cora: Uh, the people she'd like to have around to help things.

Leader: How did they compare to her own parents?
Cora: Uh, a lot better able to take care of her, cause that's what she mostly wanted, I think, is taking care of.

Leader: Can you remember any examples of what the father bear did?

Cora: I remember one thing. He got mad about - about the teacher probably giving the bears' house to one of those two silly, awful girls.

Leader: Oh. Uh-huh. How did he treat Fran Ellen? Can you remember any example of how he treated her? (pause)

Cora: Pretty much like a father I would guess from my - although I can't remember an example.

And then near the end of this discussion the leader once more questioned Cora about the bears' house, and she responded:

Leader: Now, somewhere in the book Fran Ellen says, "I'm me in the bears' house." What does she mean by that? ... 

Cora: Um, well, nobody else understands her very much in the real world, and everybody understands her there, and she has a really, really a chance to do things that she wouldn't otherwise do for fear of being laughed at, that are really herself.
Because Fran Ellen, the main character in *The Bear's House*, sucked her thumb almost constantly led all four groups to make some specific observations. Most of the subjects had difficulty sorting out their own culturally imposed attitudes toward thumbsucking and the significance of this action by Fran Ellen in her particular situation. Their responses also indicated their level of moral development for they seemed unable to look at the *cause* of Fran Ellen's thumbsucking, blaming her or her parents for the *act*.

Mike and Cal struggled with Fran Ellen's thumbsucking throughout the discussion and never really saw it as much more than a bad habit or something to do with her hands. Mike once suggested that perhaps it was an effort to be different, but with the leader's guidance they found no evidence in the book for that contention.

And so he went back to the habit explanation:

*Mike:* She never - she never broke the habit, I guess.

*Leader:* Why didn't she break the habit?

*Mike:* Cause no one, you know, (inaud) tried to help her.

*Cal:* She didn't have anything else to do.

*Leader:* She didn't have anything else to do?

*Cal:* With her hand.

*Leader:* (Inaud)

*Cal:* And after she quit (inaud) she didn't have anything else to do.
Leader: Cal, why did she quit?
Cal: Cause the teacher was yelling at her and everyone didn't like it.
Leader: That's why she quit?
Cal: And everyone said that, uh, (pause)
Leader: Now most of the book -
Cal: Made her smell bad
Leader: In most of the book they make fun of her. They say she smelled bad.
Cal: Uh-huh
Leader: The teacher tells her to stand farther away. She doesn't quit.
Cal: She wanted to make, like, uh, uh, impression on the other people.

The suggestion that no one tried to help Fran Ellen break the habit seemed to reflect the child's idea of how a habit could be broken. Soon the boys were back to thinking that she did not have anything else to do with her hand, and then they were explaining why she did quit. Since the leader obviously was not accepting their explanation which was a combination of group and teacher pressure upon Fran Ellen, Cal resorted again to the possibility that she was trying to get attention.

At this point the leader led the group's thinking through the specific scene where Fran Ellen decides to quit, and they discussed what her fears were at that moment which prompted such a promise.
This then led to a general discussion of how difficult it is to break a habit, and since middle grade children do not usually have many identifiably serious habits, the leader explored the problem both boys indicated their parents were having or had had in giving up the smoking habit.

Despite this phase of the discussion, the leader never had any initiated comments by either boy to indicate they had much understanding of Fran Ellen's thumbsucking and it's relationship to the total story other than the surface plot of promising to stop sucking, keeping that promise, and in the end being given the bears' house.

In the other boys' group, they expressed strong feelings about why Fran Ellen had never given up sucking her thumb which also reflected the cultural influence upon the boys:

Leader: Why was she doing those things?
Joe: Just came natural.
Leader: Came natural to suck her thumb?
Joe: Well, she never stopped.
Leader: Why didn't she stop? (pause)
Ken: Because she never had a reason to.
Leader: And, do most people have a reason to?
Ken: Um well, most, uh
Leader: Why didn't she have a reason to?
Joe: Well, no one was around her to tell her to stop.
Leader: Oh. You mean all those kids in that room that fusssed at her, that wasn't really telling her to stop? And the teacher?

Ken: No, it's, uh, the mom, the, it's, um. The mom was the one, cause her mom was, um, sick or whatever it was - she, uh, well, she, uh, well, it's moms are the ones that make the kids stop and her mom was sick.

Leader: It's moms that make the kids stop sucking thumbs?

Ken: Yeah

Zeb: Well she had it, it was a habit.

The leader persisted in exploring the basis for children to give up thumbsucking and related that to Fran Ellen:

Joe: She did it before her mother, her father went away.

Ken: Well, (inaud)

Leader: Do we know that? Do we know whether she did it before?

Ken: No

Leader: I'm not sure that it tells us that.

Zeb: I think it said, oh, I don't know. It probably did.
Leader: I don't think we hear about her thumb-sucking (phone rings) Uh, so you think mothers are the ones that stop children from sucking their thumbs, um?

Zeb: It's usually um, people just don't start doing it at ten, just cause their fathers go away.

Leader: People, say that again (phone has continued to ring).

Zeb: People usually don't just start sucking their thumb at ten when they never have before, but, you know, it'd be kind of weird if, you know, right when the story started up then she started sucking her thumb.

Leader: You think that would be kind of weird?

Zeb: Yeah

Joe: Well, she was still like a little kid.

Leader: Yeah

Joe: She was only ten years old.

Leader: Well, what made her suck her thumb? (pause) Just because nobody told her to stop?

Joe: She had a habit.

And just when the boys seemed to be back where they had started, Zeb provided some of the insight necessary to understanding this aspect of The Bears' House. Even so, Ken still found himself unable
to free his thinking from his beliefs about habits:

Leader: Well, how do you get a habit like that?

Ken: How do you get it? Well, then you're um

Zeb: Insecure.

Ken: Yeah, when you're insecure or when, like

uh, when you're real young, you, um, it's

just the only thing you, it's

Joe: It tastes good

Ken: You automatically do it and then as you get

older, uh, the parent, in some way forces

you to stop.

Leader: Well, now, Zeb, right? You said that you

suck your thumb sometimes because you're

insecure.

Zeb: Yeah

Leader: Was Fran Ellen insecure?

Zeb: Maybe.

Leader: Maybe. What do you think?

Zeb: It didn't really say.

Leader: What do you people think? Was she insecure?

Ken: Well, after awhile it wasn't that she was

insecure. It's just she'd just formed the

habit of it.

Leader: What does it mean to be insecure?
The girls may have had more understanding of Fran Ellen's thumbsucking and its meaning in the book, though Meg and Fay vacillated between the usual notions about habits and the need she may have had because of the family situation.

Leader: What can you tell me about Fran Ellen's thumbsucking?

Fay: Kind of babyish.

Meg: It was gross.

Leader: It was gross. What does gross mean?

Meg: It didn't sound very good, sounded -

Leader: Okay, have - can you think a little about why she was sucking her thumb? What grade was

Fay: Made her feel more secure.

Leader: You think, uh, Fay, you think it made her feel more secure?
Fay: Yeah, like, the way when she had to stop,  

she didn't like to stop.

Leader: What do you think, uh, Meg?

Meg: I think that way, too.

Leader: You do. Uh, and then, Fay, you said  
something about its being babyish. In  
other words, you're saying it's not  
very appropriate for, what grade was  
she in?

Meg: Fourth

Leader: Okay. You think it was inappropriate for  
her in fourth grade?

Fay: Yeah

Leader: If it wasn't appropriate for her to do it,  
why, then, was she doing it?

Meg: Cause she liked to do it.

Fay: She liked her thumb. (followed by brief  
giggles from both girls)

Leader: What made her like her thumb?

Meg: She's just always done that, so -

Fay: Like a habit, and, just -

Leader: Well, but, uh, wouldn't you guess that a lot  
of children in that room, and maybe even you,  
have sucked your thumb somewhere in your  
life? Is that possible for either of you?  
Do either of you remember sucking a thumb?
Fay: No
Meg: No
Leader: Okay
Meg: My dad wouldn't let me suck my thumb.
Leader: Do you know anybody who did? (pause)
Do you remember anybody that you've known
that when they were very little sucked their
thumb, but they don't suck their thumb now?
Fay: I know somebody who sucks their thumb, but
they still suck it.
Leader: And how old is that person? 
Fay: About two
Leader: About two. Well, in general you don't see
people sucking their thumbs in fourth grade,
right?
Fay: Right.
Leader: There must have been an awfully important
reason for the author to have Fran Ellen
still sucking a thumb in fourth grade.
It's so unusual. Why?
Fay: Probably, cause like, well, like her mother
and like, well, since her mother got kind of
sick, well since her father left, she, you know,
nobody paid that much attention to her and she
might of felt, you know, like, her thumb loved
her. (giggle)
In Fay's last remark from the preceding excerpt, one feels that she may have considerable insight into Fran Ellen and her need to suck her thumb.

When attempting to relate to another book, Little House on the Prairie, which the girls had spoken of earlier as a very different kind of family story, the leader suggested the girls comment on whether Laura, the main character, would have sucked her thumb. It was the intention of the leader to draw out how secure and happy a family Laura had in contrast to Fran Ellen's family. The discussion did not go that way, but again reflected Meg's culturally based bias. It should be noted that Fay continued in her attempt to bring more meaning to Fran Ellen's "habit":

Leader: So, you know, earlier you were comparing
the family - that it was a family story and
that Little House on the Prairie is also a
family story. Would you think that Laura,
in The Little House book, at the same age
would be sucking her thumb?

Fay: No

Leader: And why not? (pause)

Meg: She wouldn't be allowed to.

Fay: Probably -

Leader: You think she, uh

Fay: Didn't have a reason to

Leader: Meg, you don't think she would have been
allowed to?
Leader: Do you think it's possible that even if you aren't allowed to do something that sometimes you do it anyway? (pause)

Fay: Yeah, guess so.

Leader: See this may be a hard thing for you to understand if you've never been allowed to suck your thumb and for some reason you didn't need to suck your thumb. But there are children that would have gone on sucking their thumb even if they weren't allowed to, even if they were punished. There has to be a reason for that. (pause)

Fay: Kind of habit.

Fay's last remark seemed to indicate that she had not really succeeded in going much beyond the usual feelings one hears in our society about habits such as thumbsucking.

In Cora's discussion the subject was dealt with very briefly and only at the beginning. And Cora's view of Fran Ellen's thumb-sucking was quite mature. She had a fairly clear grasp of Fran Ellen's basic problem, and she recognized the need one has for comfort:

Leader: Okay, why don't you just start out by telling me what you think, in general, what was your general reaction to the book?
Cora: My general reaction was that there was a bunch of big problems that weren't solved that ought to have been.


Cora: You never found out what happened.

Leader: Did anything get solved?

Cora: Yes

Leader: What?

Cora: Oh - the thumbsucking and, to a certain extent, the fights in school, and it's quite clear that something is going to happen eventually.

Leader: Okay. Why do you think she was sucking her thumb?

Cora: She didn't have much else to do. I mean, she, that was the only way she could possibly get happy.

Leader: I see

Cora: It's comfort, you know, Linus' -

Leader: Okay, like Linus', uh -

Cora: Except that he's not poor and having all sorts of problems.

Leader: Okay. Is it usual for someone her age to be sucking her thumb when they have a problem?
Cora: It depends on the problem.
Leader: Uh-huh
Cora: Besides, I don't know many, very, many people her age that have a problem.
Leader: Like she has
Cora: Like she has, certainly.
Leader: Uh-huh. Could you describe what her problem, what her problem or problems really were?
Cora: Well—quite a bit was, uh—inefficient parents and—parents who didn't do their job.

Relationship of Illustration to Theme

In talking about The Slave Dancer, comments concerning the illustrations were made. Ken initiated this particular direction of the conversation when he was attempting to react in general to the book. He said, "The story itself was good, but some of the pictures weren't as good." When the investigator asked what was the matter with the pictures, the following discussion took place between the three boys and the investigator:

Ken: Well, uh, they were almost too dark to see.
Leader: I see.
Ken: Unless you are, unless you were reading it by yourself.
Leader: Do you think there might have been any reason for their being very dark?
Zeb: (inaud)

Leader: What?

Zeb: (inaud)

Leader: I can't hear you, Zeb.

Zeb: Are they done in India ink?

Leader: Oh, done in India ink? Uh, I don't know what they were done in. It looks like they might have been.

Joe: Well, uh, they're supposed to, like, give the feeling of dark.

Leader: Why would they want the feeling of dark?

Joe: That's the way the story was.

Leader: The story was dark, is that what you're saying?

Joe: Yeah.

Leader: What do you mean when you say the story was dark?

Joe: Oh, I mean it didn't have any - too much happiness (inaud)

Leader: Oh - what would you say to that, Ken?

Ken: (Inaud)

Leader: With what Joe has said, does that fit?

Ken: It seems to (pause)

Leader: Does that change your feeling at all as far as the pictures are concerned?
Leader: No. What would have helped you with the pictures?

Ken: If they'd, uh, had been, uh, some more, if they had, if they'd had some light colors in it, then it would have been, then it would of been good pictures, too.

Leader: Do you - I wonder if, what Joe was saying, there is a connection between what he was saying and the fact that those pictures have no color to them. (pause) You're suggesting they should have color. They didn't have any color and I wonder if you can relate to what Joe was trying to get at. What was Joe trying to get at?

Ken: He was trying, trying to uh, get at what color, what kind of ink they were using.

Leader: No, I think that's what Zeb was saying.

Ken: Oh, yeah

Leader: What, Joe, say again what it was, the feeling you were getting across.

Joe: Well, it was

Ken: Dark.

Joe: Yeah, dark, like we had to write (inaud) poems, sense poems and stuff.
Leader: Now, what's that have to do with dark?

Joe: Well, it didn't have any light in it, in the story, it wasn't a happy story.

It can be seen that the investigator attempted to engage the subjects in the possibility that the very dark, black and white drawings in this book might reflect the mood of the story, a mood that was both grim and quite depressing. One student, Zeb, interpreted the investigator's purpose to be ascertaining the media used for the illustrations. It is possible that he had never considered the potential for book illustrations to be carefully planned extensions of the text, not just providing visual images of characters and settings for the reader. Joe saw the fuller potential of the pictures since he immediately broke in with, "they're supposed to, like, give the feeling of dark." Further questioning by the leader succeeded in getting Joe to state that the story had little happiness in it, and so it was, in Joe's interpretation, a dark story. Only Joe had grasped the essential connection between the mood of the pictures and the mood of the story in The Slave Dancer. Joe's brief reference to writing poems, "sense poems," may have been an effort to relate a concrete sensory experience to poetic language. He may have seen an illustration as the concrete experience, and in this moment he may have begun to appreciate the efforts of artist and author to make their work integral parts of a whole.

Cora also spoke about the illustrations in The Slave Dancer:
Cora: As pictures, I don't like them much, but they are, they have a good—they explain the story very well.

Leader: Uh-huh. Now, as pictures, you say you don't like them. What is it about them that makes you not like them as pictures?

Cora: The way they're done. I just, it's not the kind of picture I like.

Leader: What kind of picture do you like?

Cora: Other kinds (laugh)

Leader: Well, can you describe at all what, what is in a picture that you like, or what, how a picture would be that you liked?

Cora: These have—too much darkness

Leader: Too much darkness

Cora: It seems to me. No color. Sometimes I like that, if they have—

Leader: Would you guess that the illustrator—took those very things you've said as necessary for his pictures? That they needed to be too dark, and that they needed not to have color?

Cora: I think so.

Leader: Why? Why would he want that?
Because that's the kind of spirit of the way the slaves felt.

So if he'd done it in brilliant - water colors or something, you might not get the Picture. It wouldn't have come out so well.

Cause what kind of feeling do you think those natives had? (pause) As they were traveling

Darkness, mostly

Yeah. In fact, they lived in the hold, didn't they?

Yes

Which would have

No light

Yeah

Except when they came up - to dance

So I guess I was just thinking that the illustrations need to reflect the mood of the story, don't they? Cause that was my first impression, oh, they're so dark you can hardly see them.

Uh-huh
Leader: But maybe that captures just what life was like for them. Life was so dark, they could hardly see it.

It would seem that Cora appreciated the need for these illustrations to be dark, though she commented, almost as an aside, that she did not care for such pictures. But Cora also did not like the conditions described in the book, for she said almost at the outset of the discussion, "I didn't like it because of the cruelty, etcetera, involved." And five months later when asked what she remembered most vividly about The Slave Dancer, her response was, "The cruelty to the slaves. That's the kind of thing I would remember."

Observations
1. Generally it was necessary for the leader to introduce consideration of themes. Students often have not thought much beyond the plot of a story.
2. Basic themes such as friendship, survival, and sacrifice were discussed with ease by sixth graders.
3. The sixth graders' level of thinking makes it difficult to deal with an abstraction such as symbolism in a literary piece.
4. The sixth graders' level of moral development prevented them from considering justifiable causes for a habit such as thumbsucking.
5. The sixth graders' in this study were surprised that the main character in a book would die. They do not expect such a thing to happen in the books they read.

6. The girls were more able to understand the possible purpose of the author in allowing the main character to die, whereas the boys were not able to suggest a suitable reason.

Summary:

In this section eight topics which arose during the discussions were presented with the inclusion of excerpts from the protocols of the tape recorded book conversations. Those transcripts show that the leader can extend and enrich the children's understanding by raising questions and making comments about significant aspects of the literary work and by encouraging the participants to consider the relationship of some of the ideas in the book to their own personal lives.
CHAPTER VI
PERSONAL RESPONSE

Introduction

Thus far this study has focused upon parameters which were determined by the investigator. This parallels the usual classroom situation where the teacher provides the terms and their definitions and then studies the students' reactions accordingly.

Another way of looking at children's response to literature was developed by using the Repertory Grid which allows the child to develop the constructs by which he/she then discusses the book. In Chapter V the constructs came from outside of the child, namely from the investigator and the professional literature, but most of the constructs of the Repertory Grids originated directly with each child.

Determining Constructs and Contrasts

Though the procedures which were followed in developing the Repertory Grids for the subjects of this study were detailed in Chapter III, it will facilitate the reading of the present chapter if a review is included at this point. Ten books were chosen with which the subjects were familiar. The five books which were the basis of the in-depth discussions were included. Various groups of three books were placed before the subject. In each group of three the subject was asked to identify two books that were alike in some
important way and then to indicate how the third book was different. Whatever the child said about the two books became a construct and the remarks concerning the third became its contrast.

Classification of Constructs and Contrasts

Each subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three. Since the investigator had encouraged consideration of thematic aspects during the book discussions, it seemed appropriate to analyze the constructs and contrasts which were suggested by each subject according to whether they were thematic in nature. In examining each subject's 10 construct-contrasts it was found that they referred to content, to theme, or they appeared to be a mixture of both content and theme. Those which were direct references to the type of book, i.e. "fantasy," and "could happen," were classified as content-genre. Table 11 classifies each subject's constructs and contrasts.

Seventy-one percent, or nearly three fourths, of the 159 constructs and contrasts could be characterized as content-based. Though only 10 percent could be considered fully theme-based, another 19% were identified as content oriented but tending toward theme. Themes generally have been identified by adults and thus expressed in more sophisticated language. It may be more difficult to spot a theme when it has been mentioned by a child. For example, an adult might consider one theme in *The Bears' House* to be the need to maintain a family's identity and its influence upon a character, but
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* Zeb had one contrast which was both content-genre and content-theme.

** Joe identified one contrast as, "Just a different book all together." This did not seem to fit any of the classifications.

*** Mike inadvertently did not identify a contrast for one book.
Zeb's comment, "the main character wanted to be different," may be a child's effort to consider aspects of the same theme; yet his remark is founded in content since he speaks of a specific individuals' desire. Therefore, the data on Table 11 indicated that 29% of the constructs and contrasts had some relationship with literary themes.

**Content-Theme and Theme**

A few more examples of constructs and contrasts which appeared to be a combination of content and theme or seemed to be themes expressed in rather unsophisticated, child-language now follows:

Cora spoke of both *The Dark Is Rising* and *The Slave Dancer* as being, "about some power, a bad power." An adult more likely might have said a common theme in both books had to do with overcoming evil. Of *The Dark Is Rising* and *The Pushcart War* Fay said, "Both trying to fight something." An adult searching for a common thematic construct for those two books might say, "Both tell of a struggle against evil forces." In comparing the two children's examples, it would appear that Cora is much closer to stating a theme, yet Fay surely is approaching a possible theme. At this point Fay's comment may be too vague to satisfy an adult's expectation of expressing a theme, but it suggests a theme-like view of the two books under consideration.

"Trying to get blacks to freedom," was a construct of Meg's. This would suggest both content and theme. An adult might have stated
the theme inherent in this comment as "Freedom" or "Struggle for freedom," or possibly, "Freedom versus slavery".

Cal said of Scrub Dog of Alaska and The Slave Dancer, "They made friends." This would appear very close to "Friendship," a more likely adult reaction when identifying a common construct for these two books. For The Pushcart War and The Dark Is Rising, Cal said, "Both had a goal to do something." In an adult's terms this might have been, "Achieving a goal," and so it would appear that Cal is stating a theme.

**Content-Genre**

Almost one fourth of the constructs and contrasts were classified as content-genre. With the exception of Cal every subject found it fitting to characterize some pairs of books according to type. Usually these comments were as precise as, "fantasy," "mystery," and "biography." Occasionally they were as general as, "nonfiction," and "fiction." Sometimes rather than identifying a particular genre the children gave characteristics of the genre, for example, Cora said of Jane-Emly and The Dark Is Rising, "They have an air of supernaturality, fairy taleish, though not really fairy tales." Fay, in speaking of The Pushcart War and The Dark Is Rising said, "Both can't really happen." And Ken said, "Stories of a life or part of a life as told by other people," when he found something in common for Proud Taste of Scarlet and Miniver and Canalboat To Freedom.
Ranking the Books According to Constructs and Contrasts

Another step in developing each subject's Repertory Grid necessitated ranking the 10 books for each construct. In order to accomplish this the investigator repeated one of the subject's constructs and asked the child to arrange the books from the one most like the construct down to the one least like it. This ranking procedure was repeated for each construct. It was necessary at times to use a contrast instead of a construct when a student had identified the same construct for varying pairs of books. For example, Zeb noted three constructs that had to do with slaves and Ken had two constructs about characters changing. A contrast also had to be used when a construct seemed inappropriate for ranking. An example of this was Ken's construct, "There are black and white main characters." This was impossible to rank since each book either had black and white main characters or it did not. There were instances when the investigator felt a contrast had particularly useful ranking possibilities such as Fay's comment about a book being "more serious."

After all subjects had ranked the books according to their own personal constructs or contrasts, the investigator introduced four other constructs for ranking purposes. These constructs were as follows:

1. The books I enjoyed most.
2. Like the books I usually read.
3. There is something in the book that is most like me.

4. The book that helped me stretch my imagination or helped me to imagine the most.

Though these constructs were provided by the investigator, each subject was free to rank the books in any way.

Tables 12, 13, 14, and 15 reveal the rankings of the five books which were discussed in depth by the investigator for this study. Thus, the other five titles are not specified since they were not a major part of the study. A short line is provided in place of the other titles in order to focus one's attention upon the books which were used for discussion.

Rankings 1 through 5 should be considered positive and those 6 through 10 should be regarded as negative. Of the 16 possible most positive rankings (1st and 2nd choices), 6 books from the discussions were identified as most enjoyed; 7 as most like those the subjects usually read; 6 as containing something most like the various students; and 11 which were considered as contributing the most to stretching the imagination. A further examination of the columns for the two most positive rankings indicated that only 2 subjects (Cora and Joe) did not identify any books from the discussions as those they enjoyed most; 2 subjects (Joe and Cal) did not include any books from the study as being most like those they usually read; 2 subjects (Joe and Mike) could not find anything in the books of the study which was most like them; but all of the subjects identified books
### Table 12

The Books I Enjoyed Most

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Table 13

Most Like The Books I Usually Read

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### Table 14

**Something In The Book That Is Most Like Me**

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### Table 15

**Books That Stretched the Imagination Most**

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from the study that had stretched their imaginations.

**Genre Choices**

The ten books which the subjects ranked according to various constructs represented three major genres of literature published for young readers. Four books were classified as fantasy, four as realistic fiction, and two as historical fiction.

Table 16 reveals the preferred genre choices of each subject for the constructs which were introduced by the investigator. Each table includes the first and second choices as well as the final two choices of each subject. In this way one can attend to the most positive and most negative choices of each subject.

For the books that were most enjoyed, all eight subjects identified a fantasy as either first or second choice. Six subjects indicated that a fantasy was their first choice, and two subjects placed fantasies in both positions. Of the books enjoyed least, again all eight chose a common genre, namely realistic fiction, for one or both of the two final positions.

In ranking books according to those that are most like what the subjects usually read, fantasy was selected by all eight subjects for at least one of the two lead positions. Three subjects placed fantasies in both positions. Fantasy was almost equally chosen for one of the two final positions. But if one examines only the first and last positions, it appears that five of the eight subjects chose a fantasy as most like what they usually read, whereas only three
### Table 16

**Genre Choices**

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<th></th>
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</table>

*f = fantasy  
*r = realistic fiction  
*h = historical fiction*
indicated a fantasy was the least like their usual reading fare. In the final position, three chose a book of realistic fiction, and two chose historical fiction. There appeared to be considerable variation in the kinds of books chosen as least like the ones the subjects usually read.

The construct, "Most like me" revealed strong interest in fantasy. All eight subjects placed fantasy at the highest end of their rankings, and half of the subjects chose a fantasy for both first and second positions. Though there were six subjects who picked a fantasy for one of the last positions, no subject chose more than one fantasy. It would appear that fantasy provided most of these subjects with something to which they could relate their personal lives.

Every subject indicated a fantasy in the first position when ranking the books according to those which helped most to stretch their imaginations and no subjects chose a fantasy for the final position. Also, all but one subject did not choose a fantasy for the second to last place. Obviously these subjects see fantasy as contributing more to the imagination than the other two genres. Table 15 indicates that one or both of the two fantasies which were used for the discussions in this study were chosen by all seven subjects who ranked the books for this particular construct. The Dark Is Rising was chosen first by five subjects.
Repertory Grid Analyses

A grid for each of the eight subjects was developed by asking the subjects to rank the 10 selected books according to the constructs that had been identified by both the individual students and the investigator. This information was scored with the aid of the university computer as explained in Chapter III. The resulting coefficients were converted to grid scores, the percentage of common variance between construct pairs. (The grids for each subject appear in Appendix C).

Table 17 summarizes and characterizes the 638 total possible relationships which occurred. The majority were characterized as "weak" (78%). Sixteen percent, or 103, were identified as "Moderate" relationships. The remaining 6 percent was divided among the three categories, "very high," "strong," and "marked." Only one child (Joe) recorded a "very high" relationship and it was between the constructs, "about animals" and "men and animals together." Five subjects accounted for the 8 "strong" relationships. Five of those relationships included at least a construct introduced by the investigators as one of the pairs. Both Zeb and Fay had a "strong" relationship between the books they enjoyed most and the books they usually read. Joe had a "strong" relationship between the books he most enjoyed and those books which had something in them which he considered most like himself. The grid for Joe also indicated a "strong" relationship between the books he most enjoyed and books
Table 17
Relationship Range For Repertory Grids Of Eight Subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>VERY HIGH</th>
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<th>MARKED</th>
<th>MODERATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>273</td>
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NOTE: + = relationship between two constructs
- = relationship between one construct and one contrast, or the opposite of one particular construct.
where they made a lot of friends. Mike's "strong" relationship was between the books that were most like he usually reads and the contrast, "nothing about boats." The remaining "strong" relationships included Cora's between her constructs "about animals" and "about some power, a bad power;" Mike's between his construct "casualties in the family" and the contrast, "nothing about blacks;" and Zeb's between constructs "easy going, can get along with someone," and "a mean guy in it."

Among the relationships characterized as "Marked," the following are examples:

1. Cora: Constructs, "about animals" and "something in the books that is most like me."
2. Meg: Constructs, "Adventure story" and "Trying to be something else."
4. Mike: Construct, "About attackers" and the contrast, "nothing about black people."
5. Cal: Construct, "Stretching the imagination" and the contrast, "Trying to make things better."

**Construct, "Most Like Me"**

After each student ranked the books for the construct, "There is something in this book that is most like me," the investigator asked if he/she could comment on what it was in the books with which the
Every child was able to respond, though some were more specific than others. In general the remarks suggest that these subjects identify with books in a variety of ways. This is seen in the following comments made by each subject regarding the construct, "Something in the book that is most like me!"

Zeb placed *The Pushcart War* first because there was a lot of "fighting back." *The Dark Is Rising* he placed second because the main character was eleven years old. He placed *The Slave Dancer* fifth and said, "I don't laugh all the time." In sixth position he put *The House of Dies Drear* with, "I like to explore."

Cora said of *Watership Down* and *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man*, her first and second choices, "These because I read a lot of fairy tales, and I love animals."

Fay responded, "I have some of those kinds of feelings sometimes."

Meg placed *The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man* first and said, "Because I wish to be something else. Sometimes I fight for something else I want." *Scrub Dog of Alaska* was ranked third because she likes dogs a lot. She placed *The Slave Dancer* fourth and said, "Sometimes I have to do something I don't want to do." *A Proud Taste of Scarlet and Miniver* was ranked fifth and her comment was, "Sometimes I force the things I want to do like she does." In sixth position she put *Canalboat To Freedom* saying, "I like horses."

Ken explained what it was about five of the books which he identified for the construct, "Most like me." For *The Pushcart War* he
said, "The trucking companies were their enemies. People act super cool, act real tough, or really hate me." Of The Slave Dancer he said, "I feel like the main character at times. I put the book second in the way of leadership. I like to lead things." Ken's third choice was Canalboat To Freedom about which he said, "He'd like more freedom, and I'd like more, too." The Dark Is Rising was his fourth choice and he said, "Change - he was changed. In ways I've been changing a lot recently." To the investigator's inquiry about how he had been changing, he explained, "I've been changing my attitude, and strength, and that stuff." The fifth book for Ken was Scrub Dog of Alaska, and for this one he said, "Because nobody likes me - only false friends."

Several times as Joe ranked the books for this construct he said, "I don't have the faintest idea." After completing the ranking the investigator asked if he could explain what it was he found in any of the books that was like him. Joe's response was, "Something and someone in them did what I probably would have done."

Mike had something to say about more of the books than any other student. He commented on 8 books as follows:

**Scrub Dog of Alaska** - "A boy my age and his dog."

**The Pushcart War** - "Me and my friends kinda like to go around and get revenge, do funny things."

**Our Eddie** - "Something like that could happen in the family."

**Canalboat To Freedom** - "I like to help people out a lot."
The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man - "The boy was kind of mischievous."

The House of Dies Drear - "I like to learn about things around where you live."

The Slave Dancer - "I like to help people - he did."

The Dark Is Rising - "The boy, eleven."

In trying to tell the investigator his reasons for choosing the books for this construct Cal was not too successful. His initial response was, "I don't know." For The Bears' House, his last choice, he finally said, "I don't think I'd do the kind of stuff she'd do. If someone beat me up I'd sock 'em back." For Scrub Dog of Alaska he said, "I like dogs a lot. If someone took my dog away I'd want it back." At first he did not know what to say about The Dark Is Rising, but then said, "The boy's around my age." He said of The Pushcart War, "There's a lot of things I could be like in that one-like drive my sister out of the house."

Though the subjects were asked to arrange the books so that those which contained something most like the individual student would be placed at one end and those with something least like him/her at the other end, it would appear that all except Cora and Fay felt there was something identifiable in books all along the continuum. Cal even found himself making a specific remark about the book he placed the farthest from having anything like himself in it.

Volunteered Comments

During the procedures for accomplishing the Repertory Grids, most
of the subjects initiated very little talk. Each child went about the tasks seriously, with no reluctance, but it may have been the time limits imposed upon the investigator by the classroom teachers that kept him from encouraging general conversation during the activity.

Cora talked more freely than did any of the other subjects during the sixty-minutes in which she worked on the books. She seemed to be under less pressure to get back to her classroom. Her comments indicate the possibilities of learning more about the child reader if conversation can be encouraged while developing the necessary data for the Repertory Grid. During the time the investigator would hand her various groups of three books for the purpose of eliciting constructs and contrasts, these were her remarks:

"I must read Watership Down again."

"I’ve found that big, long books are often very good, very well written, the best." (When she was considering The Yearling, Watership Down, and The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man.)

"All three of these have black or dark grayish covers." (When considering Our Eddie, The Slave Dancer, and The Dark Is Rising.)

"We keep coming across two paperbacks and one hardback or two hardbacks and one paperback."

"This is a little bit harder." (Referring to the group of Jane-Emily, The Bears’ House, and Julie of The Wolves.)
"They’re all three by girls and about girls." (Same books as preceding statement.)

"These three are on my not-like-so-much list." (Same books)

"I dislike all three for different reasons." (Same books)

"This is going to be interesting because these are such different books." (When asked to consider The Yearling, Johnny Tremain, and The Dark Is Rising.)

"These are all written by ladies about boys." (Referring to books in the preceding statement.)

The remainder of Cora’s comments were made as she ranked the ten books for each of the constructs:

"The first two are usually easy. The middle ones are harder."

When Cora was asked to rank the books according to her second construct, "A person or people against which there is some prejudice," she placed The Slave Dancer in the first position and said, "Definitely, definitely, definitely."

When she began arranging the books for her third construct, "About animals," she picked up Watership Down and said, "Definitely and entirely about animals."

While ranking the books for the construct, "Enjoyed the most," she remarked, "I usually do enjoy the thicker books more." And later, "I like hardback books better, they last longer." Then finally as
she struggled with her first choice, she said, "This hurts lots and lots. It's hard."

Cora's reaction to the construct, "Most like the books I usually read," began, "That's hard because I read all kinds of books, all kinds of books."

Six subjects, Fay, Meg, Mike, Joe, Zeb and Cal either volunteered no comments or only one or two incidental ones during the entire activity. Zeb worked quickly and almost never hesitated while doing the rankings, though he paused once to ask, "Am I arranging these too fast?" The investigator remained noncommittal.

Ken had a few more comments than the others but generally he seemed to be thinking out loud. For example, "A lot of these are more like an adventure than a mystery" for his construct, "Adventure-mystery." And later when he was considering his construct about characters changing, he picked up Canalboat To Freedom and said, "The main character changes his attitude toward Newt." Yet, twice Ken did feel it necessary to explain what he had meant by one of his constructs when the investigator asked him to rank the books accordingly. Ken explained what he meant by his second contrast, "More of a want," which he had assigned to The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man by saying, "Lionel wanted to be human whereas in the other books it was out of a need that they did [what they did]. The trucks [in The Pushcart War] were destroying property, and the Light [in The Dark Is Rising] needed to take over the Dark so the world would be a better place."
When the investigator asked Ken to rank the books according to the construct, "About freedom," the boy said, "I was talking about a want for freedom." And so the ranking was done as though the construct were, "About wanting freedom."

Summary Observations

1. Content-based constructs predominated when the subjects identified common elements in pairs of books.

2. These sixth grade subjects tended to identify themes much less frequently and usually did so in language which suggested a tendency toward recognizing a theme more often than stating specific themes.

3. Often these sixth graders referred to various genres in more personally descriptive language than the usual categories such as "biography" and "fantasy."

4. Books which had been discussed during the study were selected by all subjects when determining titles which had contributed most to stretching their imaginations.

5. These subjects generally identified books of fantasy as the genre:
   a. Most enjoyed
   b. Most like what they usually read
   c. Most likely to contain something with which they identified, and
   d. Contributing most to stretching the imagination.
6. Repertory Grid analyser indicated that the relationships between constructs were overwhelmingly "weak."

7. There were no noteworthy relationships in the Repertory Grid characterized as "very high." (only one such relationship occurred and its meaning is difficult to interpret.)

8. Generally, these subjects appeared to be in a state of either development or transition in terms of their responses to literary works as revealed through the Repertory Grid scores.

9. All eight subjects were able to identify personally with various titles as revealed in their comments about the construct, "Most like me." They identified in a variety of ways.

10. Encouraging free conversation during the procedures of developing an individual's Repertory Grid may provide insight into the child as a reader.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

Purposes of the Study

This investigation had four major purposes: 1) to examine and describe the responses of selected sixth grade children when engaged in in-depth book discussions; 2) to compare four strategies of initiating book discussions; 3) to discover the range of personal involvement which sixth graders may have in literature; and 4) to assess the role of one adult discussion leader. Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Who talks in book discussions?
2. What is the content of such discussions?
3. Can the talk in book discussions be characterized?
4. What is the nature of the responses when the same persons meet to discuss different books?
5. What influence do varying sized groups have upon the discussions?
6. How do children respond to different initiating strategies?
7. In this particular study what constraints were imposed consciously or unconsciously by the leader?
8. Is it possible to stretch children's literary understanding through discussion?

9. Can children express personal constructs when evaluating books?

Methods of Procedure

Eight boys and girls were selected from the sixth grade level on two bases: 1) that they were able readers, and 2) that there was a range of commitment to reading from avid to reluctant. During the course of one school year the subjects either heard or read personally five selected titles representing three major literary genres, fantasy, realistic fiction, and historical fiction. The investigator met with the subjects in four small groups and engaged the students in in-depth discussion for each of the five books. The groups ranged in size from two to four individuals.

The discussions were tape recorded and later transcribed for the purpose of more detailed analysis. This consisted of 1) tabulating the amount of student and leader talk by counting the words spoken; 2) classifying all student talk into response units according to the Squire categories of Literary Judgment, Interpretational, Narrational, Associational, Self-Involvement, Prescriptive Judgments and Miscellaneous as well as subcategories of content; and 3) noting the responses to themes and concepts from each book which more than one group discussed. In addition to assessing the transcribed discussions, the subjects were interviewed and completed a questionnaire both
designed to ascertain each student's reading background and interest. An instrument intended to assess one's ability to interpret literary selections, A Look At Literature, was administered at the beginning and conclusion of the year-long study. And finally, each subject participated in a procedure called the Repertory Grid in which one is asked to examine varying groups of three books and to indicate how two are alike in some important way and how the third is different. Ten books with which the subjects were familiar including the five which were discussed during the present study were used for this procedure. From the comments made by a subject for each set of 3 books a list of constructs and contrasts were developed. Then all ten books were ranked for each construct from most like the construct to most unlike it, or like the contrast. From this information a grid was made for each student in which correlations between constructs were calculated. Each subject developed approximately nine personal constructs, and the investigator introduced four others for purposes of ranking the books. These were: 1) the books I most enjoyed, 2) the books most like what I usually read, 3) something in the book is most like me, and 4) the books that stretched my imagination the most.

Specific Observations

A detailed discussion of the analyses of the student's reading backgrounds and responses to literature were reported in Chapters IV, V, and VI. Specific observations will be reported in this section followed by conclusions and recommendations.
Observations Concerning the Reading
Background of Subjects

1. In general the subjects found it easy to locate books of
interest to read.

2. There was a wide range of attitude and interest toward reading
among the eight subjects.

3. The child who seemed least interested in reading had a con­
sistently negative profile on the Survey of Voluntary Reading
instrument including almost no personal collection of books,
little use of the school library, a strong preference for
watching television over reading, and little family interest
in reading.

4. The child who seemed least interested in reading indicated a
desire to talk with someone about a book after reading it.

5. Another child with a fairly negative attitude toward reading
indicated no desire to talk with someone about a book after
reading it.

6. The child who seemed most interested in reading had a con­
sistently positive profile on the Survey of Voluntary Reading
instrument including her own extensive book collection, al­
most total disinterest in television, and considerable family
interest in reading.

7. The children who were most interested in reading had read series
books. Those identified as the most reluctant readers have not
read any series of fiction books.
8. Generally those subjects who seemed to be avid readers could identify adults who read.

9. Only one child was still being read to by the parents.

10. In general both avid and reluctant readers received books as gifts.

11. All but two of the most reluctant readers could name one or more favorite books.

12. In general both avid and reluctant readers could not name a favorite author.

13. The subjects found it difficult to explain why authors write.

14. Half of the subjects either did not have any books they considered "most treasured" or could only name one very old, obscure title.

15. All subjects spend some time reading various magazines.

16. Almost no subjects read comic books regularly.

17. In general the number of books freely read during the year was consistent with the child's degree of interest in reading.

18. Generally the subjects liked to have a time regularly set aside at school for silent reading.

19. In general the subjects were fairly realistic in comparing their interest in reading to that of their classmates.

Observations Drawn From Test Information

1. With the exception of one subject, all students were reading at or above grade level.
2. The mental maturity of the subjects ranged from 107 to 136.

3. The youngest subject was the most avid reader of the group.

4. The four students identified as avid readers all scored at the top of the Stanford Achievement Test for Total Reading.

5. Students who were in the middle of a continuum of avid-to-reluctant readers tended to make the greatest gains on a test designed to measure a student's understanding and interpretation of literary selections.

Observations For Eliciting Responses

From The Subjects

1. The non-directive approach for conducting a discussion with sixth grade students who were inexperienced with both the approach and in-depth book discussions was not appropriate within a thirty-minute time limit.

2. It was possible to generate discussion using the four initiating strategies of this study.

3. The leader does not need to follow a pre-determined arbitrary set of questions for discussion of a book to take place. However, he should have some general ideas of the strengths of each book which may be drawn out through questioning.

4. It was possible for the leader to have discussion on the points he considered noteworthy in all groups.

5. When asked to give general reactions to a book, children responded in various ways, i.e. one commenting on the beginning, another speaking about the conclusion, and a third reacting to the book as a whole.
6. When students are asked to retell a story, it is still possible for the leader to include the various topics he had hoped to discuss.

7. The initiating strategy of recalling a most vivid memory was useful for discussions of a more difficult book.

Observations Concerning The Behavior Of The Subjects

1. In-depth discussions are difficult for an outsider to conduct with children who are actively involved in interesting school activities.

2. In-depth discussion of a book should be with children who want to engage in such an activity.

3. In-depth discussions should not be limited to one period.

4. Children should be grouped for discussion with individuals who are more likely to stimulate each other.

5. In-depth book discussions may not necessarily be interesting to students because of the opportunity to talk about a book, but rather may be viewed simply as a chance to talk with someone who seems interested.

6. In discussions where the leader takes an active role, the students generally talked one third of the time while the leader used the other two thirds.

7. When asked to retell a story the amount of child talk increased considerably.
8. Groups with 2 subjects talked much less than either the group with one child or the group with three children.

9. The leader's amount of talk increased when the book was more difficult or dealt with more mature topics.

Observations On Literary Response

1. Narrational Responses are considerably less if there is no request for retelling a story.

2. When a book is difficult or complex there are noticeably more narrational responses.

3. Literary Judgments were highest for the book in which the initiating strategy was a request for general reaction.

4. Literary Judgments for the other strategies may need to be elicited specifically by the leader.

5. Associational Responses appear to occur primarily as a result of the leader eliciting them.

6. Interpretational Responses appeared to be fairly well distributed with the exception of the book which contained much symbolism. The interpretational responses in that book were noticeably fewer.

7. Self-Involvement and Prescriptive Judgments occurred in books where young characters were in deep difficulty with the world, parents, and school.

8. Self-Involvement responses were identified most frequently with the initiating strategy of calling for reactions to a specific character.
9. Size of group may influence Literary Judgments and Self-Involvement Responses with a large group (4) generating more Literary Judgments and a smaller group (2) generating more Self-Involvement Responses.

10. The initiating strategy of calling for one's most vivid memory from a book appeared to result in a high number of Narrational Responses.

Observations Regarding Responses

To Themes

1. Generally it was necessary for the leader to introduce consideration of themes. Students often have not thought much beyond the plot of a story.

2. Basic themes such as friendship, survival, and sacrifice were discussed with ease by sixth graders.

3. The sixth graders' level of thinking makes it difficult to deal with such abstract ideas as symbolism in a literary piece.

4. The sixth graders' level of moral development prevented them from considering justifiable causes for a habit such as thumb-sucking.

5. The sixth graders' in this study were surprised that the main character in a book would die. They do not expect such a thing to happen in the books they read.

6. The girls were more able to understand the possible purpose of the author in allowing the main character to die, whereas the boys were not able to suggest a suitable reason.
Observations On Personal Response

1. Content-based constructs predominated when the subjects identified common elements in pairs of books.

2. These sixth grade subjects tended to identify themes much less frequently and usually did so in language which suggested a tendency toward recognizing a theme more often than stating specific themes.

3. Often these sixth graders referred to various genres in more personally descriptive language than the usual categories such as "biography" and "fantasy".

4. Books which had been discussed during the study were selected by all subjects when determining titles which had contributed most to stretching their imaginations.

5. These subjects generally identified books of fantasy as the genre:
   a. Most enjoyed
   b. Most like what they usually read
   c. Most likely to contain something with which they identified, and
   d. Contributing most to stretching the imagination.

6. Repertory Grid analyses indicated that the relationships between constructs were overwhelmingly "weak."
7. There were no noteworthy relationships in the Repertory Grid characterized as "very high." (only one such relationship occurred and its meaning is difficult to interpret.)

8. Generally, these subjects appeared to be in a state of either development or transition in terms of their responses to literary works as revealed through the Repertory Grid scores.

9. All eight subjects were able to identify personally with various titles as revealed in their comments about the construct, "Most like me." They identified in a variety of ways.

10. Encouraging free conversation during the procedures of developing an individual's Repertory Grid may provide insight into the child as a reader.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Children need to have frequent opportunity to discuss their reading in a meaningful way.

2. In discussing books with children up to age 12, emphasis should be placed upon the content and theme of a book rather than literary analysis.

3. Further exploration of children's personal constructs concerning their reactions to books needs to be made.

4. Interest in reading appears to be self-generating. Those children who like to read, do read. They own books and enjoy talking about books. Children who are capable readers but do not read,
do not own books, have not been read to, and do not see reading as a pleasurable activity.

5. Children with little interest in books appear to gain more from in-depth discussions.

6. Analysis of a tape recording of a book discussion is a most helpful activity in evaluating the teacher's role and the nature and content of the children's response.

7. In-depth discussions may be a means for creating interest in particular books or genres which are not always popular. For example, this group appeared to enjoy fantasy, which is not typical of the interests of most middle graders.

8. Differing strategies for initiating in-depth discussions should be employed if one is to help children respond in varied and meaningful ways to literature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the observations and conclusions which grew out of this study, the writer offers the following recommendations:

For Classroom Practice

1. There should be frequent opportunities for small group discussions of books.

2. Teachers should be encouraged to use a variety of approaches in in-depth discussions, including asking for general reactions, one's most vivid memory, re-telling the story, and reactions to a specific character.
3. In-depth discussions of books should be conducted by teachers or librarians who know the children well for the following reasons:

   a. In order to benefit from knowing the child’s response, the discussion should be conducted by a person with on-going contact who can then utilize what is learned about the child through his/her response.

   b. Children will be more comfortable with a familiar person and might respond more easily.

4. The size of small groups for book discussions should vary since it is likely that different kinds of responses will result.

5. Upper elementary aged children need to become accustomed to various discussion settings including both teacher- and student-led.

6. Both directive and non-directive approaches should be familiar to the children.

7. Children should have the opportunity to select both the books and the members of the group for in-depth discussion.

8. In order to facilitate the child’s developing sense of themes in literature, it is suggested that there be a conscious effort on the part of the leader to encourage reactions to themes.
9. Length of discussion time should be flexible so as to allow sufficient consideration of topics of mutual interest. It should be understood that a particular discussion can be continued at another time if the schedule prevents a satisfactory conclusion.

10. This investigator would suggest to classroom teachers who conduct in-depth book discussions that they occasionally tape record a conversation and either transcribe it into a typed script or listen critically several times to the tape. The investigator believes that this would aid a teacher in becoming more aware of what different children bring to such a book discussion as well as developing a greater sensitivity to what could be said in order to bring out the most meaningful ideas possible. Careful analysis of the protocols in this study has forced the writer to make a detailed and critical appraisal of some specific discussions. It would be expected that if a teacher would do some of the same thoughtful analysis, he or she would become more aware of:

   a. his or her strengths in leading a discussion,
   
   b. the inherent strengths and values of specific books for discussion, and
   
   c. the possible directions children's thinking may take when talking about certain books.

11. Teachers and librarians might reconsider their stand against most series books in light of developing the habit of reading.
12. It should be helpful for sixth grade readers to engage in dis-
cussion of books that are more symbolically complex or emotionally
demanding, but the teacher needs to guard against forcing a more
mature view of the issues than the children are ready for. The
present study indicates that such books may need to be sorted
out by the sixth grader narrationally before embarking on inter-
pretational considerations.

13. Teachers might find the Repertory Grid procedures useful in
assessing a student’s development as an involved reader. Per-
haps conducting such procedures several times during a school
year would reveal a fuller picture of each child as a reader.

Recommendations For Future Research

As a result of this study and the observations drawn from the
analysis of the information gathered, the following suggestions are
made for future research:

1. Studies of in-depth book discussions need to be made
in an attempt to determine the effect of such
variables as:

a) group size

b) student leaders

c) the use of varied initiating
strategies

d) non-directive leadership

e) the use of other literary genres
2. Studies of in-depth book discussions need to be made in which various aged groups are involved in order to determine the possibility of developmental growth in literary understanding and awareness.

3. A longitudinal study of children's response to books over a period of six years should be conducted. Is there a sequence in children's ability and response to books? How does this change over a period of time?

4. A study needs to be made to determine how to develop skill in responding to books in terms of significant themes.

5. A survey of the status of book discussions in elementary schools needs to be made. How many schools provide for book discussions and how are they conducted?

6. A study needs to be made to determine the possible relationship between in-depth book discussions and increased interest in voluntary reading.

7. Further study needs to be made of the potential for examining children's responses to literature through the procedures of the Repertory Grid. These studies should include such variations as asking each child to identify the book titles to be used, both for grouping to determine constructs and contrasts, and for ranking purposes.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF VOLUNTARY READING

NAME:

DATE:

AGE:

This questionnaire will be used by Mr. Wilson when he works with college students who are going to become teachers. You can help him in his work by doing your best on this questionnaire. There are no wrong answers, so please answer each item in your own way.

Instructions: Read each statement and then circle the response which fits you as closely as possible.

SA = strongly agree
A = agree
NS = not sure
D = disagree
SD = strongly disagree

1. At school I like to have time to read for my own pleasure and information.
   SA A NS D SD

2. I have a collection of my own books at home.
   SA A NS D SD

3. I usually read only when there is nothing else to do.
   SA A NS D SD

4. I usually have a specific book to read either with me, at my desk, or at home.
   SA A NS D SD

5. There are some books I have read more than once.
   SA A NS D SD
6. I can remember some books that were read aloud to me.

7. I don't read much because it is hard to find anything that interests me.

8. Most teachers I have known do not spend much time reading for pleasure.

9. Many of my friends prefer to do other activities rather than to read.

10. I frequently use the public library.

11. I presently have a book either at school or somewhere else which I am reading.

12. Most of the people in my family who are older than I am do not care to read.

13. Reading is an activity mainly for people who participate in sports or who have hobbies.

14. If it is a choice between a television program I like and reading, I usually choose the television program.

15. I frequently use the school library.
16. I generally find time each day at school to do some reading.

SA A NS D SD

17. I enjoy having someone read to me.

SA A NS D SD

18. I like to talk about books after reading them.

SA A NS D SD
APPENDIX B

SUMMARIES OF BOOKS

The books chosen for this study are all contemporary titles, having been written within the past six years preceding the calendar period of the study. Each title received recommended reviews in a recognized journal whose major function is to review and assess the current books of the juvenile market in terms of both quality of the writing and appropriateness of story. There follows a brief summary of the essential features of each book. The books are discussed in chronological order, according to the date of publication.

Our Eddie, written by Sulamith Ish-Kishor, tells the story of the Raphel family first in London and then in New York City, and it is particularly about 14-year-old Eddie Raphel whose brief life assumes tragic dimensions as a father apparently insensitive to his family needs, ignores Eddie's growing affliction, refusing to seek medical advice, and immerses himself in his teaching at a private Hebrew school. The story is told in three parts, the first and last are very brief and are the accounts of young Hal Kent, an American boy, who first meets Eddie in London when Hal's family spends a brief period living there while Mr. Kent is on a business assignment, and then later when Hal visits the Raphels in New York and learns of Eddie's death and notes the effect that has had on Mr. Raphel.
The major portion of the story is told by Eddie's sister, Sybil, who chronicles Eddie's life from his almost carefree days of loving sports, to his developing physical handicap and his struggle to find work in order to aid the family's dire financial situation made more severe for a period when the father suffers a breakdown. Susan T. Halbreich, writing in the Library Journal, concludes her review with this evaluative judgment:

The untimely termination to a brief, unrealized life, the well integrated details on Jewish immigrant family life in early 20th-Century America, the sensitive portrayals of bitter, thwarted people catapult this novel way beyond the norm of juvenile books that center on this period (1969, p. 2114).

The Bears' House, written by Marilyn Sachs, is about 10-year-old Fran Ellen who narrates the story in first person. She lives with her three sisters and one brother in an apartment building. The father seems to have deserted the family right after the birth of the last child, a girl Flora, who Fran Ellen loves with a total commitment. She has assumed the major responsibility for caring for Flora since the father's departure and the mother's subsequent withdrawal into despondency and tears and futile trips to the mailbox looking for a letter from her husband. The oldest child, Fletcher, is twelve and though he has begun to assume the responsibility for the family, it is Fran Ellen who, almost possessively, looks after baby Flora. When the story begins she has been slipping out of school everyday during recess to rush to the apartment to check on Flora, to change
her, and to give her a bottle of Kool-Aid.

It is at school where Fran Ellen's life is particularly difficult. She is in fourth grade but she does not have friends and her habit of constantly sucking her thumb has made her the object of ridicule. Fran Ellen's most important moments at school are when she has finished her math and is permitted to go to the back of the classroom and play with the bears' house, an elaborate doll house made long ago by the father of the elderly teacher, Miss Thompson. It is a doll house for four china figures, the three bears and Goldilocks. Actually, Fran Ellen does not play when she goes back. Instead she sits with her thumb in her mouth and looks at the house while her imagination takes over, and she becomes another member of the bears' house. Here she finds a mother bear who cooks and cleans, and cares for her family and a father bear who especially loves girls and rocks Fran Ellen on his knees. It is Goldilocks who sucks her thumb and must be made to mind.

The story reaches its climax when the teacher, aware of Fran Ellen's daily departures from school, comes to the apartment and discovers the real situation of need and neglect.

The reviewer of The Horn Book Magazine concludes with the following evaluative comment:

The grim situation is brightened by sprightly telling, by Fran Ellen's unself-conscious humor, and by the help that eventually comes from her teacher (1972, pp. 52-53).
The Slave Dancer, written by Paula Fox, was the winner of the 1973 Newbery Award which is annually bestowed by the American Library Association upon the book of an American publisher which is considered the outstanding book in the field of literature for children.

Thirteen year-old Jessie Bollier tells his story of being kidnapped from the wharves of New Orleans in 1840 and forced to travel on a slave ship to the African coast all because of his fife and obvious talent for playing the instrument. His work on the return trip is to dance the captured natives each day on board ship, a means of exercising the men, women, and children who spent most of each day in the dark, airless hold of the ship. Through Jessie's eyes we see how corruption seems to breed corruption; we witness the inhumanity of some people towards others; and we discover in this most unlikely setting the weak beginnings of a friendship between Jessie and Ras, a young black captive. Virginia Haviland concludes her review in The Horn Book Magazine with the following:

Hunger and thirst, hazardous voyaging under sail, a degraded crew's callousness, calculated torture, and greed are not minimized but have the veracity of the retelling in a journal. Jessie is a fully realized figure, whose perceptions and agonies are presented in depth (1973, p. 597).

The Cat Who Wished To Be A Man, written by Newbery award winning author, Lloyd Alexander, is a fantasy set in the past, perhaps in the era of the Middle Ages, and tells of the cat Lionel getting his Master to change him into a man briefly in order to know that experience. His Master, disillusioned with men and their success in
turning all good into bad, is quite reluctant to grant Lionel his wish but finally relents. He gives his cat-become-man a magical wishbone, good for one wish only, as an emergency means of returning to the safety of the Master's woodland cottage.

Lionel takes off for Brightford where he does find greedy, underhanded people, but he also learns about loyalty and love and friendship through the good-natured Dr. Tudbelly and the lovely maid Gillian who turns out to be somewhat of a maid in distress. Through his continuing cat qualities such as keen eyesight and strong jumping muscles in the legs and his newly acquired human characteristics of caring and consideration, he succeeds in coming to the aid of Gillian. In the process he learns about sacrificing one's self for another when Dr. Tudbelly volunteers to destroy his armamentarium, a wooden chest with all his potions and medicines, in order to add fuel for a fire in an effort to do in the crafty mayor and his followers. And then Lionel, when the situation for him appears hopeless, makes an unexpected wish on his wishbone. Instead of wishing to be home again with his Master he wished to be with Gillian where he can offer her whatever help he can. Linda Silver, reviewing this book in the Library Journal, concludes by saying:

Lionel is so thoroughly human that even the wizard's skill cannot turn him back into a cat. . . . Lionel chooses life. . . . Infused with humor, high spirits and compassion, Lionel's story is a parable of the human condition that recognizes mankind's many frailties without despairing and offers hope that love and justice may sometimes prevail (1973, p. 2647).
The Dark Is Rising, by Susan Cooper, was a Newbery Honor Book for 1973. This is a highly complex fantasy in which the forces of evil, the Dark, are attempting to take over the forces of good, the Light. Young Will Stanton discovers on his eleventh birthday that he is the seventh son of a seventh son and the last of the Old Ones, agents for the Light. It is his mission to seek six signs which when united in a circle will provide a powerful force for the Light in its struggle against the Dark.

Will meets Merriman, who seems to be both his guardian and teacher about the forces of the Dark and the Light. Evidently with Merriman's aid Will finds himself slipping in and out of past time in his quest for the signs. There is an urgency as "the dark is rising," at this peak time for the evil forces between Christmas and Twelfth Night. The evaluative judgment of the reviewer, Ethel L. Heins, in The Horn Book Magazine is:

The mounting excitement of the narrative is well-matched by the strength of the writing, which can be as rich and as eloquent as a Beethoven symphony. Full of symbolism and allegory, the story and its implications are nevertheless clear, comprehensible, and enormously exhilarating (1973, p. 286).

The Dark Is Rising is the second in a proposed series of five books. Two other titles have already been published at the time of this study: the first in the series, Over Sea, Under Stone and the third book of the series which is Greenwitch.
## APPENDIX C

### THE PERSONAL CONSTRUCTS OF THE EIGHT SUBJECTS

**ZEB**

This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCTS</th>
<th>CONTRASTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Has to do with slaves.</td>
<td>1. The war between peddlers and truck drivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A boy helps someone or something to escape or helped it live.</td>
<td>2. Just about a girl and a bears' house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Trucks were rising in the corporation to dominate. The evil, the bad, the dark were dominating the world.</td>
<td>3. Sort of just like a biography - nothing is trying to dominate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This guy can never get along with his father. The Queen couldn't get along with anyone for long.</td>
<td>4. Nothing to do with not getting along with anyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Had to do with slaves.</td>
<td>5. Had to do with magic and stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Main characters wanted to be different.</td>
<td>7. Just like an adventure story - boy finds dog, boy loses dog, boy finds dog.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Has to do with slaves escaping.

9. Really a mean guy in both books.

10. Dominating.

8. Sort of a biography - nonfiction.

9. About some girl who day dreams, and her life.

10. A cat who wished to be a man - doesn't dominate anything.

CORA

This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Contrasts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attachment to real animals.</td>
<td>1. Animals are imaginary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. About a person or people against which there is some prejudice.</td>
<td>2. They're revolting against England, their mother country - not much about prejudice in the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. About animals.</td>
<td>3. About people and things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have an air of supernaturality, fairy talish, though not really fairy tales.</td>
<td>4. Something that might happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Might happen.</td>
<td>5. More magical, fairy tale sort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. About some power, a bad power.</td>
<td>7. An inner conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. About something over-thrown, in a way.  
10. A lot of water in them at some point.

9. Ends with a beginning - nothing is really ended.  
10. Not much water.

FAY

This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCTS</th>
<th>CONTRASTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Both in older times.</td>
<td>1. More modern, more serious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Both trying to fight something.</td>
<td>2. Earlier in time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Have problems with the family like being sick.</td>
<td>3. He's just by himself, but he has his problems, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. They're held prisoners in both books.</td>
<td>4. They're free in a way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Trying to become free of something.</td>
<td>5. Problems with the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. They wanted to change.</td>
<td>6. He has to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Parents both sick or dead.</td>
<td>8. Different time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Both can't really happen.</td>
<td>9. Tells a lot of fact, yet it is still fiction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Both have to do with ghosts and stuff.</td>
<td>10. Later time.</td>
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</table>
This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

<table>
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<th>CONTRASTS</th>
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<td>2. Someone who is really being mean to them or doesn't care for them.</td>
<td>2. No one is really mean to her - no one she is really close to or owns her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both people trying to be something else.</td>
<td>3. Doesn't try to be something else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. About a boy in a new place and learning about it.</td>
<td>4. It really doesn't seem like he is in a new place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Both about boys.</td>
<td>5. About a lady.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Both being held - didn't want to be - being held captive.</td>
<td>6. Free to do what she wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trying to get blacks to freedom.</td>
<td>7. Not trying to get someone to freedom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Both living on a boat for awhile.</td>
<td>9. She is living in castles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Both take place in Europe.</td>
<td>10. In America or the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEN

This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:
### Constructs
1. Stories of a life or part of a life as told by other people.
2. Of a need. Subject is in need. In danger of being destroyed.
3. Adventure.
4. Ordeals.
5. Main character is finding something. Both of them learn a lot. They change their attitude.
6. Realistic fiction.
7. Like an adventure - mystery.
8. About freedom.
9. There are black and white main characters.
10. Someone important changes.

### Contrasts
1. Most of a fantasy. Halfway between fantasy and realistic fiction.
3. More like an experience, a fiction.
4. About change.
5. More like an ordeal for both boy and slave.
6. Fantasy.
7. Half fiction, half factual.
8. Mystery.
9. All main characters are white, from the same family.
10. Main character built around a dog.

### Joe

This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

### Constructs
1. About slaves, about history.

### Contrasts
1. Not a slave book a fantasy.
2. About older people.  
3. People disagreeing.  
4. Made a lot of friends.  
5. One of the main characters died.  
6. About animals.  
7. About slaves and people got killed. They were more harder on the killings.  
8. These people lived where it was usually warm or it took place when it was warm.  
9. About animals and men.  
10. About slaves.  

** Mike **  
This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

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<th>CONSTRUCTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1. Getting revenge back at something.</td>
<td>1. Don't remember any revenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. About black slavery.</td>
<td>2. Fantasy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Could be, like, attackers.</td>
<td>3. Fantasy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Could be true.</td>
<td>4. Fantasy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. About black people. 5. Nothing about blacks.
7. Casualties in the family. 7. Doesn't tell about sick people in the family.

CAL

This subject identified 10 constructs and contrasts when examining the books in various groups of three:

<table>
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<td>1. Trying to get away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. They made friends.</td>
<td>2. That girl didn't have any friends at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both had a goal to do something.</td>
<td>3. Didn't have anything really they wanted to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Both have enemies.</td>
<td>4. Family just moved in and they didn't know much about the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Trying to make things better for the people who took care of them.</td>
<td>5. The father took care of the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Characters changed.</td>
<td>6. She never really got better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. About boys.</td>
<td>7. About a lady.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Trying to destroy something.</td>
<td>8. Trying to make things better.</td>
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</table>
9. Somebody got hurt.

10. Somebody died.

9. She never got hurt.

10. He wasn't really ever a real person.
GRID SCORE MATRIX FOR ZEB

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Total Variance:
- 86
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Ranking:
- 11
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GRID SCORE MATRIX FOR CORA

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Total Variance: 136 112 165 190 196 153 121 90 130 126 124 102 117

Ranking: 5 11 3 2 1 4 9 13 6 7 8 12 10
## GRID SCORE MATRIX FOR FAY

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**Ranking**

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very high

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moderate

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APPENDIX D

SAMPLE DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

SUBJECT: Cora

BOOK: The Slave Dancer

DATE: November 22, 1974

KEY: L = Leader
     C = Cora

L  All right. Why don't we, I know it's been awhile since you've read it. Why don't you just sort of try to remember what your general reactions were. We'll start with that and go on from that point.

C  I didn't like it at first because it was a little boring. Books are normally like that, you know.

L  Uh-huh.

C  They start kind of boring and then you get to the exciting part. Uh, after that, mostly I didn't like it because of the cruelty, etcetera involved.

L  Uh-huh. You didn't like the cruelty and, and does that make you dislike the book or just dislike

C  No, it doesn't make me dislike the book really.

L  It's the conditions that it was describing, is that it? What do you remember most vividly in your mind? In, from the whole book?
C I don't know. Either, uh, a picture in my mind that I've got of the slaves or else, when he gets home.

L Hm (pause) All right. Uh, you said it started out sort of boring. Now what kinds of things were happening at the beginning that maybe made that - way?

C Oh, all the usual things that make it that way, telling about him, and (pause)

L What did you find out about him at the beginning? Remember? (pause)

C They were poor.

L Uh-huh. Did you find out anything about his father?

C His father had been - killed - he drowned from one of the steamboats, I think

L Do you think that the author purposely had that situation in the beginning of the book?

C Yes.

L Where does that kind of problem occur again? (pause) The fact that someone might drown?

C In -

L You remember?

C Back in the end where he and the other boy are escaping from the ship.

L So you see how, in a way, she sort of, she gave you a hint about the end of the book, that the whole business of water and drowning, was very important. Now what did Jessie know about
his father, or what did he think about when his father drowned and, and what did he do himself when he was faced with that situation?

C  "Swim. Swim."

L  Now where did he get that idea? Is that something -

C  He used, I remember he used to dream about it.

L  Was he dreaming about himself or about his father? I've forgotten.

C  About his father - drowning. And him not being able to do anything but telling him to swim.

L  Oh. And so that, at the end, really gives him the whatever it takes, doesn't it? So that's sort of an interesting thought, that you, you don't realize when you're starting the book, that this is going to be important later on in the book, this whole idea.

C  Right.

L  Now what else did we find out about him or his family at the beginning?

C  His mother made dresses for all the rich ladies.

L  Uh-huh

C  And he used to go out and play his fife for pennies.

L  And, of course, we needed to know that at the beginning for what reason?

C  Because he brought it along later, or so that he could, they brought it along later so he could dance the slaves.
Why did they take Jessie?

Because they didn't have anybody else who could play an instrument or anything aboard the ship.

Okay. What was the reason for dancing the slaves?

They needed exercise. Something to kind of keep them awake.

Uh-huh. (pause) Uh, were they slaves at the beginning when they were first, when we first meet these people? Are they slaves in a sense?

No, not really slaves. They don't have to do any work, but

Uh-huh. Okay. And so we have a story of the trip over and then we have sort of while they are getting the slaves. There's sort of a business going on there, and then coming back. (pause) Uh,

I don't like it at the end where all the slaves have to jump overboard.

Now why did that happen?

Because a ship was sighted, an enemy ship, English, that would have caught them at it, punished them and stuff. So they didn't want to be caught with the slaves on board. Of course, they had all of this equipment that they could also be caught with, but if, if that English ship didn't see the slaves they might not dare to - stop the -
Okay

I wonder what becomes of Purvis in the end.

What did you think of Purvis?

I liked him. I hope he gets home.

Yeah. And we don't, we don't really know anything about him as far as what happens, do we? (pause) We're led to believe

He said he'd never go again on a slaver.

Yeah. When did he say that?

He said that, I forget exactly. Sort of at the beginning of the end.

Yeah. Did we, uh - there was a time there where Jessie thought that Benjamin Stout was his friend.

In the very beginning.

Yeah. Now why did he think that and why did that change?

He thought that because Mr. Stout was being nice to him and showing him around and not - hurting him as much, or anything like that. And then I think it begins to change when he steals the egg.

Yes.

You remember about that?

Yes. (pause) But why do you think Stout did change?

Well, uh, I think he was like that all along and he just wanted to lead Jessie to believe that he was his friend so that he could have help from him later on.
That's interesting, isn't it? Yeah. So that he was deceiving, uh, Jessie.

Uh-huh

Now, Purvis - how did Jessie feel about Purvis in the beginning? I'm trying to remember.

He didn't like him too much.

So, but how did Purvis treat him?

Purvis was - pretty much nice to him, although he was rough like - he was a typical seaman.

Yes

Rough enough to

Now who took the punishment for the, for the stolen egg, right?

Purvis did

Yes. (pause)

And that's when -

What did Jessie learn from that, do you think?

Jessie knew that Stout stole the egg and he learned that Stout wasn't a friend. Purvis was.

Now Jessie knew, felt he knew, who stole the egg. What did he think, did he - does he think that Purvis knows who stole the egg?

Yes.

And why do you think Purvis didn't, uh, tell?
C Well - it might have, it could have gone worse for him if the captain hadn't believed him. Or else he was just too nice.

L Uh-huh (long pause) Okay. Tell me, uh,

C Somebody said something about there being a Ben Stout on every ship.

L That's right.

C I was interested about that

L Now what does that, what might that mean?

C It would mean that, uh, there was always somebody like that who was mean and too lording it over.

L Uh-huh (pause) I suppose that, uh, there are people like that, not only on ships, huh? (pause)

C Right

L Do you think they're in other kinds of situations?

C Yes, but a ship seems to be the most, because any other situation you can just about get away.

L Uh-huh. You think so?

C Just about.

L For example?

C Uh, well, like, - if - your boss is really, at the office or something, is really -

L All right. Could you get away from the office?

C You could quit and find a new job, probably.

L Yeah. Now you say "probably," what might keep that, make that difficult?
Because there might not be any other jobs available.

Okay. So you might be just as confined to that place as they were to the ship, right?

You might. I'd never thought of that, at first

It's sort of interesting to think about the ship, sort of represents - I keep thinking in my mind of space ships that go out to visit other planets, and then I begin to think about our planet. What do you think I'm getting at? (pause)

I don't know.

Well, she told the story of, of some people who were confined to a ship for an extremely long time, and all kinds of problems that occurred.

Uh-huh.

And I was thinking that we do have space ships that go, rockets, you know

Uh-huh

Space ships that go off, have gone to the moon, and for awhile that's the only world those men know.

Yeah

But what about the earth itself?

Nobody can really escape from the earth, except by dying, but

So it's sort of a

That doesn't sound too fun to me (laugh)

(laugh)
C Except that some people do to get away from it all.
L Yes. But do some people make the best, do something pretty good about where they are? (pause) Now, is there anyone in this story that tries to make things better as far as they can?
C Purvis, I think
L Yeah. I would guess, probably (pause) And, of course, someone like Jessie is young enough to dream about the future, so he can think about another time, can't he?
C Yeah (pause) Of course, he also has thought that he may never get to that other time.
L Right. And that's the frightening thing cause he's on that ship.
C Uh-huh
L Now is there as good a chance on that ship as there might have been on land for him, to get away from something that's really evil?
C Probably not
L It's much harder.
C You could die just as easily (laugh)
L Yes (laugh) that's right. And many of them did. Tell me, this whole notion of dying to get away from something that's evil, didn't we have something like that happen early in the book? (pause)
C With -
L Or do we have something like that almost happen? (pause)

C You mean, early before he gets on the ship?

L No, on the ship, uh, early on the trip back, after they had taken the natives aboard. They had an incident with a man, a native, who was all curled up in a ball, sort of. You remember him?

C Yeah.

L Now what was it that they had to do? They forced him to do?

C Come up out of it and dance

L No, they may have done that, too, but he was all curled up and they knew he was doing something, and they forced, can't remember who, to do something, to give him, make him take food, make him swallow. Do you remember that? (pause)

(page-turning) I don't know how easy that will be to find.

C Probably not too easy.

L It has to be after they, uh, got on to the boat, I mean, with the natives.

C Uh-huh (pause) I can't remember the reason for the title of that chapter, 'The Bight of Benin.'

L Well, the 'Bight' I think is a, is like a bay. You know, it's a place where they were.

C Uh-huh

L And that must have, Benin must have been the area. Uh (long pause - page-turning)
C Spark. I'd forgotten about Spark.

L Sparks? Spark. (pause) Yeah, Spark

C I'd forgotten completely

L Yeah, I had, too

C Cause Purvis and Stout and Jessie and the natives seemed to
be the main -

L And they stick in your mind afterwards.

C Yeah. And Spark, who is, I just remembered, the captain's
right hand man until he dies and Stout takes his place.

L (page-turning) Now here, "'Get to that, Purvis,' cried Spark
suddenly, 'Get to that one.' Spark's pistol pointed at a man
who squatted by himself, somewhat apart from the others."

C Oh, yes, that's it

L "His knees were tight against his chest. His head lolled in a
strange way. Purvis ran to him, lifted him up, yanked him
back and forth, punched his arms and threw him about so
violently, I was sure they would topple overboard." Then it
says, "'Get a measure of rum, Jessie,' Purvis shouted to me.
I fetched it." And then brought it back. "'Pour it in his
mouth,' Purvis said. 'His mouth is shut,' I said in a whisper.
'Open it.' "How?" 'Here,' said Stout. He took the cup from
my hands, lifted it, then shoved it forcefully against the
man's clenched lips, grinding it back and forth like a shovel
teasing hard earth until trickles of blood dripped down the
brown skin and on to Stout's fingers." They got him to drink. Do you remember why? What was happening? Do you now? (long pause) Why were they so concerned to force him to, knock him around, force him to drink that rum?

C So that - they wanted as good a price as they could get for every single one of those slaves, and - he would have been healthier if he didn't sit around like that. They would have gotten a better price.

L I think it was bigger than that. (pause) Now, read this paragraph to yourself - you don't have to read it out loud unless you want to, but see if you get what I'm after there. (pause)

C They will die if left in that condition.

L So what was the black man doing?

C Trying to die.

L And they say that they were, some of them were able to do that. How?

C By holding, I think by holding their breath and not breathing.

L So, it's a matter of will, isn't it?

C Yeah

L Willpower. They will themselves to die.

C I don't see how they could do that, though, because, people, when they die, when they hold their breath long enough they'll faint and then, of course, they breathe.
L Yeah. Evidently it can happen, and it happened with some who
simply refused the whole reality of what was happening to
them, was their only way of escaping.
C Uh-huh
L And Purvis and Stout both recognized what was happening.
C Yes. They had been on slavers before, that's why.
L They couldn't allow that to happen because -
C They didn't want the guy to die because the less guys that
die the more money they get.
L Right. Okay.
C And all they were after is money.
L But you see - you had said earlier that one thing people do do
when something is intolerable is to die. And in a sense that's
what this one man was trying to do. And that must happen
occasionally. I'm sure there aren't many who can do that, but
when you think about his condition, what he had been taken
away from, and he didn't know where he was going, that he
preferred dying over it. (long pause) Would you say that
The Slave Dancer is a story of survival? Would you call it a
survival story?
C Well - possibly (pause)
L Now who has to survive, who struggles to survive in this?
C Jessie, mostly.
L Jessie does. Anyone else? (long pause)
C  Well, uh, the slaves certainly not. They didn’t want to survive. Judging from the example of that one we just

L  Well, for that one, but now most of them, most of us want to live.

C  Yes.

L  So, it is a struggle to survive. Now the conditions that the slaves were under may have made it difficult to survive.

C  Yes.

L  But, uh, wouldn’t you guess that most of them wanted to live?

C  Pretty much. Although some of them, pessimists.

L  Yeah (pause)

C  And they thought it might have been worse, might get worse. And in some cases, of course, it would.

L  Do you think that, that Stout and Captain Cawthorne and the ship’s crew also struggled to survive? In their lives?

( long pause)

C  Perhaps at the end, the great big storm and

L  That was a life and death survival. How about, uh, the fear they had that slaves might die of disease or they might just die by willing it or they might get stolen? Was that a fearful thing for the ship’s crew to face?

C  How would they get stolen?

L  Oh, I was thinking if some other ship came along, a pirate ship.

C  Oh.
L I'm just thinking of different, was their cargo important to them?

C Yes.

L And why?

C Money.

L Money in order, why do they need money?

C In order to survive.

L Yes. So, it's a survival story for them, too, isn't it?

C Pretty much.

L So that some of what they are doing we may not approve of

C Definitely not

L But they saw it as their way to survive, right?

C Yes.

L Okay (pause) Would you say that there's a story of friendship in this book?

C Jessie and the other boy, who

L You remember his name? (pause)

C R-A- something

L Yes, Ras.

C Ras, yes.

L That was an unusual friendship, wasn't it? (pause) How would you say it's unusual?

C People in those days just didn't make friends with black people.
And what else about the friendship in particular, what made it difficult to have a friendship develop?

Because Jessie was - in an enterprise, against his will, of course, but still he was in an enterprise to make the slaves unhappy.

Yes.

Not purposely but

But that's the way it

Worked out

Now what else made it unusual to, in order for a friendship to develop? (pause)

It was, Jessie couldn't get down into the hold to see him, and also the captain wouldn't have liked it at all.

No. (pause) Now he did get down once, didn't he? How did that happen?

His fife - you get the impression that Stout threw it down

Uh-huh

And then he blames it on Purvis.

Uh-huh. And what do they do, then to Jessie.

Makes him go down after it.

And so Jessie gets a real experience in the hold, doesn't he? Now where does he, does he find the fife?

Yes, I think so.

Remember?

He doesn't, but somebody else does.

Do you remember who gave it to him?
C  Purvis, I think.
L  Down in the hold?
C  No, not down in - maybe it's the boy.
L  I, I think he gets it from Ras. I think that's right.
C  I'm not sure.
L  Cause that's where we get this - maybe that's a friendship.
     It's a strange friendship because usually when you have a
     friend what do you do with a friend?
C  Have fun.
L  They certainly aren't having fun, are they?
C  Gosh, no.
L  Now they, they do, where else do they get to develop their
     friendship in this story, at what other point?
C  In the water and with the old man.
L  Okay, after the storm. Now what's difficult about developing
     a friendship between them even there?
C  They can't talk to each other.
L  But that, uh, they're still able to have some friendship,
     aren't they?
C  Yes. Which is interesting.
L  Why?
C  Because - it shows some of the qualities of mankind.
L  For instance? Like what?
C  Well, the ability and the need to make friends.
L  Uh-huh. And it, what? What relationship does it have with
     language, say?
You can speak without speaking, in a way.

And so a friendship can develop - even when you, what?

Even when you speak different languages or some other similar handicap.

Now how did the friendship strengthen itself during the, uh, the storm? I mean, how did, uh

They had to survive together with that one piece of whatever it was that they hung on to.

Okay. Would you recommend this book to anyone else to read?

I don't know. I haven't thought of anyone - my grandmother might like it.

Okay. What would you say to your grandmother if you wanted her to read it?

I don't know - (pause)

What might you say in order to get someone to want to read it?

She's always recommending books to me (laugh). That might make it a little easier.

Yeah. Just the very fact that she does that. Does she tell you anything particular about the book when she recommends it to you?

Well, sometimes and sometimes not. All she said about That Quail, Robert was that she had picked it up and liked the cover.

Uh-huh. And that was it, as far as what she said?

Yes.
So she doesn't always tell you in sort of capsule form something about the book in order to get you interested?

Right. But, uh, another time she - with *The Crystal Cave* and *The Hollow Hills*, she, we were on a walk and she was talking to me that she had just read them and she liked them and thought I might later.

And so, she, she went back to New York or Saskatchewan or wherever she was at that time.

Either New York or Saskatchewan.

And, uh, - after awhile she sent me them. One at a time.

Okay. I want, I want to dwell on two other kinds of things for sure before we stop. One is the pictures. What was your reaction to the illustrations in the book? (pause)

As pictures I don't like them much, but they are, they have a good - they explain the story very well.

Uh-huh. Now, as pictures, you say you don't like them. What is it about them that makes you not like them as pictures?

The way they're done. I just, it's not the kind of picture I like.

What kind of picture do you like?

Other kinds (laugh)
L Well, can you describe at all what, what is in a picture that you like, or what, how a picture would be that you liked?

C These have, there's the egg, too much darkness.

L Too much darkness.

C It seems to me. No color. Sometimes I like that, if they have -

L Would you guess that the illustrator - took those very things you've said as necessary for his pictures? That they needed to be too dark, and that they needed not to have color?

C I think so.

L Why? Why would he want that?

C Because that's the kind of spirit of the way the slaves felt.

L So if he'd done it in brilliant - water colors or something, you might not get the

C Picture. It wouldn't have come out so well.

L Cause what kind of feeling do you think those natives had? (pause) As they were traveling

C Darkness, mostly

L Yeah. In fact, they lived in the hold, didn't they?

C Yes

L Which would have

C No light

L Yeah.

C Except when they came up - to dance
So I guess I was just thinking that the illustrations need to reflect the mood of the story, don't they? Cause that was my first impression, oh, they're so dark you can hardly see them.

Uh-huh

But maybe that captures just what life was like for them. Life was so dark, they could hardly see it. There has been some criticism of this book, Cora, by some black groups. People, uh, organized, who are black who think this, who are very unhappy about this book.

How?

Could you guess at all why some black people might feel this was not a good book, or were very unhappy with it? (pause)

Because they want prejudice to be forgotten, basically.

And are you saying there's prejudice in this book?

Definitely.

What are some of, examples of the prejudice?

They don't think that they're really human beings (pause) exactly.

Now this is very close to one of the criticism that a particular group of black people has made. They're very unhappy that the group of blacks in this book have no personalities. They're treated as a mass except for Ras. What do you think of that?

I think that as the story is basically involved with Jessie and the members of the crew, I think that if it were more about the
slaves they might point out certain ones.

L  Whose story is this?

C  Jessie's

L  And he tells it, doesn't he? (pause) So, did he have an opportunity to - get acquainted with the natives as individuals?

C  Not at all. No.

L  And do you think that the white men in the days of the slave trade, uh, got acquainted with blacks as individuals?

C  Probably not, unless they were really nice masters, and they had good slaves and -

L  So this is, of course, one of the arguments that then other people are saying, is that to be an honest book at this, to tell about that period of time, from a white person's standpoint, it would have to be told this way.

C  Yes.

L  You got any other comments that you want to make about the book before the tape runs out?

C  There was something I was about to say. Let's see if I can remember it. (pause) He probably couldn't even recognize the certain ones.

L  Right

C  Except for maybe Ras

L  He didn't have much opportunity to, did he?

C  Right. Only twice a day he saw them at all. Except for the time he went down for his fife, but that's hardly ever. (tape ends)
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