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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1979

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RESPONSE TO LITERATURE IN
A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT,
GRADES K - 5

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

By
Janet Gephart Hickman

The Ohio State University
1979

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I am indebted also to my friends and fellow students at the University for their exchange of ideas; to Mrs. Barbara Fincher for her skillful preparation of the final draft of this report; and to my family, for their endurance.
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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Background of the Study

Response to literature is a topic that is widely discussed but often narrowly understood. Long seen as the proper concern of teachers of high school and college students, it has only recently become a matter of considerable interest in the elementary school. The publication of the Dartmouth Seminar Papers (Squire, 1968) reminded teachers at all levels of the importance of starting with the students' own responses as a means toward the enjoyment and appreciation of literature. Since that time various authors have focused particular attention on response in children of elementary school age and younger. One evidence of interest is the appearance of guides for observing young children's response (Roderick, 1977) as well as guides for stimulating children's response (Somers and Worthington, 1979).

It does seem obvious that knowing about response to literature ought to help teachers predict children's reactions and plan for their experiences with books. There are difficulties, however. Most existing descriptions and models of response deal with adolescents or young adults, and the term "response" itself is subject to a variety of interpretations. Even then, regardless of interpretation, response is usually investigated as if it were separate from the context in
which it naturally occurs. As a result, elementary teachers lack a framework for understanding response to literature as they would see it in their own classrooms.

The Meanings of Response

Does a focus on children's response to literature mean attention to their comments and written statements about stories, or their preferences, or their literature-based art work, or their imaginative play? Or does it mean something else entirely? The term "response to literature" is problematical; it encompasses a number of reader (or listener) behaviors that are interrelated in complex ways, yet still quite distinct from one another.

In the usual research interpretation, response refers to the subject's perceptions of and critical approach to literary material as revealed through oral or written comments (Purves and Rippere, 1968; Richards, 1929; Squire, 1964). This in itself reflects a confusing array of perspectives. Perceptions of literature can be seen psychoanalytically, for instance, as related to perceptions of self and reality (Bleich, 1975; Holland, 1968; Petrosky, 1976). The research on sense of story uses a predominantly psychological frame; Applebee (1978) draws on the theory of personal constructs (Kelly, 1955) as well as theories of cognitive development to analyze children's increasing ability to predict, retell, and comment about stories. Literary understanding might also be interpreted as comprehension, a topic which has generated its own highly technical inquiries concerning the interaction of story grammars and cognitive structures (e.g., Stein,
1978). The concern for explanation of literary perception is carried even further in experimental studies of right- and left-brain functioning (Ornstein, 1978).

Researchers are inclined to make a logical distinction between the kinds of studies just mentioned and those studies that deal with literary interests or preferences (Purves and Beach, 1972). To many teachers, however, response and choice are synonymous; children's expressions of interest may be the most obvious of their classroom responses. In any event, the questions "Did you like it?" and "What do you make of it?" are interdependent. Since recent scholarship makes a case for the relationship of interests to cognitive development and the child's changing conception of the world (Favat, 1977), it seems sensible to include interests and preferences as a part of the general concern with response.

It is less conventional to think of children's classroom activities - like painting or cooking or dramatic play or free writing - as response to literature, even though the impact of books can be clearly seen here (Huck, 1976, Chap. 12). There is some question as to whether the activity is the response, or whether it simply provides clues to the response, an unknowable rendering in the child's mind. Either way, the activity is what the teacher sees and what the teacher has to deal with. If a broad view of response is to have practical value, it would seem wise to include these school activities and in fact all events or behaviors which are in any way related to children's experiences with literature.
Other possible approaches to the study of response suggest other confusions in interpretation. A dichotomy between unsolicited, spontaneous response and response that is solicited or suggested by adults is helpful in some instances. However, what looks like natural inclination may well be the result of teaching, and vice versa. Another distinction might be made between first impressions and those responses developed over time, although few studies make such an attempt. Finally, it needs to be recognized that "response" sometimes refers to nothing more than the inclination to express response, in itself an important consideration for teachers.

In view of these various interpretations of response to literature and the fragmentation of understanding that results from narrow focuses, there seemed to be a need for a more comprehensive look at response on the elementary school level. The present study was designed to describe and document not one but many aspects of children's response in order to provide a more complete framework for teachers' observations and planning.

Response in Context

Traditionally the research concerning response to literature has used methods that force the issue: students asked to interrupt their reading to comment about it (Squire, 1964) or given tasks more ordinary but still divorced from the ongoing work of the classroom. While these methods have yielded important basic information, they have not dealt with the fact that response always occurs within a particular context.
Context seems to play a crucial role in children's learning, as well as in adult perceptions of what children are doing. Recent research in language (e.g., Barnes, 1976; Pinnell, 1975) suggests that children's language production and meanings are highly dependent on the interaction of their tasks, their companions, the materials available, and other factors; and that teachers can influence language in the classroom by manipulating the environment. Evidence has been introduced by Donaldson (1978) that young children's apparent cognitive level as measured by Piagetian tasks is dependent upon the precise context of the task situation and the phrasing of the directions. Response to literature is closely tied both to language and to cognitive level. It seemed appropriate that the present study should give an account of the context in which various types of responses occurred, in the hope that this information could be of real use to teachers.

Other Considerations

When Graves (1973) studied children's writing, he found more of interest in their procedures and behaviors than would have been possible in analysis of the written products alone. This focus on process, implied earlier, deserves special mention here because it helped to dictate the shape of the present study. It was assumed that the act of responding would be at least as important as the fact of response, which suggested both careful attention to sequence and an extended time period.

Another consideration which influenced the study was related to sequence in a larger sense. Children change dramatically in many ways
between kindergarten and the end of elementary school. Research already indicates that verbal response to literature takes on characteristic forms at different age levels (Applebee, 1978). In order to see a full range of response, then, it seemed necessary to study children from a wide age span within elementary school.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the considerable body of information that exists concerning response to literature, elementary teachers need more comprehensive insights to help them plan workable and effective literature programs. The primary need that was identified was for a broad view of children's response within an elementary school setting. This view would focus on process as well as product, and attempt to show developmental patterns in a natural context in order to give teachers (and others) a useful frame of reference.

Approach to the Study

The range of purposes considered for this study would not have been feasible under the terms of positivist research. The approach dictated by the problem was an ethnographic one allowing for broad description and the positing of relationships. Since the problem focused on response in natural contexts, there was never any question of using methods requiring laboratory settings or formal test materials. Mishler (1979) points out that:

... the context-stripping methods of our traditional model of science [have not] been appropriate to the study of context-dependent phenomena. A number of alternative approaches and methods may be more appropriate including
methods drawn from ecological psychology, phenomenological research, sociolinguistics, and ethnomethodology. These approaches vary and each has its own problems, but they provide a range of possibilities for us to rethink our ways of doing scientific research (p. 17).

Essentially cognitive processes as well as social structures can be known in useful ways through considering their function within the setting. Dumont's study of learning English in Sioux and Cherokee classrooms, Horner's "John and Mary" study of linguistic ecology, and other research reported by Cazden, John, and Hymes (1972) are examples of such a use of the ethnographic method. Griffin (1977) demonstrated the possibility of studying reading in a primary classroom in terms of how and when it occurs, using video and audio tapes along with written ethnographic reports of events in the classroom. Carini (1975) described reading in a classroom setting through a process called documenting, which made use of various kinds of observations and records including interviews and children's products.

These studies suggested that it would be possible to get useful information about children's response to literature through a similar method. The basic plan for the present research, then, was to go into an elementary school and collect evidence about response to literature as it occurred among children of varying age levels.

Purposes of the Study

The primary purposes of this investigation were to describe children's response to literature in grades kindergarten through five; and to identify patterns and meanings leading to hypotheses about the
relationship of response to the context in which it occurs. A number of categories and questions were proposed as a preliminary frame for gathering and reflecting on the data:

1. Identification of response
   a. Given a setting in which children have opportunity and encouragement to interact with literature, what will happen?
   b. Considering the total elementary school program rather than just reading period or story time, what behaviors and products reflect children's experiences with literature?

2. Classification of response
   a. What are the general characteristics of the children's responses (comments, behaviors, products) at early, middle, and upper elementary levels?
   b. What patterns or sequences are evident in the children's responses?

3. Context relationships
   a. What teacher behaviors seem associated with what types of response?
   b. What kinds of response or changes in response seem to be influenced by group interaction?
   c. What apparent relationships exist between response and various context factors such as time of day, location in school or classroom, availability of materials, sequence of activities?
These questions reflect the partly exploratory nature of all ethnographic research. It was anticipated that some concerns would come into sharper focus as the study progressed, and that new questions might arise. The ultimate objective was to identify those questions that would be the productive ones for teachers to ask about using literature with their own students in their own classrooms.

**Scope and Limitations of the Study**

A reasonable interpretation of the findings of this study depends upon recognition of the characteristics of ethnographic, qualitative research. Specific descriptions of actions within the setting of the present study, for instance, are not intended to be generalized. The study involved some 90 children and their teachers in three classrooms of a school that could be designated as both open space and open classroom; obviously some of the things that went on there might not have been observed in other types of schools. However, the study was not intended to describe response to literature in open or informal classroom settings as such. Instead, the intent was to use an environment that would allow exploration of the widest possible range of responses and contexts.

In ethnographic research, participant observers, like this investigator, seek to know their settings in depth and in detail. But all their perspectives are personal ones. It is conceivable that other researchers would have had quite different ideas about some of the events reported here. It is also undeniably true that much of the response generated in this setting was not reported as part of the
study, simply because there was too much for one person to see, too many individual and small group projects to keep track of. But practical considerations prevented the use of more than one observer in this research. Although many of the children's responses and the contexts in which they occurred were discussed with teachers and other adults involved, the final analysis reflects, basically, the perceptions of a single investigator.

It is also a matter of some importance that a participant observer in any setting becomes a part of that setting, and changes it in ways that may be difficult to assess. In this case the observer was known to the school staff and eventually to most of the children as an author of children's books. While it was often possible to allow for reactions based on this fact, there may have been indirect influences which have gone unrecognized.

The time frame of the study was perhaps its most significant limitation. Ethnographers are likely to spend a year or more in discovering the patterns and meanings within a social setting; in this case the time was something less than four months (early September through mid-December), with a primary focus of about four weeks in each classroom. Teachers in the study gave frequent reminders that there would be many changes in the children's work by June, and the obvious seasonal and holiday influences do not represent the full range of children's year-long school experiences. A longer period of investigation might have provided additional insights, particularly in terms of process and the development of response to specific works.
Summary

Although response to literature has been described and investigated in many other ways, elementary teachers who hope to foster the enjoyment and appreciation of literature need to understand response in terms of the classroom contexts in which it occurs. The present study, using an ethnographic approach, was designed to explore response and its relationship to context among 90 children from kindergarten through grade five in an elementary school setting.

A discussion of related theory and research will be found in Chapter II of this report. Chapter III details the method and procedures used. Descriptive data on the setting and the participants is provided in Chapter IV, while Chapter V deals with the response findings. Chapter VI proposes some hypotheses and discusses their implications, including suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The question of what children do with literature - in their heads, or in their classrooms - has not yet been thoroughly explored. Even so, there is a substantial body of theoretical writing and of research which has bearing on the topic. Insights can be drawn from the study of literature itself, from linguistic theory, from philosophy and aesthetics, and from various branches of psychology as well as from research and practice in education. Much of this material is concerned with readers or respondents in general rather than children in particular; almost none of it puts response to literature in a naturalistic school setting. Questions of response in context lead to uncharted territory, although guides can be taken from research in other fields.

The following review is a selective one that discusses major theories touching on response to literature, the research emphases that have been common to the field, and research from related areas that suggests the importance of investigating response within the social context of the classroom.

Theoretical Perspectives

The Importance of Story

It seems appropriate to begin the discussion of literary response with an affirmation of the crucial role of fiction in real life. Our
very perception of everyday reality can be characterized as a giant
network of constantly revised fictions, of stories told and stories
heard about how the world works, and why (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).
Although this particular view comes from sociology, similar ideas are
proposed by psychologists, literary critics, and language theorists.
Psychologist R.L. Gregory (1974) states:

... fiction is a tool, necessary for thought
and intelligence, and for considering and
planning possibilities. Fiction is vitally
important - indeed we live more by fiction
than by fact. It is living by fiction that
makes the higher organisms special. By
recognizing the importance of 'brain
fiction' for perception and intelligent
behavior, we might make psychology a

An eloquent elaboration of the notion of "living by fiction" comes
from literary critic and theorist Barbara Hardy (1968):

We dream in narrative, day-dream in narra-
tive, remember, anticipate, hope, despair,
believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize,
construct, gossip, learn, hate, love by
narrative (in Meek, et al., 1978, p. 13).

Narrative is the form most common to children's literature, and
apparently rightfully so. In Moffett's (1968) presentation of his
theory of discourse he argues that unlike adults, whose thought is
differentiated into specialized forms such as narrative, generaliza-
tion, and theory, children make do with narrative alone.

They utter themselves almost entirely
through stories - real or invented -
and they apprehend what others say
through story. The young learner,
that is, does not talk and read
explicitly about categories and
theories of experience; he talks and reads about characters, events, and settings... charged with symbolic meaning because they are tokens standing for unconscious classes and postulations of experience (p. 49).

This attention to the importance of storying, coming as it does from so many quarters, provides added impetus for the study of response. A better understanding of the interaction between children and stories is more than a narrow pedagogical concern.

The Process of Response

Long before response to literature was a popular topic, Rosenblatt (1938) had described it as an interactional, or transactional, process; "The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings" (p. 25). In stressing the uniqueness of each encounter between a specific reader and a specific text, Rosenblatt makes the literary experience seem more a performing art than an analytical search for a single "correct" reading.

This transactional model is expanded in a later work (Rosenblatt, 1978), in which "the text" is explained as consisting only of printed signs; while "the poem" is what the reader makes of the text. In terms of process the poem, or literary work, is an event. A literary work is not simply read, it is evoked. The relationship between reader and text is not linear; it is characterized as active, self-ordering, and self-corrective. The text is both a stimulus that activates the
reader's personal experience and a regulator to help the reader organize those experiences.

Rosenblatt's description of the response process has much in common with psycholinguistic models of comprehension (Smith, 1975), especially in its emphasis on the reader's cognitive activity. A fuller discussion of other psychological processes involved in response is provided by Harding (1962). He calls the reader an onlooker who enters imaginatively into the representation of other people's activity. Not satisfied with the terms "identification" or "vicarious experience," he argues that "empathic insight" better identifies the process on which the response depends. This involves imaginative sharing of reactions with the fictional characters. Harding points out that readers do not just respond with characters, however; they also have feelings and opinions about them.

Holland's (1968) theory, too, stresses the dynamism of response and a double mode of approach, but his interpretation is based on psychoanalytic psychology. According to Holland, a literary text embodies a familiar mental process whereby fantasy is transformed toward conscious meaning. Readers apprehend the text in two ways: by thinking about it, or reality-testing it, and by experiencing it through introjection, "feeling the nucleus of fantasy and the formal management of fantasy as though they were our own ..." (p. 90). Considering the frequent references to Oedipal triangles, ego psychology, and defense mechanisms in relation to the literary experience, one is forced to conclude that most classroom teachers might feel ill-prepared
to use this perspective. However, personality theory does serve as the basis for the subjective criticism advocated as a teaching model by Bleich (1975) and has been applied in analyzing the responses of adult and adolescent readers (Holland, 1975; Petrosky, 1976).

Bettelheim's (1976) work on fairy tales illustrates the psychoanalytic approach to children's response. Folk fairy tales, he says, carry important messages to the child's mind at all levels of consciousness; they encourage ego development while relieving unconscious fears. Children have unvoiced concerns about the darker side of human nature and the deeper meanings of events around them; through fairy tales children fit these unconscious fears into conscious fantasies, and thereby are better able to cope with them. The traditional replacement of the natural mother by the wicked stepmother, for example, can embody the transformation of the infant's all-nurturing mother into the demanding creature who imposes rules in early childhood.

Bettelheim's ideas have been popularly recognized and widely discussed. Despite the strength of his theory, however, difficulties arise for the lay person who sets out to interpret the responses of individuals: it seems prudent to remember that Bettelheim is a psychotherapist.

The Stance of the Respondent

A special aspect of the response process, and one that might be seen as having particular implications for teaching, is the stance of the reader or respondent. For the most part, this stance is discussed in terms of dichotomies, or as opposite poles of a continuum.
Readers approach literary works in a special way - or so they must, to appreciate it fully. This is Rosenblatt's point in making a distinction between "efferent" and "aesthetic" reading (1978, Chap. 3). Efferent reading is information-centered; the reader is concerned with what can be carried away from the text, and so must block out most of the feelings and personal associations which could be aroused by the text. Scanning the label on a bottle of poison in order to discover the antidote is an example cited as an extreme case of the efferent stance. In the aesthetic stance, the focus is on the experiencing of the text as the reader lives it through, paying active attention to feelings and associations and images. Rosenblatt maintains that while the two stances are definable as separate entities, in practice they represent two ends of a continuum along which the reader's focus of attention moves. Certain texts, however, are more conducive to one kind of attention than the other, and call for a certain stance. The efferent reading of a poem, for example, would yield some information appropriate to objective criticism, but only through aesthetic reading could it be evoked as a work of art.

Britton (1970) makes a distinction between spectator and participant roles. Although his discussion is general and concerned with many uses of language, it is clear that response to literature demands the spectator role. He explains that the terms "spectator" and "participant" are used in a restricted sense, since it is also common to think of readers as "participating" in the literary experience.
'Participant' is the key word to mark out someone who is participating in the world's affairs: 'spectator' is the label for someone on holiday from the world's affairs, someone contemplating experiences, enjoying them, vividly reconstructing them perhaps—but experiences in which he is not taking part (p. 104).

Drawing on Harding's (1937) description of the mental processes of an onlooker and the 'imaginary spectatorship' of daydreams and gossip, Britton separates the spectator at events from the participant in events both in the actual world and in our representations of the world through language. In the participant role, language is used as a means; in the spectator role, it is an end in itself. The spectator is not obligated by the practical demands of participation and is therefore free to attend to the evaluation of experience and to forms: "the forms of the language used, the pattern of events in a narrative, the dance-like movements of thought and, in particular, the pattern of feelings expressed" (Britton, et al., 1975, p. 81).

Like Rosenblatt, Britton points out what certain texts require a particular role. In defining three major function categories of language Britton named the transactional mode for language to get things done, the expressive mode for language close to the self, and the poetic mode for language as an art medium. The spectator role may apply to the expressive mode; it is always appropriate to the poetic. In responding to literature, then, the reader or listener assumes a stance that suggests attention not to outcomes but to forms of language and patterns of feeling. Unlike Rosenblatt, however, Britton does not
see a continuum from one stance to the other, but a dominance of one role dictated by the function of the text.

Britton's study of the spectator role has been pursued by Applebee (1973a), whose research is reviewed, in part, in a later section of this paper. It seems appropriate to note here, however, that both Britton and Applebee draw from two powerful theoretical perspectives - the psychology of personal constructs set out by Kelly (1955) and the philosophy of Susanne Langer (1953, 1967, 1972).

Kelly's fundamental postulate is that "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events" (1963, p. 46). This anticipation becomes organized in terms of dichotomous constructs. One of the corollaries of this system involves the person's tendency to choose alternatives that will lead either toward constricted certainty or to broadened understanding. Applebee (1978) points out that the choice is a tacit one governed by relative need for the mastery of old ideas or for the taking on of new ones - in his terms, articulation or reformulation. This serves as another continuum on which the reader can be placed in terms of response: to what degree is one set to reaffirm old perceptions about literature and the world through a particular work, or to what degree is one disposed to realign former understandings in order to provide a comfortable fit for the work?

Langer's designation of man as a "proliferator of symbols" is central to Britton's discussion of language, and her explanation of the arts in terms of virtual experience (Langer, 1953) offers one
approach toward understanding the process of response. According to this theory we first apprehend literature by experiencing its primary illusion, then by concentration on and contemplation of the forms which present that feeling. In her latest work, Langer (1967, 1972) argues that although various phenomena such as cognition and emotion involve the same basic psychological processes, we tend to separate our felt experience into two worlds: the objective (rational, public) world where feeling is a result of contact with events outside the self; and the subjective (emotional, private) world where feeling is itself a result of internal processes. Applebee (1978) uses this dichotomy to consider children's language use, relating the objective to Britton's transactional function and participant role, and the subjective to Britton's poetic function and spectator role. Objective and subjective are also used as categories of children's characteristic statements about literature, thus designating two complementary orientations that a respondent may have toward a work.

The Refining of Response

The theoretical perspectives which seem most directly related to the purposes of the present study are those which combine criticism and pedagogy. What constitutes the mature or ideal response to literature, and how can its development be encouraged? The total body of published criticism might be considered response data, constituting as it does a description of fully formulated (verbal) response; but no attempt will be made here to analyze the diversity of mature critical approaches so represented. The present study has been more concerned with naive response and the steps which might lead onward from there.
Attention was focused on this question during the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English held at Dartmouth College in 1966. Britton's keynote presentation identified development of literary response as the student's increasing sense of form:

Progress lies in perceiving gradually more complex patterns of events, in picking up clues more widely separated and more diverse in character, and in finding satisfaction in patterns of events less directly related to their expectations and, more particularly, their desires (in Squire, 1968, pp. 4-5).

Britton goes on to point out that sense of literary form increases as students find satisfactions in more varied and more challenging works, and as their frame of reference grows with increased life experience. The sense of form may or may not be articulated as critical comment, but Britton sees the introduction of the authoritative critical voice as a source of much potential harm, particularly for younger children. He suggests that teachers should instead encourage the improved response by promoting more reading for more satisfaction - wide reading and close reading at once, with plenty of opportunity for talk and reflection.

The report of the Dartmouth Seminar Study Group, chaired by Harding, is based on the premises that:

(a) response is not passive but implies active involvement;
(b) it includes not only immediate response but later effects;
(c) overt response (verbal, etc.) may indicate very little of the inner response (in Squire, 1968, p. 11).

Harding suggests that there are four levels of response, which emerge in sequence. First is response to patterns of sound, demonstrated
overtly by movement or chanting or laughter. This is followed by response to event, or patterns of expectation, as when a young listener corrects a storyteller at the least variation. Next is response to role, frequently seen in free play as children become the characters of their stories. The last level, identified as response to world, indicates a new sense of perspective as children begin to relate their own experiences to the world of the story. Fostering growth of response from one level to another calls for different procedures with children of different ages and backgrounds. The central mode of approach, however, is individual guided reading, supported by group experiences in which the individual relates his responses to those of other children, and by the teacher's presentation of literature followed by discussion.

One of the crucial points made by Harding in the Dartmouth report is that the formulation of statements about structures or interpretations may inhibit affective responses; he warns against premature formulation and cautions that responses judged by teachers as low level or superficial may be an appropriate "way in" to the work. Spencer (1977) suggests that the development of formulated response depends on children's relationship with the work to which they are responding. While young children are capable of evaluative responses, these must be seen in the child's terms:

The questions are best asked about books the children know well and feel they have outgrown. For an eight year old response may be to tell the story; a twelve year old discusses choice of actions by the protagonist. There is a time when a
fourteen year old begins to discern the writer's path through a book, as opposed to the reader's, a discovery that often comes from something of lesser stature, like a detective story, before it is clear in *Jane Eyre*. Growth in response seems to involve a developing preoccupation with form, but not because it is the subject of English lessons (p. 180).

In a recent edition of her influential *Literature As Exploration*, Rosenblatt (1976) emphasizes a similar point. In contributing to the student's growth in ability to handle responses, the teacher should be primarily concerned not about the high technical complexity of the works being read, but about the quality of the students' actual literary experiences:

> It may be that the youngster reading *National Velvet* or *Johnny Tremain* will have a fuller, more sensitive, more responsible literary experience than the student who is so unready to handle the demands of *The Divine Comedy* or even Henry James that he falls back on criticism of criticism of criticism, and never develops a literary technique of reading and assimilating for himself (p. 283).

The process of refining response - to summarize these views - is one of developing an increasing sense of form and self-awareness of the literary experience, ideally through extensive reading and consideration of literary works that are "within reach" of the student.

**Research Perspectives**

**Studies of Critical Response**

The research most clearly associated with response to literature deals with factors in readers' perception and understanding of the
text as well as the attitudes and judgments revealed in their comments, oral or written. The study which often serves as a reference point for others of this kind was reported some 50 years ago. In analyzing the written responses of university students to thirteen poems, Richards (1929) isolated several factors which seemed to him to prevent the students from making "correct" literary judgments. These ranged from the primary problem of getting the plain sense of the work to the difficulty of overcoming preconceptions and presuppositions. Also included were the tendencies to make stock responses, and to oversentimentalize. Richards' work called attention to the importance of text and how a reader ought to deal with it - a preoccupation of the New Critics who followed him.

More recent studies, influenced by Rosenblatt's (1938) transactional theory, have focused on the process of dealing with text, and moved away from strict assumptions about "correct" judgments. Squire (1964) analyzed the responses made by 52 ninth and tenth grade students while reading four short stories. In order to focus on the process of formulation, he divided each story into six parts and interviewed each subject upon their completion of each of the sections. Transcribed comments were categorized in terms of 1) literary judgments, 2) interpretational responses, 3) narrational reactions, 4) associational responses, 5) self-involvement, 6) prescriptive judgments, and 7) miscellaneous, with the largest category being interpretational responses.

Like Richards, Squire also wanted to understand students' difficulties with literary comprehension and - using some of Richards'
terminology - he identified these sources: 1) failure to grasp the meaning, 2) reliance on stock responses, 3) "happiness binding," 4) critical predispositions, 5) irrelevant associations, and 6) the search for certainty. "Happiness binding" refers to a subject's inclination to expect and interpret pleasant endings, events, and characters irrespective of the evidence of the text, and Squire refers to it as "one of the dominant impressions which result from an initial reading of the transcripts" (1964, p. 42). A strong positive correlation was found between responses indicating self-involvement and those indicating literary judgment, although a subject's strongest involvement was likely to come midway in the text, with evaluative responses near the beginning and the end. General patterns of response were not significantly related to sex differences, intelligence, or reading ability. Squire concluded that despite group tendencies in the development of types of response (interpretation, literary judgment, self-involvement, narration), adolescent readers "respond to literature in unique and selective ways and that the nature of an individual's reactions is conditioned by the interplay of a constellation of factors rather than a single cause" (p. 51).

The descriptive categorization of responses was further developed by Purves and Rippere (1968), who sought a means of characterizing the written responses of large groups of students from diverse backgrounds. In this method - tested in a pilot study with 300 essays by thirteen and seventeen year olds in the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, and Germany - raters score written statements according to a system
of elements. The major classifications are: 1) engagement - involvement, 2) perception, 3) interpretation, and 4) evaluation; each of these is subdivided, coded, and clarified by examples. As a neutral rather than an hierarchical order, the Purves system was intended to serve as a frame for other studies, as it has, although some researchers have made their own uses of it. Odell and Cooper (1976), for instance, analyzed one eleventh grade student's written responses to three novels using a combination of the Purves system and a description of the student's inferred intellectual strategies.

The preceding studies represent a major track in the research on response to literature. Generally the impetus comes from a concern with skill in literary criticism. Although there is an underlying assumption that response is tied to personal satisfactions, the explicit issue is the production of formulated statements, in situations where a teacher or researcher directly solicits the response. This type of research provides description of students' critical facility and gives an indication of the complexity of interrelating factors in the response process (see Purves and Beach, 1972, Chap. 1). Most of the major studies, however, have taken adolescents or young adults as their subjects. Although commenting about books is an activity familiar to elementary school students, it is seldom a formal aspect of the curriculum in the manner of literary study in the secondary school. Perhaps for this reason, there is no comparable body of data that analyzes children's statements about literature.

However, some children's responses have been analyzed in a rigorous way by Applebee (1976). He used a repertory grid technique with
248 London children ages six to seventeen. Their task was to supply and rate story titles to represent designated categories and to supply examples of favorite stories and poems as well as television serials, films, comic books, and other spectator role experiences. For each choice the repertory grid provided several dichotomous scales or dimensions, of which one pole was given (e.g., "very good") and an appropriate opposite term furnished by the child. Complex statistical treatment of the data revealed three "superordinate dimensions" in the children's construal of stories: evaluation, which became an increasingly central feature of response as age increased; simplicity, which represented to younger children the range from simple to hard, for older ones the range from simple to complex or disturbing; and realism, which moved from the distinction between real and made up to a concern that "it could really happen to me."

Applebee (1978) also reported use of the Purves categories as a preliminary analysis of responses elicited by interview and questionnaire. The main categories showed no systematic changes between ages six and thirteen, with nearly three-fourths of them reflecting perception of the work as an objective construct. Children's responses obviously changed throughout the age levels, however, and Applebee ascribes the system's inadequacy to a lack of differentiation within the subcategory "action." It is important to note that the sort of attention given by Applebee to children's response is the exception rather than the rule, and that the research mentioned above was only a part of a larger study where the focus was not on critical response but on the more generalized concept of story.
Interest Studies

The traditional emphasis for research in children's response to literature is on their reading interests, preferences, and choices. The most common focus has been description of preferred topics or elements of content, with a striking consistency of results over the decades (Purves and Beach, 1972; Terry, 1974). Early investigators reported that primary children particularly liked surprise and plot (Dunn, 1921) while children in general enjoyed action, human interest, and imaginative appeal (Terman and Lima, 1926). A typical list of topics found appealing by children two generations past includes adventure, fairy tales, making things, humor, biography, true-event stories, and animals (Broening, 1934).

Most studies of this sort recognized a pattern of changing interests as children moved through elementary school, as well as some differences between girls' and boys' preferences at the upper age levels. Thorndike (1941) used a list of fictitious, annotated titles to determine that both boys and girls liked adventure and mystery, with girls also liking stories of home and school. Rankin (1944) analyzed the content of 35 popular books for pre- and early adolescent readers, determined on the basis of library circulation. Although girls' and boys' interests differed widely, they shared an interest in stories of adventure or achievement where plot interest was sustained through sequence of events, characterization was accomplished through action, speech was contemporary, and the conclusions conventional.
Among the large scale studies of reading interests, the most inclusive were reported in the 1950's by Norvell. Among 50,000 students in grades seven and up, he found that both boys' and girls' interests were favorably influenced by adventure of some type, humor, animals, and patriotism (Norvell, 1950). Some 24,000 children in grades three through six gave first choice to animals, with biography ranked second (Norvell, 1958). Peltola's (1965) study of more than 3,000 suburban upper grade children asked them to supply favorite characters and book titles. She noted a pronounced sex difference in types of characters chosen (boys chose female characters last), and a definite preference for realistic over fanciful story characters. Schulte (1967) used an inventory of fictitious, annotated titles to survey the independent reading interests of approximately 6,500 children in a four-state random sample. Preferences were expressed for titles representing realistic fiction, fanciful tales, and historical fiction, in that order; boys were relatively more interested in action and adventure, girls in personal relationships and problems.

Other interest studies have set out to discover children's reactions to particular forms or types of content. Monson (1968) explored children's response to humorous material, for instance. In England, Smerdon (1976) carried out a limited scale study on children's preferences in illustrations, attempting to place their choices on an abstract-representational continuum. He used an experimental method which required a forced choice between pairs of illustrations, with four groups of children ranging in age from six and a half to nearly fifteen. At
all age levels children clearly preferred the most representational forms and clearly rejected the most abstract.

Terry (1974) surveyed children's poetry preferences on a nationwide scale, using a random sample of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. She found that humorous content was a factor in popularity, as well as familiar experiences and animals. Analysis of the favorites showed that narrative forms with elements of rhyme and rhythm were preferred over forms like haiku or free verse, particularly those that depended heavily on imagery or where meaning was not readily apparent. Contemporary content and language were favored over traditional or "old fashioned" poems. In Terry's study, fourth graders expressed more interest in poetry than the older students, and girls seemed to be generally more positive than boys although their choice of favorites was similar.

Research that identifies and describes children's preferences is helpful to teachers and others who choose books for children. But the larger the scale of it and the more generalizable it is, the more likely it is to limit or deny the child's opportunity to say "it depends" - to attempt to explain the preference. Even with opportunity, explaining one's own choice is not easy; many researchers have thus attempted to provide indirect explanation by correlating preferences with other factors. Earlier investigators tried to account for interests on the basis of age or sex or intelligence or similar elements; but recent studies have drawn on new paradigms from developmental psychology. At least two researchers (Favat, 1977; Schlager,
1978) have suggested that traditional ideas about content preferences may be misleading and that children's interest may instead go to those stories which best embody their conception of the world.

Favat proposed that interest is a function of interaction between the characteristics of the reader and the characteristics of the book, and he set out to explore the connections between fairy tales and children from six to eight years old, the age he identified as representing peak interest in the form. Through content analysis he established a "literary reservoir" describing the fairy tales of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm, and Andersen. Unusual precision in this description was made possible by his use of Propp's (1968) scheme designed for analyzing Russian fairy tales. Propp extracted a total of 31 functions, or relationships between characters and actions (e.g., trickery - villain attempts to deceive victim), which might be found in a fairy tale and which would occur in a specific sequence, if they were present at all. While literary influences on the Western European tales made them depart somewhat from this scheme, Favat reasoned that its application still revealed the essential structure of the stories.

Favat's next step was to establish a second "reservoir" of psychological information, based primarily on the early work of Piaget (1965, 1967, 1968). By comparing the two sets of information, he was able to find similarities between the child's thinking and the story. His report furnishes specific examples of these correspondences: participatory magic and animism, the morality of constraint and
retributive justice, lack of expressed causality, and egocentrism. These are characteristics established in children's thinking during the preschool years; Favat suggests that the child of primary school age finds the real world challenging these old patterns of thinking and thus the fairy tale - with its familiar world view - becomes attractive, a safe haven. When new patterns of thinking are well established, children's interest in the fairy tale drops to the point of rejection.

Favat's thesis is carefully argued and seems not to suffer from being the result of scholarship rather than empirical research. However, although he offers other research (Favat, Appendix A) as evidence of his claim that primary children have a strong preference for fairy tales, this assumption creates a problem for teachers whose observations of their own classes indicate different patterns of interest.

The same reservations might be expressed about a study reported by Schlager (1978) in which the content of popular Newbery Award winners was contrasted with less popular winners of the same award. That is, some of the titles Schlager rated popular on the basis of their library circulation may not be observed as favorite choices in particular schools or classrooms. In terms of the sum of evidence about general characteristics, however, her conclusions are well supported. Like Favat, Schlager argues that "Books that reflect the child's perception of the world are the books children clamor for" (p. 137). She goes on to point out that as stages of development
change, so do children's literary preferences. Children's taste for some Newbery winners over others might thus be accounted for by reference to the developmental characteristics of middle childhood. To this end, Schlager compiled a list of the behavioral characteristics of children aged seven to twelve, based on the developmental theories of Piaget and Erikson (1950). She then determined, from library records, the five most circulated Newbery winners (Island of the Blue Dolphins by O'Dell, The Witch of Blackbird Pond by Speare, From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by Konigsburg, It's Like This Cat by Neville, A Wrinkle in Time by L'Engle) and the five least circulated (I, Juan de Pareja by de Trevino, Amos Fortune, Free Man by Yates, Tales from Silver Lands by Finger, The Trumpeter of Krakow by Kelly, Dobry by Shannon). In contrasting the two groups of books, Schlager concluded that the popular ones were those that contained an identifiable stage of development. She found much in Island of the Blue Dolphins, for instance, that consistently characterized middle childhood: a successful survival struggle as a test of reality orientation; achievement without adult assistance, representing syllogistic reasoning and cognitive conceit; producing needed articles as a mark of task orientation and the industry-vs.-inferiority stage. Dobry, on the other hand, was found to contain few of the characteristic behaviors and conceptions of middle childhood. Instead, the main character shifts from typically preoperational ideas, such as animism, to adolescent behaviors, providing little for middle grade readers to relate to. Child development, concludes Schlager, is the key to understanding children's interests.
Research in the Development of Sense of Story

The developmental aspects of cognitive psychology also serve as a frame for research on the child's "sense of story"—the development of expectations about stories and their relationship to language and thinking processes. While this can be called an important new trend in the research on response, it is not an approach that belongs particularly to the disciplines of English education or children's literature. The notion of sense of story is rooted in psychology and language, and is associated especially with psycholinguistic research on comprehension, story grammars, and recall (e.g., Bower, 1976; Bruce, 1978; Stein, 1978). This research, however, is beyond the scope of the present review.

One way to infer children's expectations about stories is to analyze their own story productions. Sutton-Smith (1978) described the folkstories of two, three, and four year olds; and unlike folklorists or psychologists who would look at the symbolic meanings of the stories, this researcher looked at their patterns. While the youngest children furnished personal chronicles in the first person, children before three told stories with third-person characters and cyclical patterns. As in their organization of spontaneous play, these children put one character through a series of actions, or repeated one action using a series of agents. They used both the past tense and boundary rules, or markers, for beginnings and endings. These storying abilities showed marked development in children from two to four, even though their stories remained relatively plotless, focusing on conflict without the resolution.
Applebee (1978) also reported an analysis of 120 stories told by preschool children (elicited and published by Pitcher and Prelinger, 1963; see Applebee, pp. 138-140). Using an approach derived from Vygotsky's (1962) stages of concept development, he identified six patterns of story production:

1. Heaps - a primitive mode of organization in which items are the result of syncretistic response, joined by free association.

2. Sequences - an organization which puts events into an arbitrary sequence, with their association based on similarity rather than causality.

3. Primitive narratives - a collection of events around a concrete center with association based on complementarity.

4. Unfocused chains - an organization in which each succeeding incident is related to the last, but on the basis of a continually shifting attribute.

5. Focused chains - a structure in which a chain of incidents is related to a concrete center, usually a main character who has a series of adventures.

6. Narratives, or true narratives - an organization which combines the use of chaining with a concrete, perceptual or conceptual center in such a way that the center is elaborated as the chain progresses.

Sequences were the most frequently used form in the stories of two year olds, while the focused chain was the most popular structure for older children. Although Applebee's analysis treated each story as an
example of one form or another, he noted that many stories made use of more than one organizational model. One difficulty with the application of these categories in further research is that classifications of new examples may be arguable.

Applebee (1978) himself points out that the evidence of changes with age in complexity of stories told by children is not as productive as the discovery of specific structures associated with that complexity. These structures represent increasingly difficult cognitive tasks, but at the same time facilitate the manipulation of increasingly complex and diverse material. In fully developed examples of literature, both of the basic structuring principles, chaining and centering, are all-pervasive:

And it is also because these relationships are so complex, with each aspect simultaneously part of so many different chains and centers, organized at so many different levels in the structural hierarchy, that the full response to a poetic form cannot be a transactional, analytic one but must be the complex, assimilative, personal formulation that comes only in the spectator role (p. 72).

A different analysis of the same data base of stories allowed Applebee to examine aspects of fantasy and distancing. He found that as children matured from two to five they included more patterns of behavior further removed from immediate experience. Of the two year olds, 97 per cent of their stories reflected home and family; by age five, only about 33 per cent were so situated. Evidence also indicated that children at all age levels in the sample attempted to deal with threatening content by some sort of distancing—in setting or time or through reversals of the narrator.
Rubin and Gardner (1977) reported interim results of a long term study of the development of symbolic capacities in five children. The investigation of story competence was organized around the idea of story "frames," where the invoking of a situation or form (e.g., a visit to the dentist, or a fairy tale) carries implicit meaning, suggesting boundaries and the possibility for violating those boundaries. Inferences about story production were drawn from observations of children at play with a variety of symbolic props (small figure, house, animals, and so on). The researchers noted emergence of a narrative frame before age three and a half, with the ability to acknowledge verbally the convention of pretending and the use of language as a narrative skill. Then children became adept at indicating character by voice, and at beginning stories with the traditional "once upon a time." Four year olds used literary phrases from books in the course of manipulating the props. When problem situations were posed by the experimenter, and children asked to make up solutions to complete the story, they were able before age four to solve the problem within the story frame, but the solutions were physical and not essentially related to the characters or situation. The first story frame initiated by children in this study was designated the monster frame, where the preoccupation with an aggressive or threatening figure revealed the beginning of ideas about character types. The fairy tale frame was approached by the experimenter through introducing fairy tale elements into the child's play and observing the child's ability to extend the situations. It was noted that while the four year olds had some control of fairy tale vocabulary, their stories omitted motivation and the entire psychological dimension
of the story, indicating greater complexity in these tales than in the child-generated monster frame.

In a related study, Rubin and Gardner (1977) posed a completion and later a retelling task for 30 children, 10 each in grades one, three, and six. The story material was a prototypical fairy tale written so as to be unfamiliar to the subjects but making liberal use of stock elements. Some children heard the complete tale, others a skeletal version, from which character motivations had been removed. Sixth graders were judged to have strong expectations about the fairy tale frame, since they supplied more of the deleted motivation when they retold the story after a three-day wait than those who retold it immediately. First graders were more successful with immediate retellings. Children of different grade levels had different ways of making explicit the fairy tale frame; first graders named the story by borrowing the title of a familiar tale; third graders borrowed entire episodes; sixth graders blended fairy tale elements with modern literary frames and showed clear character preferences. At this latter stage the frame seemed to have been mastered well enough to generate imitation and parody.

Analysis of story production is only one means toward understanding children's response. Applebee's exploration of the concept of story has many other dimensions; his work is, to date, the most comprehensive. In one informal study of five, six, and seven year olds in London (Applebee, 1973b), interviewing was the method used to get at children's perceptions of what happens in a story, what makes a good one, and
where stories come from. While this report does not lend itself to summarization, several things are worth noting. Young children were likely to equate story and book, with little differentiation between the composing and the manufacturing process. Explaining why a story is good or bad proved to be a difficult task; when pressed, many children turned to characters' actions as evidence. In general, young children proved more adept at recounting story detail than in talking about stories. And perhaps most provocative of all, children seemed to move from an acceptance of story characters as real people through a transitional stage in which they were real but far away, toward an understanding of the characters as "made up."

Applebee's (1978) major design called for two sets of interviews with six and nine year olds and a similar reading questionnaire for the nines and for thirteen and seventeen year olds. The questions were designed to elicit information about children's reasons for story preference, their way of discussing a story, expectations about common character roles, understanding of the origin of a story, sense of the fictional element, retelling ability and interpretation of a metaphorical statement or proverb.

Samples were chosen from a working class school area in London. There were 88 subjects evenly divided between ages six and nine, between boys and girls, and between the two interview schedules. Thirteen and seventeen year old subjects were drawn from a comprehensive school and from a boys' and a girls' selective admissions school, a procedure recognized as raising questions about the validity of over-all
comparisons. Consequently Applebee limited his statistical analyses to clear contrasts, such as those between adjacent age levels, or between school settings.

The sum of the findings, however, gave Applebee the basis for a systematic model of the development of the formulation of verbal response. He identified stages that correspond to Piaget's descriptions of cognitive stages, and further divided these in terms of Langer's objective and subjective modes (Applebee, 1978, p. 89):

1. **Preoperational stage** - (up to about seven years) - The typical objective response is retelling, with little evidence of reorganization in the representation. Subjective comment tends to be syncretistic, demonstrating centration and egocentrism.

2. **Concrete operational stage** - (from seven to about twelve years) - The child's objective comments reflect new organizational powers, the ability to summarize and categorize. Extended discussion about a work can be carried on without the child's re-experiencing it through retelling. Subjective response includes assignment of terms like "exciting," although the child perceives this as an attribute of the work itself rather than as a personal response.

3. **Formal operational stage I** - (from twelve to about sixteen years) - Objective response is formulated as analysis. Readers become aware of the distinction between their own objective and subjective reactions; they perceive and talk about their own involvement in the work.
4. **Formal operational stage II** - (from about sixteen years into adulthood) - Readers make generalizations and formulate abstract statements about theme and meaning, recognizing a literary work as a statement of the possibility of human experience rather than as a literal representation of life. Subjective response focuses on self awareness of personal reaction and the felt effect of the work.

Applebee notes that this is a cumulative model; at any one stage children may draw on the typical formulations of earlier stages.

Taken all together, the research on critical response, interests, and the growth of story concepts has begun to furnish an elaborated description of children's response to literature and the developmental constraints upon it. None of the studies in this review deal explicitly with the teaching of literature, but as Applebee points out, the research on sense of story does imply a certain attitude about literary education: "The teacher's role in this process is one of questioning and cultivating response rather than one of teaching critical principles" (1978, p. 134).

In order to cultivate response, teachers need to know as much about the cultivating as the responding. What are the components of a nurturing environment for literary response? This sort of research is conspicuously hard to find. Although there has been some investigation of the effectiveness of intervention strategies (Wolf, 1967), there has not been a comparable focus on response within a range of natural classroom contexts.
Language and Literature in Classroom Contexts

One of the lessons of current research in language and thinking is the importance of context both for language production and for understanding. Particular examples of this research will illustrate the crucial role of context in response to literature.

Bruner (1978) described videotaped observations of a toddler who, with his mother, was "reading" the pictures in a book. From earlier experiences, the two had developed a turn-taking routine and the child had learned that the objects pictured were to be responded to in a particular way, with a dialogue-pattern of sounds. The mother's role was played in four parts - directing the child's attention to the picture, a query ("what's that?") , giving the picture a label, and an approving comment when the child pointed or vocalized. This routine's variation depended upon the child's response; the more he reacted, the more he was rewarded with the mother's acknowledgement of his ability. When he was able to supply the picture's label, for instance, the mother did not repeat it but moved directly to the approving comment. In Bruner's terms this is a process of "fine tuning" that demonstrates the mother's influence as the child learns implicitly the rules of dialogue. If the situation is considered an example of response to literature, however, other observations are possible. First, an investigator unknown to the child - someone lacking the shared experiences necessary to fine tuning - might not have elicited the same responses from him. Second, some of the rules being learned are not just dialogue rules, but book-sharing rules as well.
Donaldson (1978) presented evidence about the context of Piagetian tasks that suggests developmental stages should be interpreted more flexibly. For instance, primary school children generally fail at a decentering task which requires them to choose a picture representing the view of three model mountains as it would be seen by a doll placed in a position different from the child's. In Piaget's interpretation, this is an indication of true self-centeredness, or the inability to take another point of view (a characteristic that has also been noted in children's story retellings, Huck, 1976, p. 24). Donaldson reported an alternative decentering task which required the child to consider a model with two intersecting walls, a toy policeman, and a boy doll. The child was carefully introduced to the task by being asked if the policeman stationed at the end of one wall could see the boy doll when placed in each quadrant of the model. As a preliminary task the child was asked to "hide the doll so that the policeman can't see him." For the test proper, a second policeman was stationed at one end of the second wall, and the child was directed to hide the boy from both policemen. Of 30 children ages three and a half to five, 90 per cent made correct responses, and comparably positive results occurred when extra walls and a third policeman were introduced to complicate the test.

In analyzing the difference between the mountains task and the policeman task, Donaldson emphasizes that children faced with the mountains are less likely to understand what they are supposed to do, partly as a result of the way the task is presented. More importantly, the policeman task makes better "human sense." In a context where
motive and intention are clear, even very young children were able to
decenter in the literal sense.

In another instance Donaldson contrasted experimental evidence
that children under six lack powers of deductive reasoning with evi­
dence drawn from their spontaneous comments and questions while listen­
ing to stories. Premises are implicit in a statement such as "She must
have eaten all her food on the other day": houses normally have food,
the house (in the story) has none, therefore it must have been eaten
(p. 55). In general, Donaldson argues that young children use more
advanced thinking strategies than usually attributed to them, at least
in situations where the task is embedded in a matrix of human intention
and plain sense; and that by helping children become explicitly aware
of language one helps them deal with disembedded or abstract tasks.
All this suggests that in certain contexts, children's responses to a
story might be more mature than one could predict from a developmental
model. It also suggests that the precise phrasing of questions or the
means of making suggestions or directions explicit could have important
effects on the type of responses produced.

Barnes (1976) described several classroom experiences through
which he set out to illustrate patterns of communication and their
relevance to curriculum theory. One of his working assumptions was
that children learn by talking - through "exploratory talk" children
come to grasp principles or organize new information - and the more a
learner has control over his own language strategies, the more he will
formulate and evaluate hypotheses on his own. Barnes noted the
development of meaning in several examples of small group discussion, where children were given a task and a tape recorder and proceeded without further adult participation. Four 11 year old girls talked over a poem; the transcript indicates lack of organization, from an adult point of view, but the students did come to an interpretation of the main point of the poem. The collaborative, interactive nature of this discussion was a part of the context for each girl's individual response, and the discussion itself was dependent on the task structure that allowed it to occur. Generally, research on response to literature does not take into account the influence of a social context, nor does it often give children a chance to go beyond first impressions or immediate reactions. Barnes' work, however, indicates that it might be important to do so.

In failing to consider the wider aspects of context in studying response, do researchers also miss a part of the response process itself? Griffin (1977), reporting an ethnographic study of reading, suggested that researchers should pay attention to a wider range of reading events and not artificially limit the evidence. In this year-long study of young children, designed to describe how and when reading occurs in the classroom, information was collected by means of audio and video tapes combined with ethnographic reports. Rather than relying on schedules or teacher reports of reading activities, the investigators were able to let the events to be studied emerge from the data. On the first (etic) level of analysis, incidents were isolated which had been identified by the teacher or children as "reading," or which involved reading even though it was not labeled as such. On the second (emic)
level, these events were categorized in terms of the characteristics which seemed to make the events meaningful to the participants. The evidence suggested, in part, that typical first grade reading activities as well as more advanced reading behaviors could be found outside the official reading times in a first grade classroom, and that the official reading time encompassed many non-reading activities. It is reasonable to assume that comparable investigations with a change of focus—from the act of reading to response—might provide new evidence about literature in the classroom.

**Summary**

Current thinking about response to literature draws on diverse theoretical perspectives which emphasize the importance of narrative in human thought and language. Among the various descriptions of the process of responding, Rosenblatt's (1938, 1978) transactional theory seems to have been the most influential. Rosenblatt (1978), Britton (1970), and Langer (1967) all have proposed contrasting stances or modes of representing experiences which may serve to distinguish and define response to literature. Growth toward mature response is generally seen in Britton's terms, as an increasing sense of form (Squire, 1968), and as increased self-awareness of the literary experience.

Research in this field follows several different tracks. A concern for students' critical skills has generated studies designed to analyze and categorize verbal responses; the system developed by Purves and Rippere (1958) is widely used. While most content analysis of responses deals with adolescent or young adult readers, a more typical approach for studying the responses of children under twelve
has been to look at their interests or preferences. Most of these studies have shown that content preferences vary somewhat with age, but that popular topics and preferred elements have remained relatively unchanged over the years. A new focus for the research on interests is exemplified in studies by Favat (1977) and Schlager (1978), who identified correspondences between children's thinking as described in developmental psychology and the characteristics of preferred stories. Another research track, again a relatively new one, is concerned with the child's developing sense of story and the relationship of developmental psychology to the child's formulation of response. Although sense of story is an area of interest shared by cognitive psychologists and particularly by researchers in comprehension and reading, the major work in reference to literature has been that of Applebee (1978). He identified six patterns in young children's story production and developed a model of children's response from ages two to seventeen.

Other studies in language and children's thinking (Barnes, 1976; Bruner, 1978; Donaldson, 1973) have directed attention to the importance of the immediate social context in understanding children's learning. Response to literature has not been studied in this light although the evidence indicates that such research might furnish new insights particularly useful to teachers. The various factors of the classroom environment - peer influence, task structures, shared language rules - are not likely to operate singly, as experimental research might imply, but all together, as an interrelated web of context. In order to get this sort of perspective - to know the environment as intimately as the response,
and to gather evidence without setting false limits - it was necessary to model the present study on ethnographic research.
CHAPTER III
PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

Preliminary Planning

The overall purpose of this study was to explore children's response to literature as it occurred in a school environment, considering both a range of developmental levels and a variety of natural classroom contexts. It was apparent at the outset that the necessary breadth and depth of perspective could best be furnished by ethnographic methods, and that a period of several months would be the minimum required for the collection of data. These considerations made the choice of a setting particularly important. If the investigator was to function as a participant observer in classrooms at different levels, it seemed obvious that these must be in a single school so as to draw from a single population. Moreover, since the success of ethnography depends in large measure on the development of rapport between the investigator and the participants in the setting, it was necessary to find, at various grade levels within one school, classrooms where the study would be welcomed and the investigator's full-time presence not seen as an intrusion.

While many settings might have furnished a hospitable environment, there was an additional factor to be considered. Literature is largely ignored in some elementary classrooms, and included in a very restricted fashion in others. What was wanted for this study was a setting that
would give children maximum opportunity for response to literature in a variety of contexts, both structured and spontaneous.

Among the schools known to and accessible to the investigator, the ones which best met these criteria had certain things in common: they were, by their own definition, operating with informal classrooms; they were committed to an integrated language arts approach for language skills and reading; a majority of their teachers had readily evident enthusiasm for literature. The eventual choice among these schools, any of which seemed likely to provide sufficient data, was for the most part decided by their architectural design. The one open space school under consideration seemed to provide the best physical setting for staying in touch with the activities of several classrooms at once.

Although no formal pilot study was carried out, some of the decisions about the collecting of data were made as a result of a one-day trial observation in an informal, primary level, family-grouped classroom. It was apparent, for instance, from the range and variety of response throughout the day, that the study should be based on full-time observation; literature and references to literature were not confined to read-aloud time or silent reading time or any other official period. Another discovery was that the tape recorder would not be much help in dealing with spontaneous comments; background noise made transcription all but impossible. The alternative of wiring each child for sound was rejected on the grounds that it would be not only too expensive, but also too intrusive. Taping, it was decided, would be used for interviews and for such group activities as book discussions. Note taking,
on the other hand, proved to be more useful than anticipated. The activity level in the classroom made it unobtrusive, and diagrams or sketches could be added to represent children's art work. The importance of this art work (drawings, paintings, murals, and three-dimensional projects related to books were all in progress) suggested that the study should include photographic documentation as well as written records, and plans were made accordingly.

Setting and Population of the Study

The site chosen for the study was an open-space, informal-classroom elementary school located on the edge of a small city near Columbus, Ohio. Since the system operated with middle schools rather than junior high schools, the grade level range for the study was fixed at kindergarten through grade five.

Three teachers whose groups spanned this range agreed to participate. One group was composed of kindergarteners and first graders, at one point as many as 39, although kindergarteners normally attended either the morning or afternoon session so that the number appeared smaller. Eventually a few children were transferred to another class. The second and third grade group had 27 members, the fourth and fifth grade, 31. There were in all 90 children who were observed with some regularity, and whose responses provided the data for this study.

All three classes were located in a large open area surrounding an unwalled library—educational resources center. Five other groups of varying ages also shared this space, although each group had a carefully delimited "home territory." This arrangement facilitated
observation and provided easy access for the investigator back and forth among the groups in the study.

A number of adults other than the regular teachers were observed as they had contact with the children. The principal was a frequent visitor to the large area. Teachers of other groups were highly visible, as were the library aide and occasional parent volunteers. There were regularly scheduled periods with the art teacher and a unified arts teacher (music and movement). In addition, all three groups in the study had university students as part-time participants.

The school welcomed visitors interested in its programs. The informal classroom structure and the language-experience approach to beginning reading brought many guests, although during the study some also came to see learning centers and literature activities. As a result, both the staff and the children were accustomed to having "extra" adults around. Under these circumstances it was relatively simple for the investigator to assume a participant-observer role with a minimum of direct explanation to the children. It was also possible to assume that the presence of an observer had less influence on everyday procedures than would have been true in a more self-contained and less-visited environment.

In ethnographic research, however, the researcher does in effect become a part of the population and like other group members does have power to change the context. In this case the researcher was known to the teachers and sooner or later to the children as a published author and as a person with considerable knowledge about children's literature,
one who was not hesitant to ask about or comment about books. It must be recognized at the outset that in some instances this was a factor in the amount and type of response generated.

**Time Frame and Organization**

Anthropologists work at least one full year and often much longer to describe a cultural setting. A full school year would have been the optimum time frame for this project. Since that was not a practical possibility in this case, the actual dates were determined by the public school and university calendars. Only one term could be allotted by the investigator for observation and data gathering, and the opening of school seemed a logical point at which to begin. Necessary arrangements were made during summer vacation, and a conference was held with the three teachers involved during the staff development days preceding the opening of school. Observation began on the children's first day of school, the Tuesday following Labor Day, 1978, and continued - with minor interruptions - until mid-December, a few days before the children's Christmas break.

Each of the three classrooms was the focus of concentrated attention for 20 consecutive school days, beginning with the fourth and fifth grade group and working downward, so as to give the kindergarteners some time to become accustomed to school procedures. During each 20-day period, thanks to the design of the building, the other two groups were also being observed, though much less intensively. The scheduling of staggered lunch periods allowed for some regularity in these off-group observations, and the teachers cooperated by alerting the researcher
when "something good" was happening. Consequently it was possible to maintain a running record of major literature-related events for each classroom from early September to mid-December.

Observations were made daily, and for the most part over the course of entire school days. On those few occasions when it was necessary for the investigator to be away from the school, students and teachers were asked later to supply missing contextual information ("Did you start work on this yesterday?" "Tell me about the book you read when I wasn't here."). Although school began officially at 8:25 A.M., the teachers in the study suggested that observation might start as soon as the first children arrived, shortly after 8 o'clock. This was done occasionally but not regularly. There were also infrequent occasions when the investigator stayed at the school after classes were dismissed at 2:35 P.M. The bulk of the data, however, was collected during regular hours, between lunch count in the morning and final clean-up in the afternoon.

Collection of Data

Observation - Record Keeping and Documentation

Descriptive notes and anecdotal records were kept in a daily log (or logs, as this amounted to some 400 pages), and constituted the basic data of this study. Items and events that were clearly related or possibly related to the use of books, stories, poems, or other material based on literature were noted in as much accuracy of detail as the investigator could manage. A certain amount of filtering and memory work were involved, since the least awkward procedure was to
leave the notebook on a library table and return to it at intervals throughout the day. Diagrams and sketches were sometimes included in this record, as well as facsimiles of children's writing or artwork. Comments about the observations were sometimes added, but bracketed to separate them from the running account of events. Sample pages from the logs appear in Appendix A.

Audiotapes were made with a cassette recorder. Although the original target for these was read-aloud sessions and whole group discussions, the effects of background noise limited their usefulness for this purpose. Some small group discussions were recorded, as well as many individual responses and interviews with the investigator. These tapes were dated and later transcribed so that they could be keyed into the logs at the appropriate points.

Photographs were used as a further means of documentation. Displays of children's work were photographed in black and white and for color slides. An attempt was made to catch children in action and to get sequential accounts of work in progress. This proved difficult, however; observation and notation seemed a more cost-efficient use of time. Although the camera was not used daily, it did provide another perspective on the data. In the later reconstruction and analysis of events it was particularly helpful to juxtapose pictures of children's work with the written account of its progress. Forms were furnished to all parents in order to secure release for the use of these pictures as well as for quotes from children's verbatim comments and written work. A copy of this form and the letter which accompanied it are provided in Appendix C.
Participation - Activities Initiated by the Investigator

Part of the original understanding between the investigator and the teachers was that the subject of the study was response to literature within the ongoing business of their classrooms and that since literature was already an important part of their program, they were not being asked to make special plans. It was also understood, however, that there would be consultations as the study progressed, and that the investigator might suggest specific activities for the teacher to introduce or titles to be read aloud. In actual practice this was an option that was scarcely exercised, since the regular program provided such variety.

One concern at the beginning of the study was that the diversity of books available to the children would generate plenty of response but might not facilitate age-level comparisons. Because of this a list of titles was drawn up, featuring books that might have some relevance or appeal for children in kindergarten through fifth grade. An attempt was to be made to furnish copies of all these books to each of the three groups so that responses to some of them could be directly compared. The list itself was not wholly successful, since it is obviously difficult to capture five year olds and eleven year olds with the same material. Eventually most of the titles were abandoned (some never found their way into the school at all) in favor of a more intensive focus on just two of the books. One of these was chosen as a result of children's self-selection; Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein, an illustrated collection of humorous verse, was already
available and generated a great deal of response in all three groups. The other book, *The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch* by David McPhail, a picture book fantasy with an element of irony, was introduced to some children at each grade level by the investigator.

The procedure used with the McPhail book was more systematic and involved more imposed structure than the other means of data collection. The story, which was apparently new to all the children, was presented to them singly or in small groups by the investigator. Usually it was read aloud, although children were given the choice of reading it for themselves. Afterwards they were invited to tape record their comments about the book, singly or in the small group, without an adult present. Some of the kindergarteners did make their recordings with the investigator, but without interruption other than comments like "What else?". Later - sometimes as much as several days later, although some kindergarteners went on to this step immediately - each child who had heard the story discussed it, on tape, with the investigator. A rough interview guide was designed for this discussion in an attempt to elicit responses that would allow children to 1) categorize the work, 2) deal with the question of fantasy versus reality, and express their perception about 3) characterization and identification with character, and 4) identification of a theme. In practice the questions changed somewhat, and children were encouraged to explain their answers and allowed to digress. In total, 23 interviews were completed: 5 kindergarteners, 7 first graders, 5 second graders, 2 third graders, 3 fourth graders, and 6 fifth graders. The numbers reflect convenience rather than a planned sub-sample of the population,
although there was a special effort to include a "star" respondent at each grade level. The interview guide and sample transcripts of free comments and an interview are reproduced in Appendix B.

Many informal, conversational interviews were also initiated by the investigator in the course of this study, ranging from casual questions about something a child was reading to lengthy discussions with groups who chose to finish indoor activities at recess time. In the interests of rapport and spontaneity, no attempt was made to record those encounters on tape. Anything that seemed to fit the study, however, was noted in the logbook.

Key Informants

An important part of the investigator's work in participant observation is identifying sources of needed information about the setting, the subjects, and particular events. In this study the teachers were the most obvious key informants. Because of the informal classroom structure, much of the teacher-child interaction that is public in a traditional classroom was here conducted on a one-to-one basis, and directions or suggestions were frequently quite different from child to child. It was therefore necessary to ask many questions such as "Whose idea was this?" and "How much help was given on this project?" Occasionally the investigator would meet with one of the teachers during the noon hour; more often the information came from on-the-spot questions and answers in the classroom. Formal meetings seemed most necessary with the fourth and fifth grade teacher, since many of the processes by which work was accomplished at that level seemed to be less public, and more internalized. In addition to providing
information that was otherwise inaccessible, conversations with teachers served as a cross-check on the observer's own perception of events. Additional or alternative comments were sometimes added to the log as a result.

Certain children were also helpful as key informants. They had access to perceptions that the teachers did not, and were able to put some events into the perspective of school history ("We saw this movie last year, in Miss X's class," and so on). Since the demands on a teacher's time are so great in classrooms where the structure allows maximum individualization, children were often more available than the teachers as a source of information.

Report of the Data

Descriptive Data

In order for any analysis of the findings of this study to be properly understood, it was necessary to assemble as much descriptive information as possible about the environment in which it occurred. This was designed to serve two purposes: first, to give readers of the report the necessary illusion of "being there;" second, to help clarify for the researcher - even though she had been on the scene - those elements of the setting which served to influence response.

The descriptive data included information about the physical setting, the community and immediate environment as well as the school building itself, its design and functional aspects. The philosophy and programs of the school were briefly described in order to give perspective to the curricular setting in which response to literature occurred. School personnel and students were considered in terms of
the human setting of the study. The most important description, however, involved the world of the classroom for each of the groups in the study - typical schedules, activities, procedures, expectations: the immediate social context in which individual children operated. This descriptive information constitutes Chapter IV of this report.

Analysis of Response Events

If all the days of observation involved in this study had been videotaped, the first level of analysis would have been an identification of all those events and comments relating in any way to literary response. Instead, this most basic process was implicit in the data collection; choices were made continually about what was worth noting and what might in retrospect become significant. Other moves toward analysis were evident in the tentative categories proposed in the margins of the logbooks, and the questions and interim generalizations that were appended to the notes. Expert advice was also a part of the analysis at this study-in-progress stage, particularly in directing attention to new aspects of the children's behavior.

The ultimate purpose of the study was to provide a basis for hypotheses about what might constitute a nurturing environment for the development of response to literature. Therefore, the basic analytical task after the fact was the identification and documentation of categories, stages, or patterns of response with particular respect to the context in which the examples occurred. As a sorting exercise, the making of categories called more for interpretation than for simple recognition skill, and the results depended unavoidably on the investigator's personal perception.
Drawing from the list of questions that guided the development of the study (see Chapter I) and from items that demanded attention as the data collection proceeded, several preliminary frames for categorizing response events were drawn. These included: 1) range of expressed responses, modes, types of content; 2) age level characteristics of responses, seen in terms of the primary, middle and upper grade ranges of the three participating groups; 3) nature of response events associated with particular contexts, suggesting implicit rules for the expression of response and contexts for generating particular types of responses; and 4) other patterns and sequences, such as response to a single selection over time.

The use of these different analytical frames required separate reorganizations of the same data. This was done roughly in the order indicated since categories developed in the first two general frames were useful in considering the others. In each of the frames, categories and subcategories were more clearly delineated as the data fell into place. Results of this analysis are presented in Chapter V of this report.

Summary

An ethnographic approach was used to explore children's response to literature in an open-space, informal-classroom elementary school. Focus rested on 90 children in three groups: kindergarten - first grade; second-third grade; and fourth-fifth grade. The period of study began with the opening of school in September and extended to mid-December with each group getting intensive attention for a four-week period.
The investigator took the role of participant observer, recording background data and response events by means of descriptive notes and anecdotal records, audiotapes, and photographs. Although the bulk of the data reflected the regular school program, response to one picture book was collected in a systematic way in order to facilitate comparison across grade levels.

A description of the school setting and participants was drawn together to furnish a perspective from which to view the analysis of response (see Chapter IV of this report). The analysis itself was accomplished by sorting, organizing, and categorizing the response events within frameworks that focused on the range of events, the age-level characteristics of response, the association of response events with particular social contexts and the inference of "rules" for responding, and the identification of other patterns and sequences (see Chapter V of this report). The final procedure of the study was to use the background data in conjunction with the analysis of response events to develop hypotheses about characteristics of a nurturing environment for response to literature, as reported in Chapter VI.
CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTIVE DATA

In order to analyze responses in the natural context, it is necessary to know the context well. A description of the school used for this study, its programs and personnel, and especially the three classrooms under direct scrutiny was drawn together to clarify the perspective from which response events were interpreted.

The School Setting

The site for this study was Parkland Elementary School, one of 17 buildings housing grades kindergarten through five in a suburban system near Columbus, Ohio. The community is predominantly white, lower-middle to middle income working class. It is evident from dialect that some residents have roots in Appalachia, and it is also evident that much of the developed area in the district has been converted from farmland within the last generation. It is not surprising, then, that the dominant values appear to be traditional ones, including respect for authority, respect for property, and the expectation of at least moderate levels of achievement.

\[1\text{This name, like all the proper names used in this description, has been changed to guard the privacy of the participants. While numbers or code letters might have been assigned, it was hoped that the use of conventional names would make the report more readable.}\]
Parkland was built in 1969 to serve an area of new homes and apartment buildings on the outskirts of the small city which is the center of the district. The school is situated at the edge of this area, away from through streets, with ample parking and more than enough grassy play space. Beyond the blacktop surface with playground equipment at the back of the school is a slope leading down to a small stream — technically off limits for unsupervised exploring, but the site of many interesting discoveries nonetheless.

The school itself is a single story brick building featuring open space design; although part of the structure has conventional rooms, one large area functions without interior walls or dividers of any sort. This large area has the library (or ERC, for Educational Resources Center) at its core, and eight class groups positioned around it.

Although there are no physical restraints to keep children from moving freely within this area, each group's space is clearly defined by the placement of bookcases, display boards, and other furniture. The ERC floor is slightly below the level of the classrooms and though bookcases line the edges of the library, there are two sets of steps leading into it from each of the four sides. The entire library and classroom area is carpeted; this, along with acoustical tile in the ceiling, helps to contain the sound of voices, chairs, and feet. Although the only natural light comes from two sets of double doors leading to the outside, fluorescent lights and yellow walls make the huge room bright.

Elsewhere in the school are several other classroom spaces, more or less self-contained. During the course of this study five class
groups were housed there, and other rooms were used for art, for music and drama, and for storage. Besides the office complex, kitchen, and multipurpose room which serves double duty as gymnasium and cafeteria, a carpeted area with a small stage is available for assemblies or for use by any of the classes.

While it is important to know the physical characteristics of the setting at Parkland, it is probably more necessary to understand something of its philosophy and program. Parkland is the only school in the district to identify itself as having open or informal classrooms, a designation used to refer to a wide range of actual practice. Some of the classes at Parkland showed fewer of the characteristics of informal structure than others, but the outlook of the staff seemed generally cohesive, at least on the larger issues. This seems to have evolved during the years just preceding the study, coming from the staff with the support of the principal; by all accounts, at least, Parkland was not originally conceived as an informal school.

Children's individual progress and a reasonable pace for each child seemed to be prime concerns. Throughout the school a great deal of work was based on personal interest and personal choice, and carried out in self-selected groups. At all levels children were given considerable responsibility for planning and implementing (and cleaning up after) their own work. Many of these choices, however, were made in relation to a broad topic of concern to an entire class - a topic sometimes determined by the teacher. It seems fair to say that the curriculum at Parkland represented a joint enterprise of teachers and
children, at least to a greater extent than found in most conventionally structured classrooms.

Still Parkland could not be said to function completely as an autonomous unit; certain systemwide constraints had their effects—notably, on the reading program. The Parkland staff showed a firm commitment to language-experience and integrated language arts; that is, they resisted the separation of "reading" as a skill-oriented subject from the wider exercise of literacy. Many dictated or child-written stories or books served as reading material, but "real books"—children's literature of all types and levels of difficulty—were readily available, and seen as the basic material as well as the basic motivation for reading. Parkland students were not excused, however, from the district's commitment to Scott Foresman Reading Systems, and were required to take tests showing their progress through the levels of this series. In effect, then, Parkland children had double reading programs, both largely individualized.

The staff's high value on language and literature can be demonstrated through examples. For one, each teacher was expected to maintain a file of individual children's writing that follows the student from year to year. At the time of this study, the files were being kept for the third year, and served to show the progress of each child. Taken all together, they also enabled teachers to consider developmental patterns in writing.

Most of the teachers at Parkland seemed concerned about the availability of books, and were not content with the selection in the library. Many of them made regular trips to public libraries in order
to keep fresh stock on the shelves in their own areas; some had private collections which they also shared. At the beginning of the school year two of the teachers (not ones who were directly involved in the study) were busy ordering paperback books as the result of a grant approved the previous year.

An unusual source of children's books during the time of the study resulted from the school's participation in the "Classroom Choices" survey sponsored by the Children's Book Council and the International Reading Association. In this program, several hundred recently published books are distributed free of charge (but temporarily) to schools across the country, and children vote for their favorites so that a selective list can be compiled. The teacher at Parkland representing the Classroom Choices committee was also a part of the present study, and the books examined for this purpose generated a significant amount of response data.

The schoolwide interest in books was also in evidence at a parent-teacher meeting where the theme was literature, with the writing, art, and other work resulting from children's reading on display. Demonstrations were also featured at this program, which was planned in conjunction with a paperback book fair. Even the school Christmas program had stories as a theme, with pairs of classrooms working to develop musical skits based on favorite books or characters.

The Human Setting

The Staff

During the period of this study, Parkland Elementary School had 12 classroom teachers, one of whom joined the staff to take a newly
formed primary group in mid-fall. In addition there were two special area teachers. Miss Ames, assigned half time to the school, met each group weekly for art. Mrs. Rose, the full time unified arts teacher, scheduled sessions in music and movement although her work often included drama and preparation for assemblies and programs as well. The library-ERC was in the hands of Mrs. Headley, a full time aide, assisted by parent volunteers and sometimes by older students. Her duties included kindergarten and first-grade story hours, and library skill sessions for third and fourth graders. The principal, Mr. Beach, was a frequent visitor in the classroom areas, not for the sake of a display of authority, but as an evidence of interest in children's work. This could be taken as a measure of the tone of adult-child relationships at Parkland, which usually seemed to this investigator both humanistic and child centered, but also busy and businesslike. Certainly the level of vocal exchange was softer and more conversational than that in many school environments.

From the perspective of this research, the most influential adults at the school were the three teachers whose classes were the subject of study: Mrs. Christopher, the K-first grade teacher; Mrs. Patrick, with grades two and three; and Miss Lynde, with fourth and fifth. Despite distinct individual styles, the three shared a common background. All were young women, two of whom had begun their careers at Parkland; none had taught more than three years. All had been trained at Ohio State University, in a special pre-service program called EPIC (Educational Programs for Informal Classrooms), which provided certain shared understandings about children's learning. For instance,
this program would have emphasized the importance of utilizing children's own cognitive processes and capabilities (like invented spellings) rather than imposing adult structures before children are ready to use them. During this research each of the teachers was working with a university student from the current EPIC program who was assigned part time to the class.

The three teachers also shared a strong background in children's literature, including wide acquaintance with titles and considerable experience in getting children to "extend" books through various activities; many of their ideas and strategies resulted from common study with Charlotte Huck. Two were in the process of doing after-hours Masters level work at the University; one was beginning and two had finished a special sequence of graduate courses in language arts, reading, and children's literature. All devoted large amounts of personal time to teaching, arriving at the school early and frequently staying until five o'clock or later. Although they may not have stated explicitly that one of their goals was to provide a nurturing environment for literature, that was obviously the case. They worked very hard to create a climate in which children could make the most of their contact with books. This goal was facilitated by the fact that each teacher was working with some children - those at the upper of their two grade levels - for the second consecutive year.

The Children

During the period of this study, Parkland Elementary School averaged an enrollment of nearly 400 pupils. These represented a fairly homogeneous community population, both in race and socio-economic
level - white, lower-middle or middle class. The only non-white children in the school were 17 black kindergarteners who were bussed in from another part of the district for the morning program; five of these were in Mrs. Christopher's room.

This research asked for no information about individual children other than their name, grade level, and birth date. Children did volunteer additional information in the course of several weeks' contact; inferences from observations account for most of the investigator's other perceptions about the children.

From the standpoint of the study, several things are worth noting. First, as a total population, all casual signs indicated that the children represented a near average range. A few children seemed clearly gifted in one way or another; some had difficulties. There seemed to be a wide middle range of abilities, however. Perhaps most important, the majority of children seemed to operate from a reservoir of good will, with positive attitudes toward teachers and other adults and toward school in general. Aggressive behavior of any serious sort was a remarkable departure from the norm, particularly within the classroom area during class time. Typical management problems were concerned with making noise or wasting time or poor judgment in using materials (just plain making a mess) rather than with hitting or cursing or blatant refusal to cooperate. On the other hand, Parkland children seemed normally active, boisterous on occasion, and willing to argue; they did not seem by any means timid or unnaturally subdued. No attempt will be made here to account for the children's attitudes or the general atmosphere of the school. It was of course a welcome bonus for this
research, making the observation setting a pleasant one and facilitating both the expression of response to literature and the level of attention necessary for making proper notes about it.

The World of the Classroom

The response events which were eventually identified and analyzed reflect the ongoing programs and daily procedures of the classrooms from which they were collected. The following narratives describe a single day in each classroom as an example of its particular character. The description of routine matters is a composite, but otherwise each account portrays a specific day; quoted comments are reported verbatim insofar as the notes allowed. Each description goes on to outline some of the interests and themes which claimed children's attention throughout the period of the study.

K-1, Mrs. Christopher

Many of the kindergarteners and first graders who arrive early on this Friday in November settle themselves on the carpet with a book chosen from the collection in the room's bookcase or from one of the display racks that Mrs. Christopher keeps supplied with theme-related titles: at first Mother Goose and nursery rhymes, then spooky stories for Halloween, now folk tales. This is also a time for conversation, and for visiting the new hamster in its glass cage (the previous occupant disappeared under mysterious circumstances).

There are shelves and work tables, chairs and a few desks here, but no child has an assigned place. The official center for most of the morning's activity is an area bounded by the bookcase, the wall, and a display board - a reading and group discussion area away from
the flow of foot traffic; it is relatively private and comparatively quiet. The entire group always gathers here for morning housekeeping, lunch count and attendance and announcements, and to pick up the threads of yesterday's work or to establish a new focus.

On this day, Mrs. Christopher has brought new books to add, temporarily, to the class supply of folk tales, their current focus of study. She joins the group on the floor with her stack of books and introduces each volume, giving the title and the name of the author and illustrator, as well as some comment about each. Enthusiastic in manner, she obviously admires the books and expects that the children will like them too. She tells them that Paul Galdone's pictures in *Little Tuppen* will remind them of *The Little Red Hen*, which they have seen earlier. When she says the title *Tikki Tikki Tembo*, Mark, a first grader, adds a whispered "no sa rembo," part of the refrain from the story. Several of the titles are greeted with spontaneous comments, as if they are old friends; Danny Joe remembers Leslie Brooke's *The Three Little Pigs*. The teacher continues by showing LeCain's *Thorn Rose*, which she describes as a fairy tale, and a hard one, but she thought they would want to see it because some of them had bought the same illustrator's version of *Cinderella* at the book fair.

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2Complete bibliographic data for children's books mentioned can be found in Appendix D, arranged alphabetically by title for more convenient reference.
Not all the new books are really folk tales, Mrs. Christopher explains. Among the others are two versions of *Androcles and the Lion*. "Where have you heard this before?" says Mrs. Christopher, and several voices reply. "That play! That play!", recalling a Tuesday afternoon production of a dramatization of the story presented at an assembly by an adult theater group.

Ben says, "You know how long ago that book was made?"

"How long ago was it?" asks Mrs. Christopher.

"Before any of us was born," says Ben. "Way back when Adam and Eve were there."

"Hmm," says the teacher, and goes on to *Pezzetino*.

"Oh, that's my favorite book!" Ben exclaims; he reaches out for it, hugs it to his chest, and kisses the cover. Around the group, nods and smiles show that others also recognize this title.

After all the new books have been introduced, the children are asked to choose one for a period of sustained silent reading (SSR), a frequent procedure during which they are expected to focus and keep their attention on a story - reading if they can, following the sense of the narrative from illustrations if they are not yet readers. During this time children also might read aloud or retell a story to a friend, or listen to a story. Today most of the first graders reach for particular books; the kindergarteners tend to choose the nearest one.

While the children take their choices and go to claim a comfortable reading spot (Gretchen likes to be under the teacher's desk), Mrs. Christopher picks five children to stay with her in the reading center.
and listen to Little Tuppen. They gather around her on the floor, squirming into place so that everyone can see the pictures; Serena eventually climbs into her lap. During the reading Mrs. Christopher stops frequently to talk about word meanings - "spring" is a season rather than a water source for most of the group, and "iron" is a household tool rather than a type of metal. Halfway through the story, the teacher stops and goes back to the beginning, having the children recapitulate the action from picture cues.

As she reads on to the end, a bit of the text refers to an oak tree which "gave a cup." Jack, a kindergartener, stares at the accompanying picture of an acorn.

"That ain't no cup," he says.

Carl, however, knows about acorn cups and reports he has used one for getting a drink. At that, Mrs. Christopher goes to the tabletop science center where natural items representing autumn are on display; she finds an acorn and leads the group to the drinking fountain by the door so that everyone can practice using an acorn for a cup.

Afterwards, she asks them what pictures they could make to show how the story happens; could they draw all the items that the hen had to get before she could get a drink for Little Tuppen? "Gary, how would you do that?" asks Mrs. Christopher.

Gary says, "I'd take my red crayon and draw some water, very smoothly ...."

Meanwhile, other children who have finished their silent reading time have set to work at a variety of things around the room, some alone, some in two's or three's. One of the kindergarteners is using
the headphones to listen to a record. A few children are finishing work on math papers or working with counting materials; various kinds of matching and number games and counting devices, balances, and such are stored on open shelves. Two boys are building with blocks in the area used for dramatic play; a wardrobe cupboard with an assortment of dress-up clothes stands here.

Most of the work, however, involves writing and/or art. Two low, wide tables set in an L-shape provide a surface for painting and other projects. Supplies are located on nearby shelves and in large containers on the floor, including an ample amount of what is called "nerf" - castoff paper or plastic materials used in collage and construction. Much of the children's writing begins with a picture; writing paper is within easy reach, right beside a stack of personal dictionaries with wallpaper covers, where some of the children are beginning to keep track of the conventional spellings of words they want to use. The usual procedure is for children to listen to the sounds of needed words and spell them on their own.

This morning Karla and Gretchen are working on a watery picture to accompany their story about someone who drowns.

"It's from a book," Karla says.

"What book?" turns out to be a hard question.

"Oh, you know," says Gretchen finally. "That one, that cat - Puss in Boots."

Later Karla brings out some completed writing; it is standard procedure to share finished work with any available audience. Karla's story tells of a boy who fell in the water with fishes and sharks and
whales and "got ate up," whereupon he splattered paint all over their insides. Earlier in the week Mrs. Christopher had brought in the book Burt Dow, Deep Water Man, in which the hero escapes from the belly of a whale through just such a strategy. But Karla rejects the suggestion that there is another story like hers: "No, huh-uh. I just thought that up."

Because it is wet and cold, morning recess time comes and goes without much notice; activities continue. Mrs. Christopher moves throughout the area making suggestions, asking questions, listening to children read their writing, calling attention to words or sound patterns. When she sits down to see one child's work, others come to her. "Look what I did, Mrs. Christopher;" "You want to read my story?"; "See how far I am?" and so on until it is time for clean-up.

The area lights are switched off as a signal for work to stop. "Pick up four big things," Mrs. Christopher says, or "Pick up seventeen tiny things." Tables are cleared, the floor is cleaned, all work is put away. There are specially designated places for finished products, things to be completed, and things to take home, and so on. Most mornings there is time for the group to sit down in the center of the room and have a sharing session, or simply talk over their morning. Older children on patrol duty come to claim the kindergarten students who are going home, to see that they get on the right bus or across the street beyond the schoolyard. Today one kindergartener is spending the full day at school, an option arranged between Mrs. Christopher and the parents.
Noon recess, too, is spent inside on this day. After lunch children come back to the room to talk or work or look at books, or to play quiet games. There are rules against activities that may generate a lot of noise or confusion, since many of the classes in the large area are still finishing their morning's work. The teacher scheduled for playground duty will oversee those classes that are having recess.

Today Mel begins to work with clay, rolling and shaping it on a lapboard, but he trades this for pencil and paper and crayons when Warren joins him with these materials. Both boys are first graders, and they talk as they draw. Warren begins to make a picture of a Christmas tree. Mel says there's no Christmas tree in the room.

"I'm makin' the Nutcracker," says Warren. "It's a folk tale. A folk tale and a Christmas story too."

The conversation switches to TV programs seen the night before, whether it would be good to "be a sport" (a professional ball player) when they grow up, and whether there is recess in high school. Then the talk turns back to their pictures.

"Is that a tree?" asks Mel.

"That'a a forest," Warren tells him. "... here comes a giant."

Mel begins to hum "The Star Spangled Banner," commenting that it's "a song they sing before the baseball game starts." Warren continues work on his giant, first giving it the name of Mel's dog, then renaming it "Puff the Magic Dragon," which starts him on a bit of that song.

When it is time for the afternoon session to begin, attendance is taken again because a new group of kindergarteners has arrived.
One of them, Jared - already an accomplished reader - returns a wordless book titled The Dolphin and the Mermaid, and in the sharing circle by the bookcase he shows the pictures and tells a story to go with them. Mrs. Christopher invites him to ask the group questions, and he begins by saying, "Any questions or comments?" This is a stock response heard throughout the school from students at all grade levels and sometimes from teachers. It is used to signal the end of a presentation and the beginning of discussion and in effect passes the burden of talk to the audience. Mrs. Christopher tells Jared that she meant he should be the one to think up the questions.

The afternoon almost always begins here on the carpet with Mrs. Christopher reading a story; today it is Galdone's version of The Three Bears. A few children say that they have never heard this story at all, although some of them seem to recognize it once the reading has begun. Twice the children chime in on familiar lines; at the point in the text when the bears are about to come home from their walk, a voice comes whispering out of the midst of the group: "I like this part."

After the reading, Mrs. Christopher has questions. "What's porridge?" is the first one, and she eventually answers it herself. Then, "What happened to Goldilocks afterward? Was it a happy ending or a sad ending?" Several children say it was happy, because the bears didn't have to bother with her again. But Warren says it was sad, because Goldilocks went home crying.

"Close your eyes and think," says Mrs. Christopher. "What if you went for a walk after breakfast and someone came in and ate your cereal?"
"Huh-uh," says Sammy. "My Mom's always home."

Mrs. Christopher sighs. "You won't play my game. What about you, Mary?"

Mary doesn't smile. "You should lock your door," she says, "because there might be robbers." There is general head nodding and group approval.

"You just won't play my game," says the teacher, shaking her head and proceeding to the next order of business.

The first graders are to choose a book they know well and spend ten minutes sharing it with a kindergartener. Karla looks for Where the Sidewalk Ends; Ben finds Pezzetino, the book he kissed earlier in the day; Danny Joe takes Androcles and the Lion. Other children claim their books and their reading partners and scatter throughout the classroom area much as they did for the morning SSR period. Some continue reading beyond the ten minutes suggested, and by this time a few kindergarten partners have drifted off into other things, mostly art work and writing activities like the ones that occupied the children's attention during morning work time.

Mrs. Christopher asks some of the first graders to come back into the book center and talk about the books they have just shared with the younger children. "Tell us something about your book," she says to Danny Joe, to start things off. Danny Joe says Androcles is good because it's a folk tale. Tim has been looking at one of the new books that will be considered for Classroom Choices, The Worst Person in the World. It's good, he says, "because he didn't just use crayons, he
used paint 'n stuff" - echoing a directive frequently heard from Mrs. Christopher when the children talk about their plans for art work.

Then Ben gets his chance to talk about Pezzetino. "I like it because of all the colors 'n stuff, and the way it repeats. He keeps saying it ... And there's marbleizing - see here? And the very last page ...." Here he turns to the last two pages and holds up the book for everyone to see. "And he cut paper - see? How many think he's a good cutter?" Ben conducts a vote and counts the raised hands, showing that a majority of the group consider Leo Lionni a "good cutter."

Mrs. Christopher comments to the group that many people seem to be interested in the story of The Three Bears. Someone might want to make stuffed animals now, she suggests. Ben says they could make a diorama, "to show their house and them goin' out 'n everything." There is more talk about possible activities, although when the group breaks up and goes to work, these are not necessarily the things that begin. Most of the children continue projects started earlier in the week.

Recess time comes at 2 P.M., and although children still cannot go outside, most of them switch to games and clay and block play. The dress-up cupboard provides costumes for a kindergartener who is being "the princess," frightened by a monster with makeshift paper fangs. Afterwards there is an intensified clean-up, typical of Fridays; chairs are placed on table tops, equipment is sorted, books are straightened. Just before time to go home, some of the children share their finished work with the others, reading aloud what they have written, explaining how their pictures were made, asking, "Any questions
or comments?" Occasionally Mrs. Christopher will send a child to share his or her work with another class, and likewise other classes send special efforts to be displayed and discussed here. Since the last few minutes of the day constitute a general sharing time throughout the school, no formal scheduling is needed for this.

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On other days, the room routine might have been broken in various ways. Kindergarteners and first graders were scheduled for special library periods each week, as well as art and music. Assemblies and school-wide functions such as the taking of school pictures, the Halloween costume parade, the book fair, and practice for the Christmas program not only took time, but created their own contexts and auras of interest. Other special happenings should be noted as well. In October a graduate class from Ohio State University visited Mrs. Christopher's room after school hours. Several of the children were invited to stay and help explain how books were used in the class and to share some of their favorites. Later a field trip to a farmer's pumpkin patch provided a strong point of interest for everyone. A few children attended a dance performance at a lavishly decorated Columbus theater; this too was reflected in various work produced at school. A part time student teacher frequently worked with small groups of children, at one time dealing with "shoes" as a focal point for a display, stories, and surveys of foot size. When the class focus on folk tales suggested preparation of a "stone soup" lunch, several children spent a noon hour at the supermarket with Mrs. Christopher, buying supplies. The cooking (and feasting) that followed brought parents into the room
and provided a reason for all the kindergarteners to spend an entire
day at school. And of course the holidays, Halloween and Christmas in
particular, claimed much of the children's personal attention.

All these elements - the routine procedures and the topical
themes and the special events - created a general context of expecta-
tions, purposes and meanings within which the children carried on their
day to day business. In terms of literature there was an emphasis in
this classroom on knowing books as friends; a shared valuing of having
favorite books; recognizing similarities and making associations; and
on representing stories through writing, art, or other activities.
It was "right" to be excited about literature in this classroom, and
to share that excitement; books furnished social as well as personal
experiences.

2-3, Mrs. Patrick

It is a Wednesday near the middle of October, a day that begins
as always with Mrs. Patrick's second and third graders gathered on the
floor in their specially designated reading area for morning circle.
The classroom bookcase forms one boundary, and the children usually
sit facing away from the ERC; the backs of the tall library bookcases
behind them form a prop for pegboard, a place for hanging handwritten
books, or a large piece of felt for felt stories. Large roller maps
are also attached here, and open metal shelves hold supplies like
blank wallpaper-covered booklets for their own book writing, and felt
scraps. Elsewhere in the classroom are areas designated for science,
for math equipment, and for art work and supplies. Tables and chairs
and desktop displays are arranged throughout the rest of the classroom.
No child has a private desk, but each one does have a "cubby," a place to store books and papers in a specially divided open cupboard.

The children are quiet during the morning formalities; two third graders help to collect and count lunch money. On the desk by the bookcase is a sharing box, its contents subject to prior approval by the teacher. Mickey reaches into it now to get the book Out Loud; he wants to read a poem he has discovered to the group. Even though his voice can't be heard at the back fringe of the circle, the children clap when he is finished.

None of the other children claim the floor, and Mrs. Patrick goes on with her plans for the morning. She has scheduled an extended period with Mrs. Rose, the unified arts teacher, and the two of them have worked out a way to involve the group in a drama experience. Mrs. Patrick shows the class a letter, typewritten and very official looking, which she says has been sent to them from a realty company. She reads the body of the letter, which requests the class's help in investigating mysterious happenings in a house which is apparently haunted. Immediate interest and excitement register on most of the children's faces; "oohs" and "aahs" and other exclamations come from the group. In the lull which follows, the group breaks spontaneously into knots of children, two's and three's and four's, mentioning personal experiences and talking about what comes next. Doreen says, "My dad took me through a haunted house once, and he had to carry me." Two second grade girls wonder if they will need their coats when they go to the house.
As it turns out, the haunted house is to be located in the carpeted area beyond the multipurpose room, where Mrs. Rose is waiting for the class. The lights are dim, but the only prop is a chalkboard. Mrs. Rose asks them to think about the haunted house and describe it, and help her draw a plan of it. This procedure takes some time. Within the large rectangle she has drawn to represent the first floor, individual children draw boundaries for the rooms they describe. Their rooms are small, and consequently many; finally Amanda suggests they could fill up the middle with a big garage. A basement is suggested; the child who draws it in puts it at the bottom of the chalkboard. The child who wants an attic cannot reach the top of the board where he points out that it should go. Finally Mrs. Rose helps the class divide into groups of three, each assigned a particular room or area of the house to investigate. They are to find a space in the carpeted area to represent their room, explore it, describe it, sketch it.

In the midst of this investigation, the bell rings for a fire drill, and it is close to half an hour before the activity can resume. Some children rely more on movement than language: Fat and lerry and Wade climb stairs, squeeze through passageways, and drop through a trap door. Greg and Doug catch a cobra and dispose of it. Throughout the area there is talk of ghosts and witches and monsters, especially Dracula. When the group returns to their regular classroom, most of the morning is gone. Although they have not spent the usual time on individual spelling, writing, or math activities, Mrs. Patrick makes clear that they will be expected to do some writing about their
haunted house experience; somehow they must solve the problem, explain the mystery, and help the realty company. Each committee of three is given a folder for keeping their work together.

In the time that remains before noon clean-up, the children busy themselves with carrying out plans just made, or in some cases finishing work begun earlier in the week. Some of the children read. Unlike most of the other classes in the building, Mrs. Patrick does not have a particular time set aside for sustained silent reading. Instead, she expects each child to spend some part of every day "with a book," and to keep a record in an individual reading log, which she checks periodically. Doug sits down with a paperback called Cobweb Castle; later Brenda picks up the same book.

Mrs. H. (the investigator) takes this time to look at an assortment of "frightening" books that Mrs. Patrick has arranged on the chalk rack of a board near the center of the classroom. Mickey walks by and pauses. "None of them books are scary," he says. "Nothin' scares me."

Doug offers to read one of these books aloud, choosing The Terrible Troll. He has never read it before, he says, and stops to comment about the pictures as he reads, with a lot of pointing at details. There is a pause while he carries off the book to show one of the illustrations to Mrs. Patrick. Lunchtime comes when Doug has reached the second to last page. Mickey calls for him to come on, but Doug wants to finish: "Me 'n her are readin' this book," he says shortly. At the end he grins, closes the cover, says "That was funny," and hurries to catch up with the others.
Rain has begun to fall since the morning fire drill, and recess is indoors. The children come back to the classroom in two's and three's as they finish lunch, and take up approved recess activities with books and games. Third grader Jeannie A. (there are three Jeannie's in the class) chooses a book from the "scary" rack and reads it aloud to two second grade girls; all three have made themselves comfortable in a corner. Brenda, also a third grader, has found a wordless picture book, Lost in the Forest, on the same rack and is showing it to Doreen. Lori is sitting by herself reading one of the child-made books that has been clipped to the pegboard. As usual, she is "presenting" it - whispering the words and holding up the pictures for the enjoyment of an imaginary audience.

The afternoon session begins like the morning, with the group gathered by the bookcase. Today Mrs. Patrick finishes reading a story begun two days ago, McBroom's Ghost. Although yesterday there was discussion about what was funny and what they thought would happen next, there are not many comments about the ending.

A work period follows, in which children pursue a variety of activities, mostly by themselves or in pairs. Some are working on routine requirements, like working with spelling lists or math sheets or going through exercises in the reading series workbooks. Others involve artwork or composing as a follow-up from the morning. Teresa shows Mrs. H. a book she helped to make at the beginning of the year - a haunted house book; she explains that she and a friend listened to a haunted house record first, and then made each page represent a
different part of the record. Amanda wants to show Mrs. H. a book she has discovered on the science table, *Reptiles and Amphibians*. She turns to a picture of a lizard.

"Do you know where the eggs come out?" She answers her own question by pointing, then flips to an illustration showing a snake. "Do you know where the babies come from? They come from up here and slither all the way down and come out the tail." Amanda says she used to have a book like this at home and her daddy read these two pages to her. She carries this copy back to the chair where she has left her spelling paper.

Jenny is seated at a desk beside the book rack, looking at *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, one finger marking the poem entitled "Sick." When asked if this book has any spooky poems in it, Jenny says, "The teacher read us one - wait - I'll find it." She looks for, and finds, "The Deserted House" and reads it aloud, stumbling but persistent. By the time she finishes that one and begins to read "Sick," Lori is looking over her shoulder. When Lori begins to join in, Jenny tries to shush her. But Amanda has come up on the other side, laughing at the poem and also joining in on occasional phrases.

Jenny wants to read "Melinda Mae" next, and Amanda says it "took this girl a whole month to eat a whale." She turns the page to show the illustration of the mostly-eaten whale. Then Jenny reads, and repeats the ending for effect: "Eighty-nine years!" Amanda does not comment about the difference between a whole month and eighty-nine years.
Next Jenny reads "Warning" ("Oh, this is a good one. Have you heard this one?") and "Drats," which is evidently new to her, and finally "Lazy Jane." Mrs. H. asks why this poem is different from most other poems. Jenny thinks a long time.

"It has a lot of words the same," she says, "and there aren't many words on this page."

Mrs. H. presses the point: "Where do you usually start reading on a page?"

"Oh!" says Jenny, pointing to the left side. "Here, it's -- " She moves her finger top to bottom, showing that in this poem the print is arranged in a vertical column.

As the work period has progressed, other children around the room have turned to books. Keith, a third grader, has claimed McBroom's Ghost and is reading it for himself. Doug is stretched out on the floor with Glory, Glory How Peculiar, a book of song parodies, singing to himself; "D-A-V-E-N-P-O-R-T spells Davenport." Jeannie A. and Sandy are trying to get a look at it too, but Doug is keeping the book to himself. Teresa and Amy and Shari have gone to the listening center at the edge of the classroom area, where there is a record player with headphones and two filmstrip viewers. Today they are looking at one of the stories in the Clifford the Big Red Dog filmstrip series. Teresa, at least, seems acquainted with Clifford; there is a lot of pointing, and giggling as the pictures tell the story.

Afternoon clean-up time comes early because the class is scheduled to see a film - along with three other classes - that is to be shown in the carpeted area by the multipurpose room. When the children are
lined up to go there, Mrs. Patrick tells them that the title of the film is *Little Blue and Little Yellow*, and asks if anyone recognizes it. Various children are able to supply the information that *Little Blue and Little Yellow* is a book, that it was written by Leo Lionni, and that it has something to do with collage. Mrs. Patrick confirms all this and reminds them that they have been working with collage in art class.

In the carpeted area, Teresa sits on the floor beside Mrs. H. and makes whispered comments. "Little Yellow looks too pink," she says, referring to the quality of the film print. When *Little Blue and Little Yellow* blend and become green, she says they are "stuck." Teresa has seen the film before, and remembers correctly that the more the color-characters cry, the smaller they will become. There is general applause at the end, but no time for discussion. As soon as the children return to their own areas, it is time to get jackets and lunchboxes and say good-bye for the day, bypassing the usual sharing circle.

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In Mrs. Patrick's class, the haunted house drama worked as part of a scary-things theme that took advantage of natural interests in the month of October. Some of the children eventually extended this as a monster theme, constructing a three-dimensional, green-painted, robot-type character from cardboard boxes, tubing, and other cast-offs. Halloween also was the reason for focus on a huge pumpkin supplied by one of the children and used as a basis for estimating, measuring, describing, and so on. Another theme of general interest was rocks, an early emphasis drawing particularly on two stories, *Sylvester* and
the Magic Pebble, and Everybody Needs a Rock. Later in the fall, environmental study of a creek served as a focus for the children's work. An all-day field trip to a nearby metropolitan park, in conjunction with a group of fourth and fifth graders, launched numerous projects. Still later the two classes visited a conservatory for additional information about plants. Mrs. Patrick's part time student teacher also provided activities for small groups of children, like cooking caramel for apples and helping them make a display based on fall sports. She frequently read to them as well.

The special events which touched the whole school influenced the program in Mrs. Patrick's room, as was the case with the K-1 class. Preparation for the Christmas program was perhaps the most time-consuming. Several days were also disrupted by the administration of standardized tests. Despite the efforts of the staff to minimize the stress of this activity, the testing seemed to be generally accepted as an important event.

The overall tone of this classroom showed a certain reserve, positive but largely dispassionate. Expectations based on particular topics were consistent in their emphasis on taking responsibility, finishing work, getting organized. In terms of literature, the class seemed to have common concerns. Direct experience with books seemed to be valued over the representing of stories, although such activities as collage pictures, felt stories, making dioramas and such did go on. An overriding concern was demonstrating skill in making sense of a piece of writing, if not by actually reading it, then by explaining it from memory or from the illustrations. Other children and adults
were viewed partly as an audience for this and for the sharing of child-written books. Within this group it was hard to separate children's enjoyment of stories from their efforts to become fully independent readers.

4-5, Miss Lynde

The meeting center in Miss Lynde's area has bookcases on either side, two boards for display, and a large wall area most often used for putting up charts or pictures. The only chair is an overstuffed platform rocker, well worn and seldom empty. Usually it holds two children at once as the fourth and fifth graders in this class begin their day here. A different pair is assigned each week to take care of lunch count and attendance. This is followed by a class meeting - general discussion, introduction of new topics or assignments, or a sharing session. On this late September Thursday the sharing box is full. According to established routine, one student is put in charge of passing out the work in the box; each piece is read aloud and/or explained by its creator, or by someone of the creator's choice. Other children are expected to have questions or comments, and Miss Lynde's role is usually that of a member of the group.

The first thing shared is J.P.'s illustration from Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like, the one he has been working on since the first week of school. It draws many approving comments. "You made it just like half the cover," says Diane. Others mention the color and color shading, and J.P.'s use of fine detail.

Vivian and Ellen have both made pictures and done some writing based on The Seeing Stick, a book Miss Lynde read to the group on the
second day of school. Vivian's voice is so low that she has to be asked to read her work over again. "What kind of writing has Vivian done?" asks Miss Lynde. Ellen's picture causes more comment than her words; her classmates like the multi-colored background she has used. Diane and Lisa have suggestions about improving the pictures.

Rachel shares a book that she has written and illustrated. She reads the following text aloud:

My First Day of School

My first day of school was absolutely terrible. In the morning it was not so good. I was at patrol and I had my lunch setting down in the wet grass. And my lunch bag got all wet. And then I stepped on my lunch. Then on the way to the school from after patrol. My plum flew out of my bag and on to the ground. Then at lunch time I went to get my lunch bag. And my dime was gone. But then my friend Julie told Miss Lynde and Miss Lynde said someone had found my milk money and so I went and ate lunch. The end.

Miss Lynde asks, "What book did Rachel's story make you think of?"

Nearly half the class raise their hands, agreeing that they were reminded of Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day. Someone asks Rachel if all those things really happened to her on the first day of school.

The last sharing item is a pair of pictures made by Tanya; she has used torn tissue paper to represent a rocket in space and the earth awaiting the rocket's return. It is a medium that many children have experimented with in the past weeks, and the art work is more complex than the writing that goes with it. By this time the group's
level of attention has shifted; the comments are generally accepting without offering thoughtful suggestions.

The class meeting is dismissed, and children go about their planned work. As in the other groups in this study, the fourth and fifth graders are free to choose their own work space and usually their own companions. A few movable desks and chairs can be arranged and rearranged for various purposes; two vinyl-covered tables near the supply shelves serve as a surface for painting, papier mache, and other such projects. A round table near the center of the area usually fills quickly with people sharing a math assignment, or working on exercises from the same reading series book, or giving each other spelling quizzes. Some children will go to the back tables near the science area to work (a turtle is in residence here, in a wooden box on the floor) or to the two study carrels that block out distracting sights. Frequent trips are made into the ERC for reference books, and often children will note the needed information while sitting at one of the big tables there, or at one of the library carrels.

The morning is broken by a fifteen-minute recess period. Today is bright and warm, and everyone goes outside. Usually, however, regardless of weather, a few children choose to stay indoors to finish paintings or other projects, sometimes to play chess.

The time just after recess is ordinarily set aside for sharing a book: today Miss Lynde reads aloud the picturebook version of *Cinderella* illustrated by Errol LeCain, one of several folk and fairy tales she has planned to read because they demonstrate the transformation motif. She introduces the book, pointing out author and illustrator,
and reminding the fifth graders that they will remember this from last year but that she wanted to share it again because it has "such neat illustrations." Although the class has gathered in the meeting center around the rocking chair, an activity period in the adjoining primary class makes listening difficult. Miss Lynde's group changes locations, clearing a spot near the center of the room and resettling themselves on the floor. Darrin isolates himself under a table, but the other fourth graders jockey for positions closest to the book, craning their necks for a good look at the pictures.

After the applause that follows the story, Miss Lynde asks the group to recall some of the other books that they have heard recently and the changes in them that they have talked about. The children mention Beauty and the Beast, The Crane Maiden, Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like, and Tico and the Golden Wings. Miss Lynde says that she wants them to be thinking about the stories where there are "very great changes," like from a crane into a person, or from a man into a dragon. Ellen volunteers that Cinderella was like Beauty and the Beast. "How?" asks the teacher, and Ellen explains, with Lisa's help, that Cinderella has two sisters that are jealous of her "and then she gets rich." Christy puts in that it was "like in Beauty and the Beast when the sisters are changed into stone-marble statues." This reminds one of the boys of the book The Clay Pot Boy, who "changed from clay into a real boy." Someone adds that Cinderella was "a slave, like, for her sisters, and then she turned into a princess."

After other discussion about changes, Miss Lynde tells the group that another word for changing is transforming, and asks them if they
can tell some of the ways that the illustrator showed transformations in Cinderella. Rachel points out the picture of Cinderella with the clocks (which have been stars); Ellen says that all the pictures show changes. Other children mention the rat changing into the coachman and the mice into horses. Miss Lynde says if they look closely at the border illustrations they will see other transformations, and they talk for awhile about these. Finally she asks for any further comments about Cinderella. "I've read it ten times," says Julie.

The rest of the morning until noon clean-up is devoted to individual or group project work. Miss Lynde circulates, as usual, beginning with Ellen; the two of them sit down together with Cinderella, looking closely at the pictures, pointing and talking with obvious admiration. Diane is finishing a picture begun several days ago, her own re-creation of one of the illustrations from When the Sky Is Like Lace. She is applying glitter in a very painstaking, careful way, to the stars in her watercolor sky, and to their reflection in the water. She says that her father brought her the glitter earlier this morning. Connie is also at the art table, working on a book titled "If I Were," modeled after If I Were a Cricket. At the moment she is making a butterfly's wings with collage. Jerry and Paul have been looking at an informational book about science toys, and are searching through the "nerf" supply for materials to construct one of them. Mac has just finished copying the description he has written to go with a picture from Tico and the Golden Wings; the art work shows a gold-winged bird with a watch in its beak, and has been neatly mounted on construction paper.
Lisa and Candy and Toni are involved in a project on trees. In the ERC they have found an informational filmstrip and are using one of the viewers there to go through it. They also locate four books about trees, although they put them back on the shelf without looking beyond the covers. Later Miss Lynde comes into the library to talk to them, and they go back to one of the books, The Blossom on the Bough, and check it out.

Several fifth graders have special duties at noon time, and sometimes leave before the routine clean-up period. Some go on patrol duty, some may be lunchroom helpers for the week, and occasionally one may be on office duty. Otherwise everyone helps put the area to rights before lunch, and one or two children are given the job of overseeing the work and dismissing the others as their jobs are completed.

For Miss Lynde's class, the afternoon begins as always with a period of sustained silent reading. Some of the children occasionally read aloud, quietly, to partners, but most spend their time alone with a book. Diane and Christy, both very competent readers who enjoy a wide variety of books, take their selections into a corner of the library. Connie folds herself up under a desk and reads intently. Roy and Darrin take a book behind one of the coat racks. Ellen has a new book that Miss Lynde has given her, The Great Gilly Hopkins. A very intent reader, she moves from chair to floor and back again without taking her eyes off the page.

Miss Lynde has also suggested that J.P. and Mac look at Anno's Journey, a wordless book, and after they have gone through it by themselves they sit on the floor by the bookcase and talk about it with her.
A few other children join this group as they finish, or tire of, their own choices. Later Miss Lynde sits with Jeremy, who reads aloud to her; he has been making slow progress with reading and needs considerable support. She leaves him with one of the reading systems books which he studies while stretched on his stomach under a table.

Meanwhile Tommy and Jonathan finish taping their comments about Beauty and the Beast, which they have agreed to do for Mrs. H. They report that they have ended the tape with a poem ("Boa Constrictor" from Where the Sidewalk Ends). Tommy goes off to find another book, but Jonathan wants to read some Silverstein poems to Mrs. H. He begins with "Peanut Butter Sandwich," and keeps at it despite having to struggle with the vocabulary. He goes on to "Melinda Mae," and without any prompting compares the two illustrations that accompany the poem: "Gosh, she gets to be an old lady," he says, looking at the second picture. He points out that her chair has begun to fall apart, that there are crumbs under the table, and that the whale bones on Melinda Mae's plate look like paper scraps.

The SSR period lasts officially for half an hour or a little longer; at the end of this time children are usually free to continue reading if they wish. Today Ellen remains intent on The Great Gilly Hopkins, but the rest of the group switch to other activities. Diana and Dana take several picture books, at Miss Lynde's suggestion, and look through them for art project ideas. Tabitha goes to work on her book based on The Tiniest Sound, a book of prose poems Miss Lynde brought in during the first week of school as part of a display of watercolor illustrations. Tabitha says that she did all the writing
yesterday and will do all the pictures today. Connie goes back to her morning project from If I Were a Cricket, remarking that she does both pictures and writing as she goes along.

Many of the children use this time to finish required work for the week. The requirements may be different for different children, but there are always some "must" activities along with the choices. Thursday is a good day for accomplishing work because it is the only day of the week without a special area scheduled - art, music, movement, choir, or gym. The day will end with a thorough clean up (the vacuum will be brought from the janitor's room if the carpet has suffered too much), and another class meeting for final announcements, discussion, and perhaps sharing of work by students from another class.

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The general direction of study in Miss Lynde's room was largely influenced by the choices of the children themselves; individual and small group projects covered a variety of topics from World War II and fish to witchcraft, airplanes, hermit crabs, and colors, a project that ultimately led to the preparation of a multi-colored lunch for the whole class. The sequence of required work with math skills and the reading series was dictated by the materials, although the pacing was individualized.

Miss Lynde consistently emphasized the power of descriptive language and attempted to get children to exercise and expand their writing vocabularies. Her own enthusiasm for art and illustration was reflected in the class's attitude toward picture books and their involvement with a variety of media. The teacher's sharing of books was
usually focused on a theme; the series of transformational folk tales, for instance, was designed to lead up to the reading of *A Stranger Came Ashore*. Another longer book which was read aloud was *The Pinballs*. Monsters and mythical beasts was a theme introduced through books in the month of October.

Like the other classes involved in this research, Miss Lynde's group was affected by the calendar of school activities and projects. They were particularly excited for picture-taking day and curious about one another's Halloween costumes. They arranged their room with special care for parents' open house, and contributed fully to the parents' night program on literature. Miss Lynde, incidentally, was one of the staff members in charge. For the school Christmas program they became elves helping a primary class represent an ABC book of toys and trinkets. They made generous purchases at the paperback book fair and seemed to enjoy expressing opinions for the Classroom Choices book list. Their part time student teacher, a young man with a beard, was promptly dubbed "Paul Bunyan" and became a favorite of both boys and girls.

In terms of the general context of this classroom, literature held an important and highly valued place. Stories and books were a consistent common experience in an otherwise highly individualized setting, a source of social satisfaction in the sense that children worked on "book projects" together, as well as a source of curricular material. The teacher's emphasis on book discussions and questioning made talking about literature an important classroom activity. Since helping the children become confident, fluent writers was such a strong concern,
books were also seen as models. Story consumption and production were, in effect, contiguous activities.

**Summary**

The environment of Parkland Elementary School provided the frame for understanding the data on response to literature collected there. The school itself, the staff, and the way they carried out various programs all influenced not only what was possible in the way of response, but what was expected and valued and therefore probable.

The routines and the typical concerns of the three classrooms directly involved in the study provided more specific contexts in which to examine response events. Sample days with each group were described in detail in order to highlight the significance of a sequence of events or the social interaction related to personal responses when books were discussed or used in a group.

In spite of many similar routines and the teachers' general agreement about goals and philosophy, each class described here had an ambience distinctly its own. In addition, each provided within itself a wide range of varying opportunities for experiences with literature in terms of book selection, size of group involved, and materials available for expressing response. As the investigator had hoped, the schedule and the staff provided an environment where many things - almost anything - might happen.
CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE PATTERNS

The original data-gathering question for this research was a broad one: Given a setting in which children have the opportunity and the encouragement to interact with literature, what will happen? The classification of events which were judged as representing response to literature was thus the base level of analysis in the study and is reported first in this chapter. The second pattern dealt with here is the change in response according to age and grade level groups, with special emphasis on the formulation of response statements. Another sort of pattern for which evidence has been assembled has to do with the relationship of response characteristics to the particular contexts in which they seem to have been generated. Finally, there are other patterns and sequences related to wider contexts which became evident during the course of the study; these are outlined last. For the most part, all the classifications suggested are overlapping or intertwining ones, a necessary untidiness since in real life and in real classrooms events do not happen by category.

The Range of Expressed Responses

Types of responses - those ways in which children were observed to be expressing their relationship to literature - are outlined in this section. The arrangement of categories reflects, very roughly,
the distance between the experiencing of the literary work and the response to it.

Listening Behaviors

Much of the children's elementary school experience with literature comes from hearing it rather than reading it. All three of the teachers in this study read aloud to their classes on a regular basis; Mrs. Christopher shared stories with the youngest group twice a day or more. Certainly most of the overt response to these stories occurred after (sometimes long after) they were completed, but other indications of response did occur while the stories were in progress. These primarily nonverbal, spontaneous behaviors seemed to fall together in a particular way as the response events were coded.

Body stances. Levels of interest and involvement were sometimes indicated by where and how the children sat. When Mrs. Christopher read *Corduroy*, the group in front of her scooted closer and closer. Likewise when Miss Lynde read *Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like*, four boys inched their way nearer to the book. As simple and clear as this sort of observation might seem, it may not be infallibly reliable. In at least one instance Miss Lynde's group gave all the appearances of inattention during a session with *A Stranger Came Ashore*; children shifted and shuffled and stared at the ceiling. Yet the discussion afterwards indicated good recall.

Laughter and applause. Applause for a read-aloud story was so commonplace an occurrence at Parkland that eventually there was some carelessness about noting it in the record of events. Since applause is a social convention, it was usually difficult to tell whether it
was used for the sake of good manners or as an expression of particular enjoyment. When Mickey read a poem to Mrs. Patrick's class, almost inaudibly, the clapping that followed seems to have been of the polite variety. On the other hand, when Miss Lynde completed the last page of *The Pinballs*, the burst of applause (which could be heard throughout the large area) seems to have echoed the group's real feelings about the book.

Laughter during a story or poem read aloud was another event so often repeated that it ceased to seem worthy of note. In the few instances recorded, those things at which children tended to laugh were illustrations (the cover of *The Ears of Louis*, 4-5; the baby bear bouncing on the beds in *Deep in the Forest*, K-1; most of the pictures in *The Fat Cat*, 2-3) and the sound of words (the names in *Henny Penny*, K-1, or *Kickle Snifters*, 4-5).

**Exclamations and refrains.** If laughter and applause were expressed as language, exclamations and refrains might well be the result. These were undeniably verbal responses, but they seemed to have less in common with the reflective nature of formulated statements than with the spontaneity of giggles. Exclamations that did go beyond "Aw!" or "Oh!" seemed likely to be predictive in form, as when some of Mrs. Patrick's group said "He's gonna explode!" as the Fat Cat got fatter.

Rhymes and refrains were sometimes repeated with the reader, for example, the poem "Boa Constrictor" from *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, 2-3, and the dialogue in *The Little Red Hen*, K-1. Mrs. Christopher's group chimed in at times when the text, though not repetitive, was
nevertheless very familiar, as *Where the Wild Things Are* eventually became.

**Contact with Books**

To respond to a piece of literature, one must first have contact with it. Yet the response often seems inherent in the contact—in the level of attention to the book, or the tendency to return many times to the same material. At Parkland, the program was designed to encourage individual as well as group experiences with literature; consequently the observational notes produced a large number of references to children "being with" books.

**Browsing.** Sometimes children leafed through a book quickly, perused covers, or switched from one book to another within a short period of time. These actions were identified as browsing. Their process of choosing whether or not to respond to a particular selection constituted in itself a response, one of rejection or receptivity. The following are typical log entries coded as "browsing."

- Connie goes to bookcase to look through new books Miss Lynde brought in. 4-5
- Six girls staying inside for recess go to books on display rack. 4-5
- Brad flips through *The Dictionary of Mythical Places*. 4-5
- Jeannie B. stands alone by book display, leafing through *The Quicksand Book*. 2-3
- Devon flips through *Nightmares*, settles on one poem, follows line of print with finger. 2-3
- Sara comes into room to put away her lunch box, stops at bookcase to look at *Burt Dow, Deep Water Man* and *What Do You See?* K-1
At lunch time Danny Joe and Carl come in and sit by the bookcase, choose some titles and sit side by side, looking and talking. K-1

Intent attention. In some instances children kept their concentration on a book regardless of distracting influences around them, continued to read while walking or changing position, or stayed with a selection for long periods of time. These were classified as intent responses. Although the content of their response was not always revealed, the fact of their involvement was clear enough.

- Danny Joe is in the reading corner at noon recess, paying close attention to *Lentil*. K-1
- Jack looks intently at the pictures in *Mr. and Mrs. Pig's Evening Out*, spending a long time with each one. K-1
- Jeannie C. spends 45 minutes intent on three picture books. 2-3
- Laurie is sitting by herself with *The Elves and the Shoemaker*, reading it all the way through. 2-3
- Julie reads during lunch count without looking up. 4-5
- Connie finishes the last page of *Charlotte's Web* standing alone in the middle of the room, stuffs it in the bookcase, runs to lunch. She's late. 4-5

Keeping books at hand. Browsing accounted for the majority of contact responses, and intent attention most of the rest. In several instances, however, children were observed making a special effort to keep certain books within reach. This may have indicated intention, or reaction, or both.

- Jack keeps his book choices stacked on his lap during circle time. One of them is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. K-1
Mickey keeps *Frog and Toad All Year* beside him as he works with clay. 2-3

Jud is carrying *How to Eat Fried Worms*, with his place marked. 4-5

**The Impulse to Share**

There were official sharing times built into the school day for all three classes in the study; this gave children a chance to call attention to their favorite stories or poems, display artwork based on books, and submit their own compositions for peer approval. The types of responses that were in evidence during these sharing times are elaborated in the explanation of some of the categories which follow, and in the discussion of sharing as a context. Yet the spontaneous impulse to share was notable as a type of response in itself. Unofficial sharing events occurred every day in all three classrooms.

**Reading together.** Although children were encouraged and at times even directed to read with a partner, many shared reading experiences were entirely the children's choice, seeming to reflect a common positive reaction to the selection, which was frequently already familiar to the readers. Two boys were observed behind the coat rack during the first week of school, for instance, taking turns reading to each other from *The Giving Tree*, a book they remembered from the year before (4-5). In another instance, three girls looked together at a Babar book that one of them had brought from home; the character was familiar to all of them (2-3). Kindergarten and first grade children also were observed together with books they knew, such as *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. 
On the surface level, reading together looked much like another activity, which was reading to someone as a demonstration of skill. This occurred with particular frequency in the 2-3 grade group, with one of the identifying markers being the desire for an adult as audience. It is probably fair to assume, however, that the two kinds of activities are not entirely separable; skill demonstrations involved shared reactions, and vice versa.

Sharing a discovery. Much of the spontaneous sharing that occurred began with "Look at this!" or "Listen to this!" or nonverbal equivalents like poking and pointing and beckoning. These events often developed to include formulated response statements, but their genesis seemed to be related not so much to the desire to talk about the work as to re-experience it and to have one's own response affirmed by another person. The convention of recommending titles was placed in this category as well.

1. Mindy has Lentil, is giggling over a picture of Lentil in the bathtub. "Look at this," she says to girl on floor beside her. "Look!" she says to Mrs. H. K-1

2. Carl is looking through A Time to Keep, focusing on items at the bottom half of each page. "Hey, Mel," he says. "Look at this." K-1

3. Jeannie A. and Brenda argue about who will be first to show Mrs. H. a new book, The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses. They both point out features of their favorite illustrations and read aloud the accompanying text. 2-3

4. Amanda reads Magic Letter Riddles by herself, one at a time, finding someone new to listen to each after she figures it out, waiting for the laugh. 2-3
Roy wants the student teacher to listen to his favorite poem from Where the Sidewalk Ends. 4-5

Christy takes a copy of Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing from the shelf, asks Mrs. H. if she has read it, goes on to explain that it's so funny she read it all in one night. 4-5

**Oral Responses**

Notes on more than 600 oral response situations were gathered among the Parkland children. Typical content and the nature of their statements are outlined in more detail in the section of this chapter which looks at characteristics of response according to grade level groups. The statements occurred, however, in the course of three kinds of events which although not entirely distinct, can be separated here for convenience.

Retelling and storytelling responses. According to Applebee (1978, Chap. 6), retelling is a major response strategy among young children and is supplemented by summarizing as they move through the concrete operational stage. This was evident in the Parkland observations; for instance, Laurie used both retelling and summarization in talking with the investigator about The Elves and the Shoemaker, 2-3. But retelling stories was also frequently an official event, structured or encouraged by the teachers, particularly in the provision of wordless picture books for which an oral text was to be supplied, and felt boards or other storytelling devices.

- Ben retells Little Red Riding Hood after hearing it read, at Mrs. Christopher's request. K-1

- Sara and Karla tell a story to go with the wordless picture book, Deep in the Forest. They record it on tape. K-1
Jeannie B. makes felt figures and practices using them to tell "The Old Woman and Her Pig." 2-3

There seemed to be a fine line between telling a story and performing it. When children, often non-readers, performed a text, it was sometimes difficult to separate recall from oral composition from reading ability.

- Kandi "reads aloud" the story of Little Red Riding Hood from her scribble writing. K-1
- Morris tells himself a story using the book Dawn as a guide, turning pages from back to front. K-1
- Laurie combines reading and telling as she presents a book to an imaginary audience. 2-3

In addition, there were a few examples of memorization of a text. Teresa, a third grader, reported that she had read "What a Day" from Where the Sidewalk Ends so often that she could say it.

Discussion responses. As a general rule, read-aloud sessions in the three classrooms were followed by teacher-lead discussions. Teachers also discussed books with individuals and small groups. Other official talk sessions were initiated by student teachers, the library aide, and the investigator. Each of these discussions was in its own way a response event, as was each child's contribution to it. While the structure of these discussions showed great variety they were generally characterized by extended attention to a single book or topic, and a predetermined general focus. Many of the oral responses that occurred in these instances were the same kind of responses that occurred as free comment. Still, a consideration of the entire text of discussions showed that repetition, affirmation, and clarification happened here
with an intensity not possible in free comment. The following examples, partly summarized, demonstrate the kinds of discussions observed in the study.

Mrs. Christopher begins by asking what the group can tell her about folk tales. It is the second time they have discussed this today.

Karla says, "When you write something and it ain't true."

Gary says, "It's like a fairy tale."

Ben and Danny Joe offer similar information, while Warren puts in that "It scares you - tricks you, like 'Beauty and the Beast'."

Mrs. Christopher reminds them that they will be studying folk tales and talking about what makes a story a folk tale. Then she tells "The Little Red Hen," which she has told once before, earlier in the day. The children join in the refrains, and are inclined to imitate the movements described, like cutting grain and sweeping the floor. At the end, she asks how they liked it.

Warren says he liked the ending because the cake part made him hungry. Tim liked it because it "keeps repeating."

Kandi says, "I liked it because you told it right and it probably came out of a book anyway."

After several other "liking" statements, Mrs. Christopher asks them to name the characters. Several children can do this. Then the teacher asks, "What lesson do you learn from this story?"

Danny Joe answers eagerly: "When someone already baked the cake and you haven't helped they're probably just gonna say no."

Other children restate this proposition, keying on the idea of saying no.
Mrs. Christopher asks if they can tell her what the problem is in this story. Tim thinks the problem is that "no one will help." Jared explains that "at the end it's better ... now they'll have to help and she'll take a nap!"

As the discussion ends, Mrs. Christopher shows the group two picture book versions of *The Little Red Hen*. After a quick glance at the illustrations, one child announces, "In that one she bakes bread!"

Mrs. Patrick reads aloud *The Fat Cat*, after introducing it as "a Danish folktale by Jack Kent." The children are attentive; they laugh frequently. At the page on which the cat eats five birds in a flock, they begin to chant the cumulative refrain with her. Several children make unsolicited comments about the pictures and about the ending.

Mrs. Patrick begins the discussion by encouraging free comments.

Jeannie A. says, "He gets fatter and fatter on every page and then he gets skinny."

Joanne says, "His jacket shrunk." (The jacket only appears to shrink as the cat grows, however; in Piagetian terms, this remark reveals inability to conserve.)

Amanda likes "the way it repeats, the names and all -"

Mrs. Patrick asks what else is repeated besides the names, and one child suggests the phrase "What did you eat?"

Sandy points out that "it goes backward at the end." Discussion follows to clarify the sequence; the last of the cat's victims is the first to come out of his stomach, and so on.
Doreen interjects that she has a cat at home, but this aside is ignored.

Jeannie B. refers back to an earlier comment, elaborating on the appearance of the cat. "It looks like he was a balloon and on every page they blew him up a little more."

Katie raises a literal objection. "He couldn't get all those great big people in his mouth." This moves the discussion to the last illustration, where the woodcutter has bandaged the cat's stomach. "How could he put the bones back together?" someone asks.

"Glue," says Amanda. But Mark thinks that "he only cut the skin."

Mrs. Patrick changes the direction of the talk, saying that many have heard the story before but still seem to enjoy it, and do they have any theories about why this is so?

Doreen thinks it is because everybody likes cats. Several others say simply that "it's good." Doug offers the suggestion that "it's unusual, it's a Danish folk tale."

This ends the discussion, although one child immediately claims the book for personal reading. 2-3

Miss Lynde has read A Stranger Came Ashore to the class over a period of several weeks. Discussions have followed the reading of most of the individual chapters, but on the day when the last chapter is completed the group talks about the book as a whole.

Miss Lynde starts things off by asking about the setting of the story. Several children respond by describing rather than identifying the location - "There was lots of water ... boats ... a little village ... mountains and rocks."
When the group has evoked the setting, the teacher asks what they can tell her about Robbie, the main character. Brad says that Robbie was "the star of the book." Julie adds that "at first he was shy, and then he got braver." Diane confirms that he "showed a lot of bravery at the end." The teacher asks them to be specific about the points where he showed courage, and several examples are given.

Next Miss Lynde draws their attention to the shipwreck incident at the beginning of the book, and an argument ensues over whether the stranger planned and caused an accident, or whether he took advantage of a true accident as "cover." Here the children direct comments to each other as well as to the teacher.

Finally J.P. puts in that he "expected the whole thing to turn out to be a dream ... because most of that stuff couldn't really happen."

Miss Lynde uses this comment as a transition to the consideration of fantasy aspects of the book. "Can you tell me," she says, "what were the clues that the stranger was really the Great Selkie?" This begins a long series of references to incidents in the story; the teacher makes a list as they talk. Although interest is still high at this point, the discussion ends; it is time for an assembly. 4-5

**Free comment.** Many of the oral responses noted in this study were the result of chance remarks or answers to casual questions. Like official discussion, the free comments involved formulated statements, although they were expressed spontaneously or as part of a brief exchange. These comments were very diverse; many did not have the nature of critical statements or even direct comments about the story.
Likes and dislikes were frequently reported in this way.

- Jud says, "I like funny books." 4-5
- Brad says that he likes "thick books." 4-5
- Shari doesn't like books with "too many words." 2-3
- Morris says, "I don't want to look at no books." K-1

Personal associations and other feeling-related responses also occurred in this category.

- Jenny has been reading The Fox Went Out on a Chilly Night. She wishes out loud for a guitar to sing it with. 2-3
- The verse for October in Chicken Soup with Rice reminds Amy that it is Beggars' Night, that she can't wait, and so on. 2-3

Some comments about the content of a selection were noted, sometimes in reference to its literal meaning, sometimes to indicate comparison to another book or recognition of a basic element of form.

- Mindy considers two lines in Goodnight Moon. "That rhymes," she says. K-1
- Gretchen says that the phrase "to again return" in Tikki Tikki Tembo should read "to return again ... because it doesn't sound right." K-1
- Teresa talks about the "Clouds" in Rossetti's poem as if they really were sheep. "They go back to the farm, I guess," she says. 2-3
- Toni and Rachel talk about characters and setting of Ultra-Violet Catastrophe as they talk about their own story which is based on it. 4-5

Many of the children's comments reported their familiarity with books.

- Sharon asks for a copy of Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, saying that she has already read it several times. 4-5
Pat remembers hearing *The Snowy Day* last year. 2-3

When *The Little Drummer Boy* is introduced as a new book for the collection, various children say, "Oh, yeah - that one," "I remember that," "You read that last year." K-1

Accomplishment, or success in dealing with books, was another kind of content that occurred as free comment.

Tony reports how many chapters he has read. 4-5

Jerry says he read his book all in one day, and it's 63 pages. 4-5

Amanda says of *Goodnight Owl*, "I can read it by heart." 2-3

**Actions and Drama**

Children were often seen responding to a story, or a part of one, with their bodies. Sometimes this occurred as a listening behavior, with children spontaneously portraying an action or expression as they heard about it. At other times, groping for words, they resorted to movement in order to explain meanings. In dramatic play, children seemed to carry this acting-out response to its ultimate conclusion. Skits and planned drama experiences involved more reflective, more structured responses combining movement and language.

*Echoing the action.* Just as someone who hears an unusual word might try it out by whispering under the breath, so did some children experiment with literary actions or situations. This was noted either as a listening behavior or as an immediate response, and was more prominent as a reaction to dramatized versions. The tendency of K-1 children to imitate the movements of the Little Red Hen as they listened to that story has already been reported.
During the reading of *The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch*, Carl gets up and shuffles his feet, as if he too were drawing pictures in the snow. K-1

After an adult theater group presents *Androcles and the Lion*, many children come back to the classroom area roaring, and acting out lion attacks. K-1

Children in two classes watch the film version of *Where the Wild Things Are*. At least six of them use their arms and hands to imitate the wild things' animated movements. K-1, 2-3

**Demonstrating meaning.** Mrs. Christopher sometimes invited children to show her what they thought a book or poem meant. Often, however, they used demonstration strategies without invitation.

As the group looks at *Anno's Journey*, Terrence giggles at a detail in one illustration where the statue of a horseman is shown pulling the reins. When asked why that is funny, Terrence gets up and poses himself as a proper statue, showing how unmoving it would be. K-1

During a discussion of *Drummer Hoff*, Mrs. Christopher asks what a cannon is. Sammy says, "I'll be the cannon. Someone hold up my feet." Other children then take up the positions of other apparatus mentioned in the rhyme - the rammer, the shot, and so on. K-1

**Dramatic play.** Children in the K-1 group made frequent use of their play corner and costume wardrobe. Most of the happenings observed there reflected the use of generalized story frames rather than clear response to specific stories; generic characters ("the princess," "the queen," "the wolf") were more usually portrayed than particular characters. The influence of television stories was notable here,
since almost all of the "named" characters in children's play appeared to be from television in one form or another.

- A group in the play corner announces to Mrs. H. that they are dressed up for "Little House on the Prairie." (Television rather than literature is the more evident source.) They identify each character and explain appropriate expectations. The girl who is to be Mary says, "Oh my, I'll have to be blind." K-1

- Several children playing monster and haunted house identify themselves: Ben is the werewolf, Sammy is the vampire, Kandi is the little girl, Mary is the mother. K-1

- Four girls in the play corner decide character slots.
  "You be the godzilla."
  "Okay, I'll be it."
  "I'm the mother."
  "Where's the witch?" K-1

Child-initiated drama. Demonstrating meaning and dramatic play sometimes lead children into more formalized activities; on other occasions children simply decided that they wanted to "do a play."

Specific stories were occasionally represented, or characters or other story elements were sometimes combined with topics of current interest. At other times skits were planned around more generalized story frames. In all cases the children's intention was to present their drama for an audience.

- The demonstration of meaning for Drummer Hoff suggests to children that they play out the entire book as story theater. They rehearse with one child reading the verse and others assembling the cannon, using large blocks as machine parts. K-1
A group led by Doug and Jeannie B. plan a skit using the character Paddington from *A Bear Called Paddington* in the setting of their last field trip. The title is "Paddington Goes to Franklin Park Conservatory." Like the book, their drama portrays a series of misadventures. The bear gets stuck by a cactus, swims in the wishing pond to get back the money, and takes a shower in the watering hose. The Conservatory personnel give a sigh of relief to see him leave. 2-3

Rachel, Toni, Candy, and Lisa present a skit which they have made up ("it's a fake") and practiced as part of their study of trees. It incorporates conservation concepts and considerable showmanship, including costumes and scenery, in a fairy tale frame. The title is "Queens and Trees Don't Mix." The Queen calls in the woodcutter, telling him that there is a paper shortage and that the trees must be cut. When the woodcutter sets to work, two squirrels appear and complain that he is destroying their home. The woodcutter declares that squirrels can't talk, but he nevertheless reports the incident to the queen, who doesn't believe him. This sequence is repeated, but the third time the queen hides behind a bush and hears the squirrels for herself. She invites them to live with her in the palace. The woodcutter continues his work, and everyone is happy. All the characters dance in a circle mid-stage, singing a parody of a rhyme from *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. 4-5

**Teacher-initiated drama.** A few instances of drama planned by teachers were observed. Mrs. Patrick involved her class in playing out *Stone Soup*, for instance. The haunted house drama involving this class was reported in detail in Chapter IV. The presentations planned for the Christmas program were unique in the way that they combined what is usually defined as creative dramatics with a concern for theatrics. For Mrs. Patrick's and Mrs. Christopher's classes, whose
starting point was the book Where the Wild Things Are, preparation for this program was in itself an event, but one that accommodated many different types of responses planned by the two teachers in conjunction with Mrs. Rose, the unified arts teacher.

. The children practice moving like wild things, to appropriate music, making monster shadows in the light cast by a bare bulb.

. The children talk over ways to change the story to give it a Christmas focus, as suggested by Mrs. Rose's questions: "What do you think would happen if Max went back to where the wild things are, and it was Christmas? What would he take with him?" It is decided that there will be a wild Christmas rumpus and appropriate gifts.

. Part of the children are involved in a group composition of a song lyric, using the tune "Up on the Housetops."

  Up on the cave tops with great horns
  Out jump the wild things, two, three, four ...
  K-1, 2-3

Making Things

One of the generalized expectations at Parkland was that children would use literature as a basis for various worktime activities. As one child explained of a large brown-paper mural he was painting, "It's a book and the teacher said we had to do something with it." "Doing something" seemed only infrequently to be an imposition, however, since children accepted suggestions eagerly and designed many activities independently.

Making a book was a common activity in all three classrooms in the study, involving both picture-making and writing. Children did often seem to see these as objects or products, and in that sense child-made books could be classified here. Yet their language content
and the composing process by which they were formulated placed them with written responses, which are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Most of the events classified here involved artwork of one kind and another: pictures done in a variety of media, or modeling and construction activities. Displays and collections, game-making, and cookery were also tied to experiences with books. Both the process and results of all these activities were highly, perhaps deceptively, visible at Parkland. Making things constituted a significant part of the response events observed, but in view of their character as attention-getters, it was difficult to judge their importance in the overall scheme of things. Their most evident effect was to lead to writing, as examples in the next section will show.

Pictures. The making of pictures based on a book was observed almost every day in the K-1 and 4-5 groups, but somewhat less frequently in the middle group, who usually put their art work directly into the wallpaper-covered books they were writing. The teachers encouraged and provided for experimentation with the media used in picture books. Sketching and painting and collage seemed to be the children's most typical means of representation, although printing, marbleizing, scratchboard, and other techniques were also tried. Murals were often done with one or two partners, using paint and collage.

After the reading of The Biggest House in the World, many painted murals and smaller flat pictures are made showing elaborately decorated and colored snail shells. K-1
Mickey draws with crayons - a horse, a wagon, a man. He gets another sheet of paper, tapes it to the first, extends the road on which his figures stand, adding a house and an apple tree. "I'm drawin' a picture from that book," he says, indicating Anno's Journey. K-1

Laurie makes a paper collage picture of a girl in a fancy hat, which is displayed over a copy of Jennie's Hat. 2-3

At the student teacher's suggestion, a group works on a mural based on Charlotte's Web. Each child adds what he or she wants: a red barn with white crossbars on the door, a farmer and his truck, geese, several spider webs and pigs. 2-3

Diane works on a picture from Fish Is Fish, with the book as guide. She uses tissue paper, crayons, and paint in an effort to replicate one illustration as exactly as possible. 4-5

J.P. is making pencil sketches to be put into a book based on The Judge. The monster in that story will become a conventional dragon in his; he points out an illustration from Magic in the Mist which is to serve as his guide for the creature. 4-5

Modeling and construction activities. Although drawing or painting was more common than three-dimensional art, modeling and building activities usually involved more than one child and more than one work period. Many materials were provided and used; conventional clay as well as salt and starch mixtures, and the ubiquitous "nerf."

Trina has a copy of If All the Seas Were One Sea at the art table, open to a stylized illustration of a ship. With clay she makes her own ship, assembling it from cubes and other shapes. K-1
Terrence, Mel, and Ben are making a diorama, a painted tissue box with bits of sponge glued on to represent the bricks in the house of the wisest of the three pigs. They plan to build in a fireplace so they can show the big bad wolf falling into the stew pot. K-1

Doug, Mickey, and Alec are using nerf to build a "flying machine" for Paddington Bear. 2-3

Tommy and Darrin construct a diorama showing Jim and the Beanstalk. The stalk is green yarn with paper leaves, suspended from the top of the box. 4-5

Miscellaneous products. Other making and doing activities originally suggested by books occurred, but less often than the types already mentioned. Game-making was something reported by the teachers (Miss Lynde particularly) to be a popular activity in other years, but which had not yet "taken hold" during the time of the study. Very few child-made games were observed.

J.P. has a board game in progress, based on A Stranger Came Ashore. It incorporates symbols appropriate to the book, such as a pictured raven, a violin, gold pieces, and the cave where the Selkie's skin is hidden. Reward and penalty cards are related to the plot (e.g., Old Da dies, go back four spaces). 4-5

The older children, with the teacher's encouragement, produced some tabletop displays, beginning with an interest in color poetry (Hailstones and Halibut Bones) that lead - over several weeks' time - to collections of blue, red, green, yellow, purple, and orange objects with appropriate descriptive writing. Later in the year a more ambitious display was planned by a small group.

Diane, Christy, Toni, Rachel, Candy, and Lisa conduct tours of their Stranger Came Ashore museum. Exhibits include a black feather
from the raven, diamond dust from the Selkie's palace, and Peter's fiddle ("out for repair" except on the days when Christy has her violin lesson at school). There are typed labels on the exhibits, and a dittoed information sheet for all museum guests. 4-5

Another activity suggested by books was cookery. The same interest in color poetry that produced the color displays was extended to group preparation of a lunch for the whole class featuring colorful foods. By this time, however, the connection with Hailstones and Halibut Bones was largely forgotten. Other cooking activities were more direct in the reflection of a story, according to the intention of the teacher.

A small group mixes a cake which is then baked by a parent volunteer. Warren explains, "because it was in the story The Little Red Hen." K-1

The entire class is involved in the preparation of a lunch planned around Stone Soup. A small group, led by a parent, is in charge of the soup itself. Mindy goes to the book rack saying, "Let's look and see if we did it right." After checking the illustrations she decides that the soup needs more stirring. K-1

Writing

As a use of language, writing might seem to be more logically classified in tandem with oral responses. In practice, however, writing was often last in a sequence of response events, generated not so much by a story or poem itself as by the child's representation of it. The composing of texts rather than their execution was of most interest; some of the "writing" reported in this section was dictated to an adult or to another child.
In classifying the writing events that indicated children's experience with literature, it seemed necessary to consider not only the product, but also what the child appeared to understand about what he or she was doing. As a consequence, more than one of the kinds of written response suggested here might well occur in a single piece of writing. Basically, children were observed restating or summarizing stories, writing about literature in personal or critical terms, making deliberate use of literary models or devices for their own compositions, and employing literary frames and references in a more generalized, less conscious way. For the sake of clarity, in the examples that follow, the children's invented spellings have been made conventional. Syntax and mechanics remain the children's own.

Restating and summarizing. The written equivalent of retelling, this response was most frequently observed in the K-1 class, almost never in the 2-3 group, and occasionally in the 4-5 class. A summary was often written as a long caption to be displayed along with artwork based on the book. There may be some question about the classification of stories written or dictated by the youngest children, whose restatements contained original elements. These may have indicated lapses in comprehension or recall, but it is also possible that the children saw themselves as author of a "new" story.

Warren, Mel, Danny Joe and Carl, after collaborating on a huge snail picture for The Biggest House in the World, compose this text:

The snail is eating a cabbage. But it cannot move. The snail is too big. The other shells on the small snails are light. And he died. The End. K-1
Ben's dictated story of "The Three Little Pigs" departs from the traditional version although it includes the important elements depicted in his diorama:

Once upon a time there lived three little pigs. And there lived a big bad wolf. George, Sam and Ram were very best friends... and they decided to build a big brick house... The big bad wolf fell down the chimney and then the first little pig ate the head, the second little pig ate the body, and the third little pig ate the rib, and they ate the tail for dessert. 

Brad writes chapter-by-chapter summaries of The Mouse and the Motorcycle, putting them into a book; the project extends for several weeks.

Ellen writes a 150-word account of The Seeing Stick to accompany an illustration she has attempted to replicate, using colored pencils and vellum paper. Her writing is largely accurate to the text, although it includes no dialogue.

Writing about literature. Some writing done by children reflected their intention to report something about a work - something subjective, or feeling oriented; or something objective, or form oriented. In schools where conventional book reports are regularly assigned, this type of response might well have been seen more frequently than at Parkland. Two official opportunities for this sort of writing did exist: the reading logs required by Mrs. Patrick, and the voting slips for the Classroom Choices books. The kinds of statements written in each instance were very generalized ones, demonstrating a lack of differentiation between the characteristics of a work and their own reaction to it (cf. Applebee, 1978).
Mrs. Christopher reads aloud *The ABC of Monsters* and asks everyone who can to write a comment on the voting slips.

Terrence: It was funny and you can learn your ABC's.

Ben: You learn ABC's and I love monsters.

Karla: The book was O.K. I love you. K-1

During the first week of school Mrs. Christopher poses this question: How would Mother Goose look? The children make pictures and add captions.

Sara: I think Mother Goose looks like this to me. She looks like a goose to me. K-1

After Jared reads *Lentil*, Mrs. Christopher writes out questions for which he then writes answers. K-1

The older children's writing included more comments about form, frequently combined with summaries and subjective response.

Several children contribute to filling in the slots on a chart kept for comparing elements in transformational folk tales. 4-5

Rachel's writing about *The Mixed-Up Files Of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* begins by commenting on the form:

It's a letter written to her lawyer... 4-5

Julie identifies this writing as a book report:

I read a book called *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Claudia and Jamie run away from home. The two go on a week and a half trip. They hide out in the Metropolitan Museum and you should see how close they come to being caught. The highlight of the story is when they find out about Angel, Angel turns Claudia's life so if you want mystery and excitement you should read *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. 4-5

**Deliberate use of literary models.** At Parkland, children were frequently encouraged to model their own writing after a familiar book, to compose a variant of a story, or to make some use of a specific
pattern or form or character from literature. In the K-1 group, this was reflected basically in the restatements and summaries. At the upper levels, the use of models was seen more frequently than writing about literature, and not always as a result of direct suggestion by the teacher. When children chose picture books as models - as they almost always did - their own books reflected the original both in text and illustrations. The first try at such a production, or the first phase of a work that used a repetitive pattern, usually followed the original more closely than later attempts. This phenomenon is discussed in greater detail in the final section of this chapter.

On the first day of school Mrs. Patrick reads *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* to the group, then asks children to write what they would wish for if they had a magic pebble.

Greg: I wish I had 900 hot dogs and 100 7 Ups.
Sandy: I wish that I had a real magic pebble. 2-3

Amanda writes a letter to Santa from a book character, a riddle-form popular in many classes during early December.

Dear Santa, I want a lot of sleep for Christmas.
Sincerely, GoodNight Owl. 2-3

Doug is writing an illustrated book based on *A Bear Called Paddington*. In "Paddington's Air Adventures" the bear borrows a doorknob and other household items to convert a boat into a plane. (The similar construction of a plane is featured in *Bored, Nothing To Do*, a book available in the classroom, although there are no notes to show that Doug had looked at it.) 2-3

Diana begins work on a book modeled after *Panda's Puzzle*, using watercolor scenes that are very close to the original illustrations. "But it's not just like it," she explains. "It's 'The Zebra'." 4-5
Sharon has made a display of blue items, an activity suggested by *Hailstones and Halibut Bones*. She writes her own "What is blue" poem, beginning:

Afternoon sky,
River in the evening
Blue Jay fly in the sky
It makes the day blue, cool 4-5

In independent efforts, Ellen, Sharon, and Connie use the book *Someday* as a pattern for their own picture books about wishes. 4-5

Lisa writes a "new and modern" version of "Jack and the Beanstalk" after the student teacher has shared several editions of the tale, including *Jim and the Beanstalk*. In her story, Jack and his mother live in a three-room apartment in a high rise, and when they are "going poor," Jack has to sell the Corvette. Later hidden in the giant's closet, he makes a ladder of coat hangers which he climbs in order to stick the giant in the nose with a pin and smother him with the giantess's old coat. When Jack's mother sees the gold he has taken, she "takes back all the stuff" she has said about him, and they live happily ever after. 4-5

**Indirect uses of literature.** There seemed to be great variation in the level of awareness which children brought to their use of literary models. Lisa's "Jack and the Beanstalk" was an example of conscious control of the conventions and content of a folk tale; she was able to discuss the form explicitly when questioned. Other children, especially younger ones, produced writing which showed surface similarities to a model, but their use of conventions and sometimes even their references to characters or plot details reflected connections with literature which they themselves failed to recognize. Echoes of books which children had heard or read were frequently found in the text of their writing; unfortunately it was not always possible to ask direct questions
that would determine how much of this was deliberate or explicitly done. The use of a generalized story frame without particular intent to demonstrate that frame was also classified as an indirect use of literature, although this seemed to indicate a more mature form of written response.

Ben and Terrence dictate a story which begins as a restatement of The Biggest House in the World. Other influences, probably television, appear midway in the story with the mention of Goodyear blimps and airplanes in the sky. The final sentence - "The biggest crab ate up the snail and got its shell and all the snails couldn't put it together again" - echoes "Humpty Dumpty," a rhyme read aloud and the subject of many pictures three weeks previous to this work. K-1

Karla uses a plot device from Burt Dow, Deep Water Man in her story about a boy and some big fish, without recognizing the source. K-1

Warren has started a book about a man being chased by a vampire bat that lands in his hair. He describes the action: "First he has to get an apple and a bow and arrow and then he gets a cannon and kills the bat. But a stake is what he needs." Warren identifies the information about the stake as coming from a recording, but he has no explanation for the veiled reference to the story of William Tell. K-1

Amanda shows a tissue paper and paint collage of Little Blue and Little Yellow (several days after seeing the film version), with writing attached. I made a pretty picture of Little yellow and Little blue they want to go home. But they can't lead back home because the birds has eatened all the crumbs. When asked who else had to follow a trail of bread crumbs to get home, she has to think a long time before answering "Hansel and Gretel." 2-3
Sandy and Shari write a Halloween book called "The Vampire Who Had No Teeth," in which a girl is transformed into a toad and one character is granted three wishes. Although Shari has just reported that she has a lot of books at home, Sandy is the one who speaks up when asked how they knew it should be three wishes. "From TV," she says. 2-3

Doug's story about the discovery of Marzon (the monster he built with Jeannie B.) is "literary" in style if not in grammar, particularly its opening sentence:
One day while me and Sis were waiting for the Express, we went into the old Thompson house to kill time. 2-3

Rachel begins a picture book story about a boy who wants to have the chicken pox and a motorized racecar toy. Her opening is "Before grandfather's father was born..." although all the scenes are contemporary ones. 4-5

Christy has attempted a "continuation" of A Stranger Came Ashore, essentially a catalogue of marriages, deaths, and new generations of characters. She also attempts a present-day mystery which begins by setting the scene on a dark and storming night, using a point of view that permits such asides as "But what was there to laugh about?" and "On that stormy night something horrible was going to happen." The second story is more successful than the first in incorporating certain features of the setting and tone of A Stranger Came Ashore. 4-5

Characteristics of Response by Age-Grade Groups

In order to facilitate the task of looking more closely at developmental patterns in response to literature, response events were considered in terms of the classroom groups where they occurred rather than in terms of the exact ages of the respondents. Each group represented an approximate two-year range of chronological ages. At the beginning of the study, children in the K-1 group were from 5.0 years to 7.0 years;
children in the 2-3 group were 6 years 9 months to 8 years 11 months; and children in the 4-5 group from 9 years 2 months to 10 years 9 months. No attempt was made to determine levels of cognitive development through formal testing, although it was assumed that the children in the middle group would have for the most part moved into Piaget's stage of concrete operational thinking.

**Types of Responses**

All the basic classifications of responses described in the preceding section, from listening behaviors to writing, were observed to some extent in all three groups in the study. Particular types were seen more frequently in some groups than others, however, and there were obvious qualitative differences that seemed related to the children's level of development. Many of these qualitative differences were demonstrated in oral responses, which are discussed in more detail in a separate section on the nature of response statements.

**K-1 responses.** One of the particular characteristics of young children's response was the extent to which they used their bodies to communicate. This group provided nearly all the examples of imitating or trying out movements as they were described in a story. Likewise, explaining story elements by demonstrating or acting them out was a frequent strategy in the K-1 class but not in the other groups. Story elements were also seen reflected in the dramatic play of this group; if dramatic play occurred at all among the older children (at recess, for instance) it was not observed.

Another aspect of response peculiar to the younger children was their reliance on generic or prototypical characters, both in drama
and in composing. In addition to examples already cited, there were other instances.

- Danny Joe and Jack identify felt board cut-outs as they arrange them on the board, as "here's the grandfather," "here's the little kid," and so on. K-1

- Mary writes a story about the Pumpkins, who scared, in order, "the baby sister," "the mother and father," and "the big brother." K-1

In terms of independent contacts with books, children in the younger group were, predictably, more likely to browse than to be intent. A few children were seen engrossed in books, either reading or looking, for some length of time.

The young children's art work reflected a range of media not unlike that of older children, although their manipulative skill was obviously less developed. Their approach to representing literature was somewhat different, however. Whereas children in the 4-5 group tended to portray a scene in a way that revealed a fairly cohesive view of character interrelationships and the wholeness of that scene (sometimes by replicating the illustrator's vision), K-1 children tended to "collect" important story elements in their pictures.

- After making a crayon drawing of *Potato Pancakes All Around*, Randy points out the things that he has included - the sky, the clouds, the sun, people dancing, people eating, and a table with food. K-1

The younger children also tended to plunge into their picture-making without any explicit idea of the outcome, just a generalized intent to represent a character or story.
The children have heard and discussed an extended picture book version of "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son." Mrs. Christopher gives a group a large sheet of yellow paper and the challenge of making a picture of Tom without any crayons or paint. They begin with nerf and glue, making styrofoam clouds, a dried bean tree, a popsicle stick roadway.

Mrs. H. asks, "What does Tom look like?"

"We don't know yet," is the answer. Facial expressions indicate that a silly question has been asked. K-1

The writing or composing responses of the K-1 group did not show children making deliberate use of literature to dictate the specific form of an original story, although some of their work (especially Warren's) approached this classification. They did use literary conventions like "once upon a time" and "happily ever after" and allusions to familiar stories without seeming to be fully aware of the source. Conscious attempts to use literature as a guide usually produced a retelling or a summary of the known story.

2-3 responses. For most of the types of responses observed in this study, the second and third graders showed transitional characteristics. That is, different children at different times were like the K-1 group or like the 4-5 group rather than a separately identifiable 2-3 group in their artwork, their writing, and the way they talked about stories. One kind of response, however, did seem to have special importance at this level. Second and third graders read to one another and to available adults more often than children in the other groups; they were eager to share a text and have it confirmed. Since the children who were most confident in their own reading ability showed this response less often and since older readers were somewhat more
likely to recommend a book than to present a part of it for comment, it seems reasonable to associate this emphasis on sharing a text with the developmental task of becoming an independent reader.

Obviously, one of the children's purposes was to demonstrate and test their skill, but most of the recorded instances also involved a demonstration and testing of response.

- Sandy wants to read *Morris Goes to School* to Mrs. H., saying, "It's really funny ... because he does everything wrong." 2-3
- "I'll show you a real sad book," Amanda says, and presents *My Brother Steven is Retarded* for inspection. 2-3

Even when children did not make conversation about the books they wanted to share, their expression and manner often indicated their estimate of the story as humorous, or scary, or somehow amazing, a basic response to be confirmed or denied by the other's reaction.

In general the task of getting through and making sense of a selection seemed to be particularly important influences on children's contacts with books at the 2-3 level, with attention to conventions of print (indexes, chapter headings, etc.) frequently noted more than literary form. Difficulty and length were often mentioned by the children, and for the sake of accomplishment, many were willing to read or listen to stories which they did not fully understand.

- Two boys and four girls have volunteered to meet regularly with Mrs. Patrick to read together and discuss *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, a new selection from one of the paperback book clubs. Jeannie C. has already read and is willing to talk about this book.
In the discussion of the first chapter, the other children are unable to interpret the expression "a good deal of water has gone under the bridge" except for its literal level. They take a long time deciding that "Uncle Sam" is not really Pa's relative, and they do not understand the arrangement by which settlers were granted government land. Nevertheless, all the children express interest in continuing the discussions. Greg pages through the book admiring its length, and Joanne "can't wait" to get to the next chapter. 2-3

4-5 responses. Much of what was notable about the responses of fourth and fifth graders as compared to younger children represented differences in degree rather than in kind. For instance, while there were children at this level who did spend a lot of their book contact time browsing and choosing and flipping pages, a larger proportion of this group gave intent attention to particular books, and for longer periods of time.

While children at all levels had favorite books, the older children showed a narrowing of preference in books for personal reading, with strong feelings for and against particular selections.

When Christy is asked what her favorite book is, she lists several that she calls "excellent": A Stranger Came Ashore, Tuck Everlasting, The Dark Is Rising, Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, and Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.

Mrs. H. asks if she has read The Search for Delicious.

"No," says Christy. "The title didn't turn me on...boring titles turn me off, like Call Me Charley and The House of Sixty Fathers." She points out these two books on the shelf beside her and indicates the back cover blurb for the last one. "It just didn't seem like it would be very good," she says.
"Would you rather read about a girl than a boy?"

"No," says Christy, "not as long as there's suspense. I love suspense." She goes on to talk about which Judy Blume novels she has read, and how much she likes them. 4-5

Brad has read The Mouse and the Motorcycle and Abel's Island. He says that he likes to read about animals, mostly, as he looks through the bookcase to find another book to begin. He pulls out a paperback copy of Nobody's Family Is Going to Change, reads the title, and pushes it back. "That's one that I'm not going to read," he says. 4-5

In their representational responses such as artwork and writing and skits, the older children reflected a wider knowledge of story conventions and ability to manipulate them for specific purposes as well as a better sense of a story's wholeness, in which all the parts must fit. When Ellen wanted to end her writing based on Someday, for instance, she did not use "happily ever after," realizing its connection to a particular story frame. She was able to find a substitute ending device, however. Her last page reads "Some - ... oh darn, it's time to go in." The skit, "Queens and Trees Don't Mix," already described as an example of child-initiated drama, showed the tight story structure which children were able to produce when dealing with a well-known frame. Other aspects of this skit, like the queen's royal accent, showed a sense of attention to all the relevant details rather than the piecemeal approach common among the younger children.

Responses to Where the Sidewalk Ends. One book that was consistently available to children in all three classrooms in the study was Shel Silverstein's collection of humorous verse, Where the Sidewalk Ends.
Responses made to this book served to highlight some of the typical characteristics of each group.

The K-1 children liked *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, particularly those first graders who had had prior exposure to it. It was one of the books a group of them chose to share when a University class came for an afternoon visit. On another occasion when Ben and Tim wanted to share "The Acrobats" with Mrs. H., asking her to read it for them, they acted out the ending by tumbling down the two carpeted steps into the library. Despite the positive attitude toward the book, however, there were comparatively few documented references to children spending time with it.

Judging by the quantity of attention that *Where the Sidewalk Ends* received in the 2-3 group, it was best liked at that level. Most of the responses were in the categories of contact, sharing, and free comment. The book went from child to child during work time and was sometimes the subject of controversy when books to be taken home for the evening were spoken for.

Before morning circle, Keith is stretched on the floor by the bookcase, reading from *Sidewalk*.

After circle, Katie picks up *Sidewalk* from where Keith left it, and sits there reading.

In a few minutes Keith reclaims the book to read "Sick" aloud to himself.

Later Doug says to Mrs. H., "Wanta read? Let's read some poetry." He gets *Sidewalk* from the shelf where it has been put away. "Let's look 'em up in the index," he says. "Merry" is his choice. Mickey joins them during the reading, mentioning something that his class had done with the poem "The Yipyuk" the previous year.
At noon clean-up three children try to reserve the one available copy of *Sidewalk* in order to take it home that night.

A few days later, Amanda reads "Lazy Jane" to Mrs. H., saying that she hasn't got to read one poem out of *Sidewalk* all this year because someone always has it out. 2-3

The characters in *Sidewalk* were familiar enough to be reference points for the children. After Mrs. Patrick read aloud a book with an anti-pollution message, Doug commented that the messy creature in that story would like Sara Sylvia Cynthia Stout (Silverstein’s creation who "would not take the garbage out").

There was also evidence to suggest that for at least one child in the 2-3 group, *Where the Sidewalk Ends* served as a prototype for poetry.

After a field trip, children are assigned several tasks including the option of writing a poem about an object they have studied in detail. Amy doesn't know where to begin, or so she says to Mrs. H. After some talk about what poems might be like, Mrs. H. asks if she has ever heard any poems about trees (Amy's object is a small branch with a few berries on it, which she says came from a tree).

"Yeah, one. If I can find the book." Amy locates *Sidewalk* and reads "Tree House" to Mrs. H., although she has not been asked to produce the poem as evidence. They agree that Amy's poem cannot sound just like this one, however. Mrs. H. asks Amy if she can think of any interesting words to describe her berry branch (which she now says is a bush), since poets sometimes repeat interesting words.

"Oh, I know one that repeats lots of words," says Amy. She turns to "Lazy Jane" and reads it aloud.

Finally she writes: "My berry bush/My berry bush/ I like my berry bush." When asked to think about the way the twigs felt to the touch she suggests as a next line "My berry bush has sharp stickers."
Mrs. H. comments that she doesn't really have to use a whole sentence in a poem, that sometimes poets make a list of good descriptions, like "bright berries, sharp stickers..."

"Huh?" says Amy.

A later check of several of the poems in Where the Sidewalk Ends reveals that despite unusual page arrangement and vocabulary, most of the syntax is entirely conventional and complete. 2-3

Fourth and fifth graders also liked Where the Sidewalk Ends; it was a favorite source of material for reading aloud to someone else although compared to the 2-3 group only about one-third the number of Sidewalk related anecdotes were recorded. Some of the children, particularly the fourth grade boys, spent more time with it than others. The book was so well known among the whole group, however, that references to it brought immediate shared meanings. When they dubbed the student teacher "Paul Bunyan" they were referring to Silverstein's version, and because of this reminder the poem was read aloud during a class meeting. During their theme focus on monsters and dragons, Miss Lynde furnished special materials (feathers, sequins, glo-paint) so that a group could create their own version of "The Yipyuk." At least some of the 4-5 group drew on the Silverstein material and incorporated it knowingly into another literary frame; the authors of the "Queens and Trees" skit picked up the title and meter of "Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me Too," making a chant from it to end their production.

In all three classes, no other single book generated as many observed response events. Other books stimulated more writing, more picture making, more extended discussion. But no other book was as frequently handled or as frequently offered to another for sharing.
And while this interest was consistently high, it peaked sharply — especially with the sharing response — in the middle group.

Response Statements

What readers say (or write) about a book is the usual measure of their response to it, an indicator of the kind of thinking which they bring to literature. It was assumed here that because of growing cognitive skill, children's oral responses would show some differences in the way statements were formulated from one grade level group to another (see the developmental model in Applebee, 1978). The content of children's free comments and of discussions in each group was examined to determine general patterns, and responses to a single picture book were collected in order to provide a more direct comparison of the differences from one group to another.

Developmental patterns. Although most of the statements which children at Parkland were heard to make about literature did fall into some recognizable categories, they did not reveal a clear progression of differences between the K-1 and 2-3 groups, or between the 2-3 and 4-5 groups. Since responses were collected in a wide range of situations, it was not possible to attribute any response feature to the influence of development alone. There were obvious differences, however, between the youngest and the oldest children in the study, and these indicated some directions in the changing character of response.

In all groups there seemed to be a priority on establishing a literal level of meaning. With the younger children this was generally expressed as an explanation that made sense to the child whether it
was supported by the text or not, so that sometimes children seemed to be talking about a book quite different from the one at hand. In the group discussion of Corduroy, first-grade Ben suggested that the stuffed bear was maybe a wind-up toy, and "that's how he moved around," even though there is no hint of a winding key in either the pictures or text of the book. In the same group there was some trouble with the discussion of Palmiero and the Ogre until everyone was clear that the title was not "Palmiero and the Yogurt."

Even though literal explanation and questions were heard less frequently among older children, it seemed likely that establishing meaning carried the same priority for them. Although their wider experience and background may have dictated fewer instances where they needed to verbalize this concern, unfamiliar terms in a story could bring the issue to surface.

- Laurie reads aloud to herself: "The man clapped his hands." Jennifer C., reading over her shoulder, corrects her: "The man cupped his hands." Laurie frowns. "Does that make sense?" she asks. 2-3

- After the reading of the first chapter of A Stranger Came Ashore, the first question by a child is for further explanation of the Scottish house described as having a "but end" and a "ben end." 4-5

Children did not necessarily comment about meanings in which they felt secure; but sometimes the teacher's questions showed that their perceptions, although satisfactory to them, were not borne out by the work.

- The group reading By the Shores of Silver Lake discusses the chapter where the Ingalls' old dog Jack dies. He goes to sleep one night, and in the morning "Only Jack's body, stiff and cold, lay curled there on the blanket." Later the text mentions the possibility that
Jack is chasing rabbits in the Happy Hunting Ground. The words "die" or "death" are not used, and the children seem not to have made use of the information about burying the body—perhaps because the phrasing was "they buried it..." The children agree in explaining that Jack is sick; he is stiff because he has caught a cold during the night, but as the sun shines he is better so he can go hunting. 2-3

While this interpretation does make reasonable human sense, it does not fit the text. Fourth and fifth grade children might well have understood this example more accurately, although they struggled in their own way to agree on a literal rendition of the accident scene by which Finn Learson arrives in *A Stranger Came Ashore*. What seemed consistent from one age group to another was the tendency to work out logical explanations for puzzling events or situations; the difference lay primarily in the complexity of the material that was puzzling.

Another tendency which was noted across grade levels was children's inclination to mention the similarities rather than the differences among books or stories. This sort of comment was facilitated by the teachers' provision of multiple picture book editions or variants of one folk tale, or of books related around a theme. Yet although there are obvious contrasts in such books, children almost always reported the likenesses.

Ben and Terrence "read" to Mrs. H. from *Over in the Meadow*. "And there's another book just like this one," Ben says, getting another edition from the shelf, "only the pictures are different." The two boys go through both books, identifying those pages that are most alike. K-1

As Mrs. Christopher reads *Potato Pancakes All Around Danny Joe* speaks up: "This is just like Stone Soup!" K-1
When Mrs. Patrick introduces *A Bear Called Paddington* by telling how the story begins, Amanda says, "That's like *Charlotte's Web* because in that the little girl gets a pig to take care of." 2-3

In a discussion of *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, Jeanne A. says, "This is like *The Fat Cat* - it keeps repeating." 2-3

After hearing *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek*, Christy remembers another book that fits J.P.'s description "where the pictures are little in the beginning but then they get bigger." Several children supply the title she has trouble thinking of - *Dawn*. 4-5

There were fewer explicit spontaneous comments about similarity in the older group, perhaps because comparison was such a commonplace activity that it did not warrant special mention. When pressed, children identified both similarities and differences between stories. Younger children could also identify differences when questioned. Only one of the K-1 children was observed making spontaneous comments that pointed out contrasts.

After the library aide reads *Lambs for Dinner*, Danny Joe offers a comparison to "*The Three Little Pigs." "It's not like that other story where the wolf puts 'em in a pot." K-1

The fact that this child made several such comparisons and also characteristically gave intent attention to books may indicate some link between reflection on stories and this sort of response.

Other kinds of responses showed clearer age level differences. When the K-1 children talked about books, they made personal statements that were tied to the stories only through association.
As the class discusses *Deep in the Forest*, one child says, "We went to Lake Hope once and there was a forest there with bears and things." K-1

During the reading of *Tikki Tikki Tembo*, Warren wants to tell the group about parades and Chinese dragons that he has seen. K-1

About *The Little Drummer Boy*, Ben says that he has a drum at home and he can play it, and besides he was Baby Jesus once, at church, in a tee shirt and blanket. K-1

Many of the personal references made by older children were not merely associative; they revealed a connection of the child's own experience to some interpreted meaning from the book.

Sharon talks about Debbie, the main character in *Grandma Didn't Wave Back*. Sharon thinks Debbie is really close to her grandma, and that reminds her of someone: "Yeah, this girl I knew, she went from school right to her grandmother's and she didn't go home till after dark." 4-5

All children seemed interested to some degree in the "reality" of a story. For younger children this was expressed as an attempt to identify whether or not the story was true, or possible.

Danny Joe grins about *Henny Penny*. "There's no such thing as the sky falling," he says. K-1

About *Where the Wild Things Are*, Mark says, "It's not true that a forest grows. When you're at your house and you get sent to bed without any supper, a forest doesn't grow." K-1

Older children continued to classify stories according to their reality, although they used more precise terms like "fantasy" or "fairy tale." They also moved in the direction of statements about the probability of situations and characters, whether or not they were like real life.
When Christy says of Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret that "It tells a lot about a girl. An awful lot," her implication is that the book is realistic in a way unlike other books she knows. 4-5

Several girls report that they like The Pinballs better than A Stranger Came Ashore because it's about things they know and it could really happen. 4-5

The trend toward a broader perspective on a work and its relationship to the world in general was also noted in children's interpretation of story themes. When questioned, some children in the K-1 group could reduce a folk tale to its "lesson," as Danny Joe did when he stated the theme for The Little Red Hen: "When someone already baked the cake and you haven't helped, they're probably just gonna say no." Older children, when asked for the point of a story, made more generalized, disembedded statements, ones less tied to the particular text under consideration. One fifth grader, for instance, said of Tico and the Golden Wings, "Everybody's different, and you shouldn't be jealous." Metaphorical interpretation of theme was seen only in the upper group and then only rarely, in response to the teacher's questioning.

Miss Lynde reads Dawn "because of its pictures and descriptive language... you've probably all heard it at least once, but I thought you would enjoy hearing it again." The group discusses the colors, and the shape, of the first picture. Someone says it looks like an egg.

"Did he use that shape on purpose?" asks Miss Lynde.

"Oh!" says Ellen. "It's like a chick hatching. Night turns into day - the chicken comes out of an egg - you know." 4-5
A common strategy for answering questions in the K-1 group was retelling a story in all or in part, as if the story could speak for itself better than the child could speak for it.

Mark and Sammy are writing about a picture-in-progress, based on Clyde Monster, in which the monster is "going to his house." When asked what a monster's house looks like, Mark says, "It's a cave, see," and launches into a retelling of the story, with dialogue and dramatic intonation. K-1

Children in the 4-5 group continued to use a similar strategy, but it involved more summarization than straight retelling and a more conscious, purposeful level of manipulation. The directive to "tell me something about the story" was frequently interpreted as a request for a summary, and children complied, but they also seemed aware of another level of expectation.

Jonathan and Tommy, when asked to talk about Beauty and the Beast on tape, retell the story in considerable detail. After they listen to the playback they explain that they forgot to say anything "about" the story and add more comments, beginning, "I think that the book is, uh, good, 'n also it has lots of colorful words in it and colorful pictures in it." 4-5

Christy and Ellen, asked to talk about the same book, begin by asking each other questions about the form of events in the book. As their ideas wane, they lapse into a retelling, using the pictures as guide. 4-5

In quizzing each other about the book, the two girls were quite consciously copying their teacher's tone and her manner of asking questions. This sort of response was observed several times in the 4-5 group, and the children were explicit about what they were doing. In one instance one of them remarked to another that they "would have
to ask good questions like Miss Lynde does." But "playing teacher" was also observed in the K-1 group, where Mrs. Christopher encouraged children to ask questions in the sharing circle. However, these children relied more on the precise wording of questions which they had heard, sometimes many times, even though they acted as if the ideas had just occurred to them. The older children, by contrast, could manipulate this response strategy with more awareness of its possibilities.

Another of the threads noted in children's statements about books concerned their perception of the author's role. In all the groups, teachers were careful to introduce books with the author's name and point out books written by the same person. In the K-1 group, however, children expressed more interest in the creation than the creator. Even though several books by Leo Lionni were prominently displayed after the group had worked with *The Biggest House in the World*, it was the stories rather than their authorship that brought comment. There were times when the K-1 children recognized the efforts of an illustrator, as in "He used paint 'n stuff," a comment partly related to the group's concern with using media. At the 4-5 level Miss Lynde encouraged close analysis of the illustrations in picture books, and this emphasis was reflected in free comments. But the older children also made statements about the author as producer of a book. While some of these may have been generated by the investigator's role as an author, it seems unlikely that such was entirely the case. It may be that as children began to feel more confidence in themselves as writers, they were more attuned to the role.
Sharon talks about the number of books that Judy Blume has written. "How does she ever write so many books? ... Look how long they are." 4-5

Christy describes Stuart Little: "Stuart's a mouse and he's got human parents. It's real neat. He really uses his imagination in this book." 4-5

Overall, there appeared to be two general directions in which children's response statements developed. First, particularly personal, associative statements centering on a small part of the text, as well as statements where meaning was embedded in references to the text itself moved toward more cohesive, more generalized statements where meaning was evident without reference to the text. The second major area of development concerned children's growing ability to make deliberate use of verbal response strategies; the older children were more conscious of the kinds of things that can be said about books. Considering the similarity of teaching approaches in the two groups, it seems reasonable to think of these patterns as related to a combination of cognitive level and experience.

Response statements on *The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch*. The comparison of children's oral responses to a single picture book provided another way of looking at development-related differences. Twenty-eight children (5 kindergarteners, 7 first graders, 5 second graders, 2 third graders, 3 fourth graders, 6 fifth graders) taped free comments about *The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch* by David McPhail, either alone or with one to three other children and with a copy of the book at hand. Later each of these children discussed the book with the investigator,
again on tape, answering questions relating to classification of the story, the distinction between real and make-believe, character, and theme.

The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch was chosen for this purpose because it was a book new to all the children. More importantly, it was relatively brief and had features attractive to the younger group, like a full-color, fire-breathing dragon, while at the same time it was sufficiently complex to allow older children the possibility of demonstrating more sophisticated responses. Fantasy intrudes upon contemporary reality in a way that sets the story apart from folk and fairy tales, and presents some difficulty of definition. Also, the theme might be interpreted in more than one way; adult critics would remark the irony in any of these interpretations.

In this story, Moony Finch, a child who loves to draw, is given a box of crayons for his second birthday and thereafter practices drawing whenever and wherever he can, so that he becomes very skilled. One day in the park, a passerby asks if she may have the picture which Moony has just drawn. When she touches it, his sketch of a cloud lifts off the paper and floats away. Then Moony's park-bench companion asks for a picture of a treasure chest filled with gold coins. Touched, and spilled, the coins attract a large crowd who noisily demand other pictures of material value. Finally Moony sketches the whole group with their new possessions and then uses his "just-in-case eraser" on the treasures. As they disappear in Moony's drawing they disappear also in real life, and the angry crowd turns on the artist. Quickly he draws
a fierce dragon and tosses it to the people, who grab for the paper. The dragon springs to life and chases the crowd away. To protect himself, Moony draws its likeness and erases it bit by bit - teeth first, claws, tail, and so on. Alone, he draws "one last little picture." The final illustration shows Moony walking home with his drawing pad under one arm and a pet-sized dragon following him at the end of a string.

When asked to respond on their own to this book, children at all levels used some similar approaches. It was common for them to say either that they liked it or that it was good, statements that appeared to be equivalent in meaning. "Funny" or "neat" were the usual descriptive terms. Another typical strategy was to identify a favorite part.

Predictably, children at all levels also referred to the illustrations in some way. Kindergarteners who mentioned the pictures either said that they were good, or focused on the story information that came from picture content. Randy and Frank, kindergarteners who talked about the book together, were concerned with the colors of the crayons that Moony Finch used, and the shape of the dragon's tail. Amanda, a second grader, noticed that the pictures were colorful. Fifth graders called attention to the medium of the illustrations, and the way the illustrator had executed his work. Sharon and Christy, for instance, decided that he had used "probably watercolor ... and some pencil," and noticed his use of detail.

Several first graders tackled the problem of literal meaning, which was complicated by the fantasy element.
Danny Joe: I think it's not really true. Sort of like a folk tale, I think. [Deep breath.] I just don't know what - how - he does it. It's like magic. Because when he drew it - just touch it - it came alive. K-1

Sara: That picture, it looks like the man's magic and he did it. But I don't really understand these pictures.... What do you think made that turn into the car? That's a hard thing to figure out, I guess. K-1

Older children seemed content to think of the book as make-believe; they referred to the event of pictures coming to life, but without the younger ones' puzzlement. Diane, a fifth grader (and Danny Joe's sister), said, "It's fantasized like no other book I've heard or read before."

Fourth and fifth graders did not depend on retelling strategies, although they summarized incidents in support of their favorite parts. Some of the youngest made a partial retelling suffice as their entire response.

Kandi: He loved crayons and he drew every picture for most everybody, 'n he wanted to draw a lot 'n a lot 'n a lot 'n a lot of pictures. An' when he draws a lot 'n a lot of pictures he gave 'em away 'n they come true. K-1

The second graders who responded were especially given to partial retelling, although they seemed more concerned with being more complete and including proper detail.

Generally, the second and third grade children were hard to categorize as a group on this free response task. They did seem to pay more attention to the print features of the book, one of them noting the dedication, and others asking for clarification of the title and
author's name. A third grader was the only child of any group who suggested an immediate sense of identification with the main character.

Doug: I thought it was good because I like to draw too. But I don't have a magical 'raser and I don't have a magical pencil and I don't have no magical crayons but still I love to draw. 2-3

During the follow-up interviews, which were conducted individually, children were asked to deal with a predetermined list of features, ones which they had not necessarily touched upon in their earlier responses. The first questions were designed to discover if or how they would classify the book, by telling "what kind" it was. Some types of answers occurred across grade levels: expressing a reaction like "a good book" or "It was funny"; and referring to content - "a magic book," "a drawing book," "a dragon book." Other children gave capsule summaries: "It's a book about a boy who...." With younger children there was some indication of letting the story speak for itself. One first grader said, "I'd read 'em the book," and one of the second graders was inclined toward retelling the opening pages. While almost every child offered a classificatory response, only at the fourth and fifth grade level was there any application of conventional critical terminology. Connie, a fourth grader, mentioned both terms "fiction" and "non-fiction," thought for a moment about the difference, and identified the book as fiction. Diane, a fifth grader, referred to it again as "fantasized."

All the children were questioned about the real possibility of drawing pictures that came to life, with uniformly negative response. They were then asked to talk about the reality of the dragons in the
story, and to explain the fact that the crowd bothering Moony Finch ran from the big dragon. The K-1 children knew that pictures could not be transformed into the real thing, and verified this from their own experience.

- Randy: Because I had a piece of paper before and I drew a cloud and it didn't [slide off the page]. K-1
- Sara: Well, if things slipped off papers, then no one would be able to show a picture to somebody. K-1

About the appearance of the dragons there was some confusion. Some children said it was in a dream, others that the people just thought they saw a dragon. Several first graders tried to establish a more literal explanation that would reconcile their idea of the dragon as impossible with its obvious effect on the story characters.

- Gretchen: It's people in there. Inside of the dragon...makin' fire come out of its mouth. K-1
- Danny Joe: ... it's a paper dragon. K-1
- Warren: When he drawed it, it turned out to be a mural....

Mrs. H.: Is the little dragon real?

Warren: Yeah, it turned out to be an iguana. K-1

Even first-grade Ben, who could explain that "this is a book and books ain't true," justified the dragon's unreality by saying "dragons don't have them tails like that." At the 2-3 level, both the third graders interviewed accounted for the problematical events in the book with simple explanations: it "couldn't really happen," but "it's fantasy,"
and "that's how it is in the story." Fourth and fifth graders had little trouble in phrasing statements that recognized the world of the book as a sphere of its own.

- Christy: ... in real life it couldn't be, but in that book they're showing it. If you get what I mean. 4-5

- J.P.: [The dragon] is real in the book, but not in real life. 4-5

When the discussion turned to character and an invitation for the child to say what he or she would have done in the crowd near Moony at the park, the younger children showed an inclination to interpret the situation so as to protect Moony's feelings. The story text describes the crowd as "greedy," but only one child in the K-1 group picked up that word. To them, the people were "stupid" or "grouchy" or "mean," and "they should settle down," or "they shouldn't yell at him." Many suggested that they would quiet down the crowd on Moony's behalf, or be quiet themselves, or at the very least, mannerly.

- Sara: ... I wouldn't yell. I'd just go up to Moony and ask politely if I could have a picture. K-1

The younger children's concern with appropriate group behavior, a classroom emphasis, seemed consistent with their worry that Moony might also use too much paper.

- Kandi: ... [he] will say I'm gonna waste my paper so I can't draw no more. K-1

Older children were more inclined to pinpoint the description of the crowd characters as "greedy" or "hasty" or "unpatient," and to consider the likelihood that they would have acted the same in that situation.
Doug: I'd have to be greedy if I was in the crowd. 2-3

Diane: ... probably [would have] asked him to draw me a ten-speed. 4-5

A question that probed for theme - "Did Moony Finch learn anything in this story?" - brought the literal response "He learned to draw" from several of the children in second grade or below. Some of the youngest did make a theme statement, expressed in terms of the story.

Mindy: Never draw like that again ... because all them people would say I want this! I want that! K-1

Danny Joe: He shouldn't go out and do sorts of stuff like that because it might happen again. K-1

Most of the older children identified the lesson they had found in the story in general terms; that is, they made disembedded theme statements that might serve equally well for other stories.

Teresa: Well, he learned [people] were selfish. 2-3

Brad: You can't do everything for everybody. 4-5

J.P.: You shouldn't give everything to people that they want 'cause they'll always want more. 4-5

In total, the responses to The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch reaffirmed elements of the developmental pattern noted in other oral responses. Young children's statements were more tied to their immediate concerns and to the context of the story; older children made more use of a wider perspective and more generalized or disembedded statements. A particular emphasis in some of the young children's
response was their apparent inclination to explain puzzling events literally, in a way that was logical to them, contrasted with older children's clearer acceptance of the story as its own world with its own rules.

**Context - Response Relationships**

Examples cited in the preceding sections on response types and age-grade level characteristics included some information about the situation in which the responses occurred. In order to suggest patterns of relationship between context and response, it was necessary to shift the center of attention to the situation itself, to identify those contexts that occurred most frequently, and to scrutinize the types and characteristics of the associated responses. While the term "context" carries with it the implication of the wider environment of the school and the classroom, its direct meaning here is more limited. A specific activity, the participants involved, the materials used, and sometimes the activity's place in a sequence of events constituted the "context" that seemed to have the most bearing on response to literature.

**Teacher-Created Contexts**

Although new visitors to Parkland Elementary School were likely to remark on its seemingly casual atmosphere, with teachers involved in but not directly managing events, this level of observation does not do justice to the teachers' role. Pre-planning and organization on the teachers' part created a more deliberate structure than was immediately evident. The range of activities from which children could
choose their work, as well as the materials they used, were a direct result of teacher planning. Even though children frequently picked their own work companions and chose their own sequence for getting things done, teachers retained considerable control in these areas through direct suggestion and the manipulation of required work assignments. All in all most of those contexts in which children were seen expressing response to literature were teacher-created or teacher-sanctioned.

Provision and presentation of literature. In all three classrooms the teachers were consistent in providing books in addition to those in the ERC. They made frequent trips to public libraries (and occasionally to discount book shops), and because of this the book collections accessible to children had a core of familiar titles along with some that were transitory. Since many of the library trips were designed to provide books about special topics (monsters for 4-5, scary things for 2-3, folk tales for K-1 and so on), the children had access both to general collections in the ERC and their classroom bookshelves, and to special theme-oriented collections. Occasionally teachers provided books that were earmarked for certain children, because the content fit a project the child was working on, or because the book seemed likely to strike a particularly responsive chord in that child.

The arrangement of books in the classroom was seldom by chance. Teachers called attention to categories and highlighted similarities by placement, labeling, and special display. During the opening week of school, for instance, there was a prominent display of nursery rhyme books in the K-1 area, with one rack labeled "nursery rhymes" and other
editions standing up on the tops of available bookcases and cupboards. In the 2-3 group the large bookcase had shelf tags: books about people, books about animals, books about things, folk tales, poetry and riddles. Four books were displayed so as to call attention to their illustrations at a special watercolor center in the 4-5 area: Dawn, The Crane Maiden, When the Sky Is Like Lace, and The Tiniest Sound.

The provision of books made literature accessible to children at Parkland; the presentation of books made it almost unavoidable. When teachers brought new books into the classroom they almost always treated it as an occasion, introducing and commenting about the new arrivals. This was frequently a whole-group activity, although particular books were sometimes introduced to the class by sharing them with a small group first. Reading aloud to the whole group was, with minor interruptions for special events, a daily occurrence in all three groups. These read-aloud choices were usually focused on a theme or pointed toward a particular purpose.

The comments through which teachers introduced books and their strategies in choosing books to bring into the classroom and to read aloud seemed to serve two related contextual functions. First, they emphasized connections and associations among literary selections; second, they helped establish expectations for particular books. For example, Miss Lynde chose to read aloud a series of transformational folk tales to the 4-5 group "to get them ready for A Stranger Came Ashore." Mrs. Christopher shared more than one version of several folk tales, including The Little Red Hen and Little Red Riding Hood. When
Mrs. Patrick brought in *Pancakes for Breakfast*, she wondered aloud who remembered *The Quicksand Book*, by the same author, or who had read any of his other books. Introductory comments by all the teachers invited attention to content and implied basic types of response. "Notice the descriptive words," a teacher might say, or "You might want to compare these."

The teachers' efforts to provide and present literature had an obvious influence on the quantity of response that was generated. A display of new books brought a flurry of browsing and choosing; when the new books were introduced one by one, these responses were intensified and particularized, so that more children seemed to know what books they wanted and were more eager to get them in hand.

Having books within reach - books that could be handled, leafed through, read again, or simply carried about - seemed to be an important factor in generating response. Children sometimes made brief references to books that they remembered, but writing and artwork and other reflective responses called for having the book at hand. Many of the photographs taken during the study showed children referring to a book as they worked on a mural or a picture. The older children were especially interested in having a particular book if their own writing was related to it. Perhaps most important, the books at hand were the books that were discussed. For many children, having a book was prerequisite to talking about it.

Mrs. H. asks Amanda to tell her about the book that suggested the writing (about rocks) that is on display. "It's *Everybody Needs a Rock*," says Amanda, and before explaining further, she goes to the teacher in an adjoining area and borrows a copy as proof. 2-3
Carl and Mel are working on a mural of Tikki Tikki Tembo. Mrs. H. says, "Carl, tell me about your picture."

"Well," says Carl, "here's the old man with the ladder and here's where they live and here's the well, and wait a minute--"

He disappears toward the bookcase and comes back several minutes later, empty-handed.

"What were you looking for, Carl?"

"That book, Tikki Tikki Tembo."

"Can't you tell me about it without the book?"

"Nope." K-1

Books that were read aloud were usually delivered directly into the hands of a waiting child, or left within easy reach. More often than not they disappeared to surface later, accompanied by a picture or a child-made book. At Parkland the books that generated the most talk and the most varied responses were those that the teacher shared with the group. The fact that a book had claimed the teacher's attention gave it, in a sense, special sanction, and this may have had considerable influence with some children. Moreover, books that had been shared aloud were accessible in the cognitive sense; children were acquainted with the story without dealing with whatever problems the act of reading it might bring. And again, these books were left at hand.

One of the telling observations about children's contact with The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch was that no pictures were drawn of it, no stories written about it, no dramas planned around it. Despite the fact that the story was read to and discussed with nearly
one-third of the children in the study, none of them went on to a type of response beyond the required talk. It seems likely that one explanation for this was the book's inaccessibility. Rather than being left on a display rack or shelved with other classroom books in a way that invited attention, it was kept with the investigator's tape recorder and other paraphernalia on top of a library cabinet - in reach but off limits. One first grader suggested that she might make "a collage or a diorama or something" and asked to borrow it; but the book was needed elsewhere and her project didn't happen. Although another copy of this book was in the general K-1 collection for a time, no child seemed to discover it.

If the provision and presentation of literature helped to determine the quantity of response that was generated, the teacher's choices and strategies must also have influenced the characteristics of the responses that occurred. The repeated emphases on making connections, pointing out books that were related by author or theme or illustrative technique, would seem to account at least in part for the children's inclination to mention similarities as a spontaneous oral response. In a different vein, teachers' comments about specific books served to focus children's expectations and probably their reactions.

Jerry is making his own book about raccoons. Miss Lynde brings him a book from the public library, commenting that "it has lots of information." Later in the day he reports with some disappointment that "it's mostly just a story." 4-5
When Mrs. Christopher introduces *Anno's Journey*, a book she has bought for herself, she asks the group to help her decide "if it's a book for kids like you or for older people." When she adds that it doesn't have any words, Ben says, "It oughta be for kids like us, then." During the rest of the day the book receives unusually close scrutiny from several children. K-1

Teachers who provide and present literature also inevitably respond to it themselves. Their approaches and even their terminology are likely to influence the child's construal of what constitutes appropriate response. Examples of children "playing teacher" by presenting books to an imaginary audience or by questioning one another when asked to discuss a book have already been cited. It is harder to document the effects of teacher attitude and enthusiasm, since these are implicit in all their plans and activities. One of the unavoidably qualitative judgments of this study was that the teachers' own appreciation for the children's literature they shared was a crucial factor in the context for response.

**Book discussions.** Various kinds of discussion contexts - small group, whole group, individual; one book, several books - were arranged by teachers in the study, and sometimes by other adults. Some of the characteristics of discussion responses, notably their focus and the occurrence of repetition, affirmation, and clarification, were reported in the section on oral response.

One function of some of the discussion noted in this study seemed to be to give children a chance to find words for their immediate response to a story or poem. These discussions showed a minimum of
imposed structure, with the result that the teacher discovered what
children were thinking without revealing her own thoughts about the
book.

Mrs. Patrick reads *Fox Eyes* to the group, and
then asks for comments.

Amanda says she has that book at home; it came
from a book club. Laurie adds that her dad
gets books through the mail all the time.

Jeannie A. mentions that you can see shadows
of things in the pictures. Mickey says the
pictures are good, and Robert finds his fav­
orite picture.

This part of the discussion seemed qualitatively different from a
later segment where a focus had been introduced.

Mrs. Patrick asks about the ending. "Is it
important that the fox forgets what he sees?"

"Yes," says one child, "because then he would
go out during the day and get everybody's
food."

Jeannie B. suggests that on the last page the
fox is sitting and wondering about all the
things he's seen. 2-3

Most of the discussions observed at Parkland involved more adult
direction. In these, children changed or developed their interpreta­
tions of meaning by talking about a book, in response to questioning
and the eliciting of examples.

Sandy has been reading *Spectacles*, a picture
book in which the illustrations show how
common objects can look very different to a
myopic person. Mrs. Patrick asks her to talk
about the book with Amanda, who wears glasses.
The two girls eventually take the book to
Mrs. H., sharing it as if it were a guessing
game, asking her to transform each fuzzy
picture into the everyday components shown
on the following page.
Mrs. Patrick joins the group and asks the girls if they know why the pictures are made like that.

Amanda says, "It's sort of like a recipe book, so if you wanted to like make a picture of a dragon you could use a house and a Christmas tree...."

"But why is it called Spectacles?" asks the teacher.

Neither child can say what "spectacles" means.

Mrs. Patrick points out the first page of text, which says that the little girl didn't even know she needed glasses. Still Amanda isn't clear about the meaning. She proposes that "spectacles" refers to the fuzzy pictures on alternate pages. When Mrs. Patrick points out the last picture in the book, with a little girl trying on her spectacles, the girls decide that the word means glasses.

Mrs. Patrick asks Amanda if things look different to her without her glasses. Both the teacher and Mrs. H. also wear glasses, and give examples of how the world looks without lenses. Amanda then says that she sees a blur in one eye without her glasses, and describes how Sandy would appear from where she is sitting. The adults tell her that now she has a good "recipe" for a picture in Spectacles. 2-3

When more children were involved in discussion, the immediate context changed. Teachers did not conduct extensive verbal exchanges with individuals, but each child had a greater number of responses against which to compare his or her own. Children reacted to one another sometimes directly, sometimes through the teacher. Meanings arrived at in this way often passed through a series of interpretations.

Mrs. Christopher invites comment about the ending of The Three Billy Goats Gruff: "snip, snap, snout/my tale's told out."


Tim says, "It's like when you snip off something, but--like snipping off my dog's tail." He uses his fingers like scissors. Two other boys pick up the tail-cutting idea, restating it and agreeing with Tim.

Warren disagrees. "It's like my story is at the end," he says.

Mrs. Christopher affirms that the idea of ending is an important one. K-1

For the classes in this study, discussion seemed to be the primary tool for direct teaching about literature. The meanings of words and terms, the use of literary conventions, interpretation of setting, theme, and characters, and characteristics of literary form were all dealt with by teachers in the discussion context. The conventional terminology for the formulation of critical statements appeared in some children's responses after words were supplied to fit the meanings established through discussion. The use of "transformation" in the 4-5 group is a case in point, as is "refrain" with the 2-3 group, and "folk tale" in K-1.

Book extensions. Using a term from their studies with Charlotte Huck, all the teachers showed concern about providing for book "extensions." That is, they wanted to give children a chance to extend their interest in or their reflection on a story through follow-up activities related to it in some way: writing, art or construction activities, drama and the like. On the surface of things these activities often seemed more concerned with practice in routine language or manipulative skills. That was, admittedly, one of their important functions. But although much of what went on in the course of extensions appeared to be distinctly non-literary, a close look at the products showed that
children's understanding of and approach to literature were also involved. In representing a story in some way, children worked through its meaning, relating concepts to symbols in what Elkind (1976) identifies as connotative learning, a concrete operational precursor of the reflective intelligence exhibited at the formal operational level. Thus the making of pictures and games and plays gave children an opportunity to make sense of a story not as an adult critic would do, but in a particularly childlike way.

There were several means by which teachers provided for the book-extension context. The designation of space for artwork and projects and the provision of varied concrete materials seemed to be important factors, especially when coupled with teacher suggestion.

- Early in the year Sharon, Christy, and Tanya present a felt-story representation of Little Blue and Little Yellow. When asked why they have chosen this activity, Sharon says, "Well, Miss Lynde had some felt that she wanted someone to use, and ...." 4-5

The provision of the assortment of materials known as "nerf" made possible the construction of dioramas like the house of the three little pigs and Jim climbing the beanstalk. When teachers provided new materials, just as when they provided new books, an upsurge of interest and new representational responses were the result.

With materials at hand, teachers sometimes used discussion to elicit the children's own suggestions for activities.

- After Miss Lynde introduces a new collection of books, she says: "Some of you have been making pictures from books. Let's take a minute to think about what else you could do after reading some of these books about monsters and dragons."
A list of work choices already written on the board includes 1) write a story for wordless books, 2) a picture to go along with a story, 3) make up your own monster.

The children add to the last idea: write about it, nerf, stuffed, cardboard, paper mache, and clay. When the ideas come more slowly, the teacher asks what they could do with a dragon's home. Three suggestions are listed: diorama, cage, construct a home. Miss Lynde puts in a suggestion about making surveys and asks children to propose topics (How long is a dragon's tail? Is there really a Loch Ness monster? Do you think there really are dragons?). Someone says that they have forgotten descriptive writing. 4-5

Obviously some of these suggestions were to lead children away from literature, toward inquiry and information sources. But the encouragement to reflect on and represent stories was there. Vivian and Christy wrote texts for wordless books, respectively The Mystery of the Giant's Footprints and Creepy Castle. J.P. began his own book based on The Judge. Julie wrote a "dragon story" which turned out to be a prototypical fairy tale, with the comment, "I've read so many stories like this I just decided to write one like it." Pictures and descriptive writing were modeled on Kickle Snifters and The Snopp on the Sidewalk, and several three-dimensional projects were begun.

An important offshoot of the work with materials and media was the regularity with which written representation followed. From a language arts perspective, teachers often encouraged representational responses in order to give the children something to write about.

The book-extension context seemed somewhat easier to initiate than to monitor. When teachers did not have an opportunity to discuss work in progress with some of the children, hastily-formed ideas were
sometimes pursued. Aside from the fact that at Parkland there was a
strong inclination to trust children's innate capacity for learning
on their own, two influences operated to raise the standards for repre-
sentational response. First, there was a strong tradition of activities
of this sort. All but the kindergarteners referred to work done in
previous years - books written, pictures made, "literary lunches"
enjoyed. The writing files were there as an extra reminder; after
the 4-5 group considered Dawn, Sharon went to the file and produced a
book she had written about it the year before, titled "When the Sun
Goes Down." The second influence was interaction. Many book extension
projects were done by small groups, with children serving as a check on
each other's ideas. Even individual projects were largely public be-
cause of the physical setting, and questions like "What are you doing?"
and "What are you doing that for?" were common.

Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that putting children in the
book extension context did not necessarily guarantee the quality of
their attention to literature. The investigator worked with a fourth
grade boy on a board game based on Tops and Bottoms and was surprised
to find that her own talk as well as his had more to do with mechanics
than symbolization. It was also true, however, that the provision of
extension materials and the teachers' emphasis on their use made it
possible - and attractive - for children to deal with literature in a
careful representational way. Many of the products indicated that
this served as an important learning response as well as a way for
teachers to assess children's perceptions about literature.
Formal sharing and display. Children's work was always in evidence at Parkland, colorfully mounted and taped to walls, tacked on boards, or arranged on flat surfaces. Since book extensions were such a regular part of children's work, there was not any time after the first day or so of school that children could fail to see other children's response to literature. Teachers spent considerable effort in mounting, arranging, and labeling these displays, sometimes with their students' help. In the K-1 area, for instance, work was usually presented according to the themes in literature to which it was related - a bulletin board of folk tale extensions, or pictures of Mother Goose. Other displays presented all the work inspired by a single book, such as Drummer Hoff or The Biggest House in the World.

One of the explicit reasons for the emphasis on display was that it was a source of pride for the children. By widening their audience it also confirmed the need for revising and proofreading and in general doing best work. In terms of response to literature, displays served in a sense as tacit discussions, with several variations of an idea put forth at once. This facilitated (though of course it did not guarantee) a rethinking of the original story or stories by those who saw the display. Second thoughts being usually more reflective thoughts, it is tempting to think that the influence of display was significant on this account alone. This study did not produce direct evidence to warrant such a conclusion, however, since the investigator did not question children about the displays and their reactions to them.

Most of the work which went into a prepared display was finished in the children's eyes because it had already been shared with their
own classroom group and sometimes with others, too. This formal sharing context required children to talk about books and to defend their representations.

Christy works with paint in order to recreate the muted multi-color skyscape at the end of *The Crane Maiden*. When the picture is completed, she writes the following to interpret mood rather than content.

- Colorful, light, bright,
- beautiful. Soaring, Gliding in the air. Call peaceful, soft, mild,
- Gentle, easy, calm.

She and Miss Lynde are equally pleased with her use of descriptive language and it is decided that she will share this work with other classes. At the end of the day she makes the rounds of various class meetings, where she identifies the book she used, shows her picture, and reads her writing aloud. Typical questions asked by the other children are "Why did you want to make that picture?" "What did you use?"

Generally the older children seemed to use the same critical vocabulary for talking about representations that they used in discussing the original books. Early in the year they were especially attuned to noticing descriptive words and illustrative detail. Thus while the presenter in a formal sharing situation usually needed to summarize content and express preferences, the audience - called on for "any questions or comments?" - had an opportunity to practice the use of critical terms on a simple level.

Finally, the use of formal sharing and display at Parkland put these responses in a public context, automatically excluding from these situations the most personal sorts of reactions to books, the private feelings that were shared only in one-to-one conversation, if at all. Yet the public focus on children's work with books encouraged
representational responses by demonstrating the high value placed on them and kept literature at the center of children's attention.

**Child-Created Contexts**

Some of the questions which intrigued the investigator at the outset of the study concerned children's spontaneous response to literature. Would books and book characters be a topic of conversation or a source of play ideas during recess times? Would children's comments about books to each other show them attending to literary form without any adult direction? The answers, or lack thereof, were not very satisfactory. If children talked about books or played out books in their "free" time, the evidence was not available to the observer. For one thing, the Parkland environment tended to blur the distinction between official school activities and personal activities; children's work times were just as social as indoor recess, despite subtle changes in the focus of events. What might have occurred as completely spontaneous responses in other settings, like the dramatic play in the K-1 group, were teacher-sanctioned, teacher-encouraged activities at Parkland, although of course they retained certain spontaneous elements. Moreover, the presence of an adult in any free gathering of children changes its character; in the basically unofficial time before the school day began, for instance, fourth and fifth graders who talked willingly to the investigator during class hours fell silent at her approach.

Consequently the child-created contexts in which response evidence could be collected were limited. The one type of response which seemed consistently generated by children's own energy was that identified
earlier as the impulse to share. Although this sometimes lead to
formal sharing and comments made to the entire group, this context
most often involved two people, or occasionally a small group, and
more sharing of the material itself rather than comment about it,
unless an adult intervened.

In some instances, children pursued adult-initiated or sanctioned
activities so independently that they were judged to be operating in
a context that was under their own control. This was true to some
extent of the taped dialogues and small group discussions about The
Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch which were arranged by the investi-
gator. The contrasting structures which children imposed on these
discussions showed the kinds of response strategies with which they
felt comfortable.

Sara: Wait a minute, wait a minute. We're gonna have one problem here. Everyone's gonna have to raise up their hands like in a class meeting. Then someone will pick on you.

Ben: Okay...I got picked. C'mon, let me talk about it. Why do you guys think that he - uh - drew pictures with his crayon 'n then they touched it 'n they came alive? Carl?

Carl: It's not really true.

Sara: I know. It's just a story they made up.

Ben: This old man set down 'n made it up... K-1
Terry: Whatta we do? [Whispering] Do we look at the pages? Whatta we do?

Pat: Let's read it. "Moony Finch went to draw...." 2-3

Christy: ...Okay, now you said it was good. What did you mean by good?

Sharon: Cause it has good illustrations and it's got good - it gots nice writing, and some of the words are descriptive.

Christy: Okay. Thank you.

Sharon: Okay, Christy, what'd you think of the book? ... 4-5

Children who composed skits or dramas without direct teacher supervision usually demonstrated their ability to manipulate story conventions, responding to literature by putting it to use.

In a presentation about monsters, most of the cast ends up fallen together in a heap on the floor. A final voice from the middle of the pile announces: "And we lived happily ever after." K-1

Rules for Responding to Literature

One way of interpreting the evidence collected about the relationship of context to response is to infer implicit rules governing children's response behavior, much as sociolinguists infer rules about other patterns of language. In many ways children's responses incorporated these more generalized language rules, as illustrated by the conscious use of turn-taking in the preceding examples. But there also seemed to be some unspoken guides with the special function of regulating response to literature - whether or not response to a selection would be expressed at all, and to whom, and in what form.
One rule that seemed to operate across grade levels might be stated roughly as: Talk about a book you can touch. The importance of having books at hand has already been discussed, as well as children's inclination to stop in mid-comment and find the book to prove a point. It may be assumed that part of this influence can be traced to a desire to refer to illustrations, since so many of the books evident in this study were picture books. But much longer, less visually stimulating books were treated in the same way; when a group of fifth grade girls went into a corner of the library to discuss From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, which they all had read, each wanted a paperback copy of the book to hold. An exception was noted in the case of stories that were well-known to the children - familiar folk tales or books read and re-read, perhaps more than once. Two fifth grade girls were willing to talk at some length, empty-handed, about the books of Judy Blume, but between them they had read five of her children's books several times. Children also talked readily about books which had just been shared by the teacher, but these were close enough at hand to be considered touchable.

Another general rule could be stated as: Offer comment to a fellow reader. Children could seemingly go for days without talking to one another about books except in the context of official discussion. But if two children found themselves with the same book or if one began a story familiar to the other, there was an immediate opening for talk. Typical comments began with "Hey, I know that one," or "That's a neat book" - not statements of much depth, but ones that signalled a general
willingness to respond. Adult readers of children's books seemed to be covered by the same rule.

While the group is in the art room, Mrs. H. occupies herself by skimming a paperback copy of *The Search for Delicious*. Unable to leave the story near the end, she stands at the bookcase reading as the group returns. Two girls who had been very private with their opinions see her with this book and volunteer the information that they have both read it, adding other enthusiastic comments. 4-5

Most of the representational responses during the study were based on literature that teachers had introduced or presented or suggested to the children. *Work with a story that has drawn attention* seemed to be the rule. Books read aloud and discussed produced the greatest number of responses of this kind. Teacher directives accounted for part of this quantity, but they did not account for the fact that children almost never brought a book from home or from the public library or even a free choice from the ERC and used it as a basis for a book extension. It seems likely that children regarded book extensions as part of their "work," regardless of the personal interest and freedom of choice involved, and found it somehow appropriate to center their work on official material.

These were the most obvious of the apparent constraints on response operating at the implicit level. There was some evidence to suggest other possible rule statements, for instance, one concerning children's choice of the person with whom they were most likely to share a discovery in a book. Further examination of the data and the consideration of other examples would be necessary to clarify these, however.
Other Patterns and Sequences

In spite of the classification of types of response events observed and consideration of their relationship to age groups and to specific contexts, certain apparent response patterns remain to be discussed. There were recurring tendencies and sequences in children's work and in their attitudes toward literature that seemed to call for other kinds of discussion. Although in some cases the construal of the pattern itself as well as its interpretation may be open to argument, the events noted call for some sort of explanation.

The Mimetic Phenomenon

Left to their own devices, many children in the 4-5 group who chose to make a picture as a book extension tended as a first response to reproduce as exactly as they could the artwork in the book. The suggestion that they experiment with the illustrator's own medium may certainly be seen as a contributing factor. Several pictures inspired by Dawn and by The Tiniest Sound were made with particular attention to the shading of the watercolors and frequent references back to the book. But a diorama scene from The Tall Man from Boston was created with the same eye for detail, and similar examples could be cited for each week of the study.

This sort of response was met with some ambivalence. The products were often well executed and pleasing, and were praised as such. It was obvious, however, that despite children's satisfaction in a well made reproduction, copied or imitated work was not valued as highly by adults as was a personalized representation. Miss Ames would not allow
such work to be done in the art room. Miss Lynde frequently talked with children about ways they could make a picture uniquely their own.

Perhaps because of the older children's greater manipulative skill, this response was most evident at the 4-5 level. But younger children made some similar attempts. Photographs of children at the 2-3 and K-1 levels show some of them working with a book as guide.

Holly, a kindergartener, takes a picture book, What Do You See? to the art table, where she gets out water paints. She chooses a double-spread illustration of a lark in flight, a bold, simple picture with a background of clearly defined blue-shaded bands. She begins to make a wavy blue brushstroke across the bottom of her paper. Another girl is working near her, gluing beans (for jewels) on a picture that resembles one in Palmiero and the Ogre, also open on the table.

"Aw," says the second child to a friend, "she's copyin' that picture."

Holly stops for a moment. "That's what you're doin'," she says. Then she continues making background lines, being careful to match the colors. The bird itself is harder to reproduce. After her completed picture has dried for a few minutes, she comes back and crumples it, saying she "has to find an easier one." K-1

One of the puzzling things about this sort of response, especially among the older children, was its tendency to persist as a first reaction in the face of reluctant adult approval. Moreover, while it might have been expected to occur more among children who were usually at a loss for their own ideas, such was not the case. Diane and Ellen in the 4-5 group both produced careful reproductions of illustrations, but they also did other work which was strikingly original and were able to make comments about stories which were very perceptive by adult standards.
Perhaps the copying of a picture book illustration could be viewed as a creative failure, or an inappropriate artistic activity - that is, it does not put the child-artist's own feelings into symbolic form. But possibly the child's work in this case is not intended to be creative or even representational in form, but figurative - a kind of symbolic finger exercise on the same order as copying letter shapes to learn them or committing poems to memory. In that case, reproducing an illustration might be one sort of reasonable literary response to a picture book. At Parkland the accurate, detailed reproduction of text - retelling - was both encouraged and valued as a first level response and was used in some form as a response strategy at all levels. Another kind of mimetic response noted was the tendency of the youngest children to echo the actions suggested in a text with their bodies. Considered all together, these mimetic responses may have indicated a tendency, perhaps stronger among some children than others, to use mastery through imitation as a step leading toward interpretation.

Response as a Process in Time

If anything became more clear as the data collection for this study proceeded, it was that first impressions and first reactions to literature, for these children at least, were only a small part of what might be called their response. A child who read or heard a book and answered some questions about it was not finished responding to it, in the broader sense. Several longer-term patterns in the process of response were noted.
Using books as models. A common task which children at all levels set for themselves was the making of a book. In many instances the children in the two older groups used a picture book as a model for their work; and their beginning efforts were often largely mimetic, with careful reproductions of the pictures and/or language patterns that had attracted them in the first place. But succeeding efforts moved away from the model, while retaining some connections to it. The pattern was clearest when the model book repeated a single form page by page, as in Someday or If I Were a Cricket.

Thursday. Connie glances through If I Were a Cricket, one of the picture books that demonstrate use of watercolor. She takes it to Miss Lynde and they talk briefly, with the teacher mentioning that she should use her own ideas. Then Connie moves to the art table, saying she needs a place to write.

Later in the morning she paints a background for her first picture, indicating that she will make the ladybug pictured in the book but leave out the child's hand shown with it, and she will do her own writing. That afternoon she continues work beside Rachel, who is using the same book as model and mixing paint to get just the right shade.

Tuesday. Connie works on her second picture. The first looks more like the original than she intended; she added the hand "to cover up a goof."

Thursday. Connie works on her third picture, having switched media from watercolor to collage. She no longer has the book at hand as she works.
Monday. Connie's book is complete:
If I were a ladybug I would sit on your flowers.
If I were a flower I would sit in your window.
If I were a butterfly I'd fly/around your house.
If I was the sun I would/shine on the earth.
If I was a hill I would shade you from the sun.
If I were a river I'd cool you down.

Other children were also noted moving further from their model as they worked, both in pictures and text, particularly with sharply focused patterns like those in Hailstones and Halibut Bones and The Tiniest Sound. There appeared to be a process of imitating or appropriating the original work, then a period of reflection leading to improvisation and eventually to broader application. No explicit analysis of the form seemed to be involved, although greater confidence in departing from it would seem to indicate that a more thorough implicit understanding had been developed.

Responding to accumulated sources. Sense of story refers to the expectations children bring to literature, mostly as a result of the sum of their experiences with literature. In some cases children's representational responses demonstrated a reliance on several literary sources that had been met over a period of time. The various interpretations seemed to have interacted, and the response that eventually was made explicit reflected a long process of feeling and thinking. The most interesting example of this sort of process was furnished by Warren, a first-grader who was a frequent exception to the rule about doing extensions with books close at hand.

2This interpretation draws on remarks by James Britton made in a conversation with the investigator, October, 1978.
Mrs. Christopher takes her class on a walking trip through the school to see the literature displays arranged for the special parents' night program. Warren stares for a long time at a picture made by an older child, a reproduction of an illustration from Noah's Ark, showing the wooden ship adrift in a storm, with lightning overhead. This is a book already familiar to Warren; he has commented about it earlier in the year.

Back in the classroom, he begins to paint, using a wide sheet of brown wrapping paper. The first items to go in are a large wooden ship, water, and forks of lightning.

Mrs. H. asks, "Is this a story I would know, or are you making it up?"

Warren says she probably wouldn't know it.

"Is it like Noah's Ark?"

"A little."

Then Carl pauses beside Warren's work and says, "Hm - there's the bridge and there's the troll." Mrs. Christopher has invited them earlier in the morning to begin pictures about The Three Billy Goats Gruff.

Warren is incensed. "No!" he says. "That's not the three billy goats. That's Captain..." He bends over the painting, mumbling something about TV. Later he gets chart paper and a marker and begins to write.

After lunch Mrs. Christopher reads The Three Billy Goats Gruff and Warren joins in the discussion of what a troll looks like and of conventional endings. Mrs. Christopher suggests they write their own folk tales.
Warren goes back to the story he began, reading the text so far to Mrs. H.

The Snowy Story by Warren. The Captain is sailing a ship that is wooden. Soon the Captain says 'is There a storm coming up?' he said. 'I dont know!' she said. The Captain was right. There was a storm. When the storm hit the sea the moon is hidden in the flooding sea. The man is froze solid.

Mrs. H. says that it's very sad and asks about the "she" referred to in the middle of the narrative. "What happened to her?"

"She drowned."

Mrs. Christopher says, "Have you been thinking about death today, Warren?"

"No," says Warren, "I've been thinking more about folk tales. You know, like where the beast gets killed." (This is an apparent reference to the vivid destruction of the troll in the book the teacher has just read.)

Later he adds to the story:

The light house is looking for the moon.
The ship is creaking. The girl is falling out of the ship. and they all fall in the water. But the Captain didn't.

When Warren's mother comes to get him at the end of the day, Mrs. H. remarks that his story language is so poetic that it reminds her of Longfellow's "The Wreck of the Hesperus."

"But we saw that on TV!" says Warren's mother, explaining that the poem was narrated while pictures were shown as part of an educational program for children.

The next day, when the story and picture are put up for display, Warren adds "TTTTWeeWeeWee" at the end, explaining to Mrs. Christopher that folk tales have special kinds of endings and so does his story. K-1
Although Warren transformed Longfellow's "skipper" into "the Captain" and failed to remember the father-daughter relationship that adds pathos to "The Wreck of the Hesperus," he had clearly responded to tragic elements and images, especially the lone ship in danger that is the common element with Noah's Ark. It seems probable that his references to folk tales may have been partly an effort to make the work more legitimate in terms of what everyone else was doing. While there are several unusual features in this piece of work, it is presented here to invite consideration of the process through which it came into being, and the investment of time required - both the entire day that it took to make the product, and the long term pattern of contact with literature behind it.

**Developing response in a sequence of contexts.** One of the first things noted about children's use of books at Parkland was their tendency to return to familiar titles, sometimes on their own and sometimes by the teachers' design, for different sorts of activities. Little Blue and Little Yellow, for instance, was a book that many children remembered hearing in kindergarten or first grade, but which fourth and fifth graders chose for making a felt story. Books like Dawn, which had been shared and used as the basis for discussion in previous years were read aloud and discussed again and became the inspiration for watercolor pictures.

While one might predict that meeting the same book over and over could bring boredom, it seemed in most cases to bring fluency. A note in the margin of the logbook reads: Familiarity doesn't breed contempt, it breeds comment. And children's comments about a story they had
considered several times, in different contexts, were more confident and somewhat different in character from earlier responses.

Most of the books to which children and teachers returned again and again were what would be identified by critics as "quality" children's literature. It is tempting to conclude that only books of considerable depth could support this repetition, but such a claim would not be precisely accurate. Some titles noted for humorous episode and not much else were used over and over by upper grade children.

One way to look at this sequence of responses is to follow a group's contacts with a single book. Where the Wild Things Are was already familiar to many of the K-1 children when the school year began, and they had several opportunities to respond to it before the period of the study was over.

October 4. Mel and Warren are making a mural. Their man-in-the-moon face is scowling, with sun rays around its head.

"Is it a daytime picture or a nighttime one?" asks Mrs. H.

Mel hesitates, but Warren looks at the book lying nearby and says, "Night." He explains that it's a story about Max and the place where the wild things are.

October 5. Warren is holding up the Wild Things mural and chasing people with it. It isn't finished yet, he says.
October 6. Warren and Mel's mural is on display, with writing:

Warren and Mel by the picture of Where the Wild Things Are. One night Max rode in his boat. In the night Max saw a island. He saw monsters. The king one said. I am the strongest! he said. And Max said I'am the strongest! he said.

October 9. Warren is one of the children who stays after school to talk with visitors from the University about books and how they are used at Parkland. He and a boy from another class read aloud Where the Wild Things Are. After the reading, Warren wants to ask the visitors questions about the book, teacher-fashion.

November 28. Mrs. Christopher reads Where the Wild Things Are aloud to the group in preparation for their part in the school Christmas program. She announces they will make a play based on the book. Ben says, "I wanna be Max!" Warren says, "We've read this before." Jack stares at the wordless middle pages. "Why ain't you readin' them?" he asks. Warren explains, "Because there's no words. They're just yellin'." Jack says, "Read it again, Mrs. Christopher."

Later, in the carpeted area with Mrs. Patrick's class, Mrs. Rose leads a "supposing" discussion, gathering ideas for a visit by Max to the Wild Things' island on Christmas Eve, appropriate gifts, and a party scene. Jared thinks that Max could "bring like cannonballs and decorate the monsters." Ben suggests that Max could say, "Let the wild Christmas rumpus begin!"

Still later, Mrs. Christopher's class uses the carpeted area for their regularly scheduled movement class. First they gather on the floor, studying the illustrations of Max and the wild things. Then each finds a personal space and experiments with being monster-like, using teeth, eyes, hands, legs.
December 5. Mrs. Patrick has scheduled the animated film, *Where the Wild Things Are*, for the music room. The K-1 group is invited. Mrs. Christopher says that most of her children have seen this film before.

When the music starts, Warren says, "It sounds like a jungle."

Carl, Jared, Mindy, Danny Joe, Mark and Terrence all act out the wild things' motions with their hands and arms.

At the end Mindy says, "It was neat." Terrence stands up to demonstrate which of the monster movements he liked best.

"I like when they're getting charged up," says Warren.

December 6. There is a practice for the Wild Things Christmas production. Ben suggests "when we're finished someone should come out and say 'the end'."

December 11. The K-1 group practices the song parody that they will sing as Wild Things, and talk about the costumes they will wear - stuffed pantyhose for tails, and cardboard ears, with fierce make-up on their faces.

December 12. Another practice.

December 13. The whole school participates in a full-scale rehearsal of the program. All the kindergarteners leave at lunch time, and Mrs. Christopher begins to read *Where the Wild Things Are* to the first graders, even the title page and copyright notice. Halfway through the text, she is called away briefly, and she gives the book to Danny Joe to finish. To his irritation, most of the others chime in on most of the lines. After the last sentence, "And it was still hot," Carl speaks up.

"That's not true," he says.
Mrs. Christopher has slipped back to the edge of the circle. "Why?" she asks.

Carl says, "Because when I'm out playin' and I come in, my supper's cold."

Mrs. Christopher asks why Max's supper was still hot.

Gretchen answers. "Because probably he got it only about half an hour after he came back."

"Back from where?" asks the teacher.

"From Where the Wild Things Are," says Gretchen.

Sara offers another idea. "Maybe he went to sleep and had a dream."

Mark says, "It's not true that a forest grows..."

The teacher points out the place in the text where Max tells his mother he will eat her up. Do they know any other place that says "I'll eat you up"?

Mary knows that this is something the Wild Things tell Max, and so do several others. K-1

It was not characteristic for Carl to add thoughtful comments to a book discussion. The fact that he began the talk here may well have had something to do with the discussion's place at the end of a varied sequence of experiences that encouraged him to consider the story in several different ways.

Most response measurements necessarily find out what children are doing or saying or thinking about a book at a given point in time. But judging by the dynamic nature of the patterns observed at Parkland, response to literature involves a strong sequential dimension as well.
Stance Toward Literature and Perception of Response as a Task

Even the youngest children in this study knew the difference between a story and real life; on that basic level they were clearly in the spectator role described by Britton (1970), and did not confuse it with the participant role. K-1 children in general, however, and some in the 2-3 group, were not clear about the implications of the difference. The same confusions that Applebee (1973b) found in British children's comments about the possibility of visiting Cinderella were evident in Parkland children's attempts to explain the appearance of the dragon in The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch. Children in the 4-5 group, although they were not the only ones to comment on authorship, were more likely to see books as deliberate creations of other people, another mark of the spectator's stance.

Looking at children's approach to books according to Rosenblatt's (1978) aesthetic and efferent categories showed that by this standard also, children's response was in some ways undifferentiated. That is, while children showed that they knew some books were stories and some were collections of practically useful information, there were similarities in the way that they dealt with the two kinds of books. On the one hand, children let themselves be entertained and amazed and even moved by material designed to inform. Mrs. Patrick's class listened intently to the reading of a book about monsters and gargoyles, and new discoveries like Small Worlds Close Up, a collection of microphotographs, were passed from child to child as eagerly as good stories. Conversely, children sometimes took an intense interest in the information available from fiction. One chapter of A Stranger Came Ashore, called
"The Merry Dancers," occasioned a rush of fourth and fifth graders to the ERC for more details about the aurora borealis.

It seemed to the investigator, however, that except for children's highly purposeful visits to the encyclopedia shelves, they approached almost every book with dual expectations, willing to live through the text as an aesthetic experience, but also open to the possibility that they might take useful ideas or information from it. Frequently the efferent responses appeared to predominate; many comments were noted to the effect of "I can use this for my report," or "This will make a good picture." But given the invisibility of inner experience and the difficulties of explicit introspection, it seemed likely that many of children's reactions - their listening behaviors, for instance - implied an aesthetic stance.

A somewhat different perspective evolved when the focus of observation shifted toward children's apparent perception of the task of responding to literature. Responses that were made explicit frequently revealed less about children's reaction to the book than about their understanding of what they were supposed to do. Terry's and Pat's distress when left alone with a book and a tape recorder - "What do we do?" - expresses the problem in basic terms. Whenever response was solicited, children's analysis of the situation influenced their apparent analysis of literature. The frequency of retelling and summarizing, for instance, may not have reflected children's dependence on that strategy but rather their interpretation of a request for response as a request for information. Thus what looks like direct evidence of the range of
children's ability to respond may instead be indicative of a more generalized communicative competence.

However, when the response events classified as spontaneous in this study were contrasted with those where response was elicited by an adult, there was a striking difference. Most spontaneous responses - book browsing and intent attention, the pointing and prodding of sharing a discovery, and frequently the off-hand free comments - were largely formless. On the other hand it was difficult to elicit response without implying a structure of some sort - basic terminology or sequence or a point of focus. Discussion comments, writing, and the representational products of book extensions, at all grade levels, reflected better formed responses. In that sense, children's perception of the tasks involved was closely associated with the development of their ability to express response to literature.

Summary

Events identified as response to literature in three classrooms at Parkland Elementary School were classified and compared in various ways in order to discover and clarify patterns. The first division cut across age groups, putting responses in broad categories by type. Various listening behaviors, mostly nonverbal, were identified. Contact with books and the impulse to share accounted for a large number of response events. Oral responses, action and drama, making things, and writing were reported in detail. Examples from the investigator's notes served to illustrate each subcategory of each type of response.

On the second level of analysis, responses were scrutinized in order to determine patterns associated with age-grade groups. In
Looking at response types, K-1 children were observed using more motor responses, relying on generic characters in drama, "collecting" story elements in pictures, and using literature-as-model in a less deliberate way than older children. At the 2-3 level, the most distinctive features of response were the amount of spontaneous sharing, the emphasis on accomplishing a reading task, and the apparent influence of the desire to develop independent reading skills. Children in the 4-5 group were better able to execute all types of responses, showed stronger preferences than younger children, and had a broader knowledge of story frames and conventions. A comparison of responses from all three classes to Where the Sidewalk Ends emphasized the middle group's propensity for spontaneous sharing and their interest in readable material.

Particular attention was paid to the formulation of response statements at various grade levels, and certain developmental directions were noted. Children at all levels seemed concerned with establishing literal explanations of story events and noting similarities between stories, although these were verbalized more at the K-1 level. Young children's tendency to comment on a story's "truth" moved toward older children's concern for its being like real life. Overall, older children's statements revealed a broader perspective. They appeared less likely to volunteer random associations when discussing a story, better able to summarize in place of using partial retelling, and more likely to abstract a story theme rather than express it in terms of the story itself. Twenty-eight children, representing all grade levels, K-5, responded on tape to one picture book, The Magical Drawings of Moony B.
Finch. These comments, taken from both free responses and interviews, seemed especially to affirm the younger children's preoccupation with attempting to make sense of events and older children's ability to make disembedded theme statements.

In another pattern of analysis, responses were related to changing classroom contexts provided by the interaction of an activity, its participants, and the materials. Most of the identifiable contexts were teacher-created: provision and presentation of literature, book discussions, book extensions, and formal sharing and display. The provision and presentation of literature influenced the quantity of response generated, with the immediate accessibility of books seeming to be of particular importance. The emphasis on theme-related books seemed to be reflected in children's recognition of and comments about similarities. Teachers used book discussion as their most direct tool for teaching about literature, and the nature of oral response within discussions appeared to depend largely on the kind and amount of focus provided by the teacher. While book extensions sometimes appeared to be "non-literary," they were judged to be important contexts in which concrete-operational children could represent stories and reflect on their meaning. Teachers encouraged these responses by supplying needed space, interesting materials, and direct suggestions. Formal sharing and display provided a context in which children were encouraged to value response activities and to produce their best work. Sharing forced children to formulate statements and questions about literature, providing an opportunity for the use of critical vocabulary. Child-created contexts proved relatively inaccessible to adult observation,
except for the interaction observed as children spontaneously shared books. When children pursued adult-initiated activities independently, they frequently used learned response strategies.

It was suggested that the relationship of contexts to response might also be presented so as to indicate that children operated according to implicit rules for responding to literature. Evidence for three of these was presented: Talk about a book you can touch; Offer comments to a fellow reader; and Work with a story that has drawn attention.

Other patterns that had presented themselves included some children's tendency to reproduce picture book illustrations as a response; this was linked to retelling and to the nonverbal response of echoing the action in a generalized mimetic phenomenon. Sequential response processes were also identified and demonstrated through detailed examples. Children using literature as a compositional model were observed departing from the model with time and with successive attempts. Single response products were noted to develop through time and to refer to sources accumulated over time. Response to a single source was also seen to develop with time and through a series of different contexts. In a final look at children's stance toward literature, their growing confidence in the spectator role as well as their openness to both aesthetic and efferent approaches was noted; and the perception of response tasks was identified as an important determinant of the nature of responses elicited.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The Problem of the Study

In spite of current interest in response to literature as a topic of study as well as a teaching approach, it was determined that two concerns needed further exploration - one, the development of response among children of elementary school age rather than among adolescents, and two, the occurrence of response in real classrooms rather than in measurement contexts.

The purpose of this research, then, was to describe and discover patterns in elementary children's response to literature as it occurred in the natural context of a school environment. This involved the identification and categorization of classroom events that reflected children's experiences with literature; a comparison of the general characteristics of responses exhibited at early, middle, and upper elementary levels; and attention to the relationship between response events and various elements of the classroom context.

Procedures

Since the focus of the study was on natural contexts, an ethnographic approach was judged to be the only satisfactory way of dealing with the problem. The investigator became a full-time participant observer in an open-space, informal classroom elementary school which
included grades K-5. Three groups totaling 90 children were chosen for study, representing K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 grade levels, where teachers shared similar philosophy and methods. The study began with the opening of school and extended to mid-December, with each group being the subject of intensive observation for at least 20 school days, although a running account of major events in all three groups was maintained.

Evidence about response to literature was collected in descriptive notes and anecdotal records, taped discussions and interviews with children, and photographs of children's work. Although most of the response events reflected the teachers' regular planning, the investigator introduced and systematically collected response to one picture book to facilitate comparison across grade levels.

In order to clarify the general context in which response events occurred, a description of the school setting was outlined along with narrative accounts of a single day spent with each classroom group. Patterns of response events related to context and sequence emerged as the on-site notes and transcribed data were coded and categorized by type and grade level group.

**Findings**

**Types of response.** When response events from all groups were coded according to type, a wide range of expression was found to have occurred in the setting:

1. **Listening behaviors** - Children expressed interest and involvement in literature being read to them through body stances, laughter and applause, and chiming in with exclamations and refrains.
2. Contact with books - Children initiating their own contacts with books were most often categorized as browsing. There were many recorded instances of intent attention, and sometimes children simply seemed to be keeping books at hand.

3. The impulse to share - Children communicated their responses spontaneously by reading together, and by sharing discoveries, essentially a process of presenting material so that another person might affirm the child's own response.

4. Oral responses - Children responded orally to literature in structured forms such as retelling and storytelling, with or without devices such as felt boards; in discussion statements, which frequently showed repetition and clarification; and in free comment, often reporting preferences or feelings, familiarity, accomplishment, or references to content.

5. Actions and drama - Children used their bodies in echoing the action of a story, or in demonstrating meaning when words failed them. Synthesis of movement and language was used in dramatic play, in child-initiated drama, usually skits based on a story or a typical story frame, and in teacher-initiated drama, in which children were encouraged to extend a story or story frame.

6. Making things - Children created many products based in some way on literature, including pictures using a variety of media and techniques; three-dimensional constructions like clay sculpture or dioramas; and miscellaneous products such as games, displays and collections, and cookery.
7. Writing - Children responded to books through writing, which often followed other types of response. Many examples involved restating and summarizing a work, and there were some instances of writing about literature. Deliberate use of literary models and indirect uses of literature, in which children were less conscious of their sources, were both observed.

Responses associated with age-grade groups. When basic response types were considered in terms of the groups where they were observed, it was clear that all types were represented in some way at all levels. There were contrasts, however, particularly in frequency of occurrence and in the way certain responses were executed.

The following observations were made about the youngest children in the study:

1. In their contacts with books, K-1 children were more likely to browse than to be intent.

2. K-1 children used motor responses to a more marked degree than other groups, particularly echoing the action and demonstrating meaning. The only examples of dramatic play observed occurred in this group.

3. K-1 children relied primarily on generic characters, or character prototypes, in dramatic play and in composing.

4. K-1 children's picture making, like some of their oral responses, tended to "collect" items and ideas, rather than place them in a framework of interrelationships.
5. K-1 children did not demonstrate the deliberate use of literature as a model for original stories; apparent attempts most often became restatements or summaries. Literary conventions and characters and plot details did appear in K-1 stories, however, although the children frequently did not seem to recognize their source.

The middle group in the study constituted a transition stage in the sense that children sometimes resembled the K-1 group and sometimes the 4-5 group. Some types of responses had special strength at this level, however:

1. Children at the 2-3 level showed a great many spontaneous sharing responses. This was particularly evident in their desire to read aloud and to share selections from the book Where the Sidewalk Ends. As a corollary to this finding it should be noted that no other book at any level produced as many spontaneous sharing responses.

2. Children at the 2-3 level responded more than younger or older children to conventions of print and were more concerned with the accomplishment of getting a book read, so that response to literature seemed at this level to be particularly tied to the task of becoming an independent reader.

Children in the oldest group were generally better able to execute all types of responses. There were also some clear contrasts between them and the younger children.

1. In the 4-5 group, more children gave intent attention to books, for longer periods of time.
2. In the 4-5 group, children expressed stronger and somewhat narrower preferences in choosing books.

3. In the 4-5 group, dramatic play was never observed; echoing the action and demonstrating meaning, almost never.

4. In the 4-5 group, children demonstrated a wider knowledge of story conventions and ability to manipulate a story frame both in drama and writing.

A separate comparison was made across grade levels for oral responses, considering discussions, free comments, and solicited responses to *The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch*.

1. Children at all levels seemed to have a priority concern for explaining puzzling items or events in a story; the youngest children were more likely to offer free comment in this vein.

2. Children at all levels generally remarked on similarities between stories rather than differences, although they could discuss differences when questioned. Again, the younger children were somewhat more likely to make spontaneous comments about this.

3. Younger children were much more likely than older children to make personal statements tied to literature through association only.

4. Younger children were more likely to talk about whether a story was true or possible, while older children also commented about its probability or likeness to real life.
5. While younger children tended to state the lesson or moral of a story in terms of the story itself, many older children could make disembedded theme statements, occasionally with metaphorical interpretations.

6. While younger children frequently retold or summarized a small part of a story as a response, older children used more comprehensive and more efficient summaries.

7. In general, older children showed a wider acquaintance with verbal response strategies and more flexibility in choosing an appropriate approach.

Responses associated with particular contexts. The most frequently occurring contexts were teacher-created and seemed to be related to certain types and characteristics of response:

1. Provision and presentation of literature - The presence of books, their accessibility, and the amount of attention drawn to them influenced the quantity of response generated. The emphasis on categorization and making connections between books seemed to be mirrored in children's concern for similarities.

2. Book discussions - The kind and amount of focus provided by the teacher helped to determine the form and direction of responses; some children were aware of the teachers' critical terminology and critical strategies, as evidenced by their own use of these in other situations.
3. Book extensions - Provision of concrete materials, direct suggestions, and the presence of examples encouraged children to respond to stories by representing their meaning through drama, writing, or making things.

4. Formal sharing and display - The emphasis on these public contexts helped to give value to response activities. Children formulated statements and questions about literature in the course of formal sharing.

Child-created contexts were generally inaccessible to adult observation, although two generalizations seemed evident:

1. The impulse to share involved child-created contexts in which the associated responses were very loosely structured.

2. Children who operated independently in teacher-created contexts typically used learned response strategies.

An alternative way of organizing the evidence about the relationship of response to context would put these findings in a somewhat different form. In some cases children seemed to express responses according to implicit rules. Three of these were proposed as examples:

1. Talk about a book you can touch.

2. Offer comment to a fellow reader.

3. Work with a story that has drawn attention.

Other patterns.

1. The occurrence of echoing the action, retelling, and the reproduction of picture book illustrations seemed to indicate a generalized mimetic phenomenon as a first-level response common to some children.
2. Children who used literature as a model for composition departed from the original over time and with successive attempts.

3. Response products were developed over time and often with reference to several literary sources.

4. Responses to a single literary work changed over time and after repeated exposure to the work in a series of contexts.

5. Children's responses indicated varying degrees of awareness of the spectator role and generally a central position on the aesthetic-efferent continuum.

6. The nature and type of children's responses depended in part upon their perception of the response task at hand and the form inherent in it.

Implications for Teaching

The findings of any ethnographic study are inevitably context-dependent. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to propose that generalizations drawn from the Parkland research can be of use to other teachers. This investigation provides new evidence about the nature and characteristics of elementary children's response to literature; consequently teachers may be better able to predict and assess children's reactions to books. This study also provides a documented description of a literature program which generates quantity and facilitates quality in response, with direct implications for teaching strategies and planning classroom environments.
Understanding Children's Response to Literature

1. Children need to talk about books - not just to the teacher, but to each other. One of the surprisingly strong impressions gained from this study was the amount of free comment and spontaneous sharing of books among the children. The opportunity to show a book to a friend, to giggle over it, point at the pictures, offer an opinion, perhaps argue a little, kept children interested in and in contact with books they might otherwise have ignored. And since children's immediate impressions are not likely to be expressed at all if not expressed at once, this spontaneous sharing served as natural motivation for the formulation of response statements. Teachers who recognize the importance of such language opportunities will legitimize the social behaviors that occur when children talk to each other about books.

2. Children need opportunities to respond to literature in a variety of ways, nonverbal as well as verbal. Talk is important, but it is not everything. Teachers should recognize that activities which seem to have only superficial connection with literature may enable children to think through and express their understanding of stories in ways much more childlike and appropriate than verbal analysis. For instance, young children show something about their perceptions of character and their knowledge of story conventions in dramatic play that may not be based on a particular story at all. In making a mural or a mock museum or some other symbolic representation of a book, children's chief concerns may appear to be drawing straight lines or keeping the clay out of the carpet, but they also have to make decisions about what is important enough to the story to be included in their work and
how the parts are to be arranged. If we accept the Piagetian premise that children think by doing, teachers will not unnecessarily restrict the range of allowable responses.

3. Some types of responses are especially common at a particular age level. In this study, seven basic response types were identified, and each of them was represented in each of the three age groups involved. Nevertheless, in frequency and intensity and importance, some types must be thought of as particularly characteristic of children in lower, middle or upper elementary grades.

The under-seven age group use their bodies to respond. Just as children often need to talk before they can write, so do some young children need to act out or demonstrate a meaning before they can put it into words. Teachers might capitalize on this inclination by saying "show me" as well as "tell me," thus facilitating the verbal response. Dramatic play also seems particular to young children. All it requires of the teacher is approval, although several things can be done to encourage it. A special place, simple props, dress-up clothes or bits of costume all contribute to this type of response. It should be noted also that since most young children are not yet independent readers, they are necessarily "lookers" and "browsers" when on their own with books. They need many books to look through, and, paradoxically, help in focusing their attention on a single one. Careful introduction of new titles may be one effective technique; another is to ask a question that requires concentrated study of the pictures for answer.

Seven-to nine-year-olds are so involved with the task of becoming independent readers that it influences much of their response behavior.
Their concern with accomplishment and demonstrating reading skills is evident in the amount of time spent reading together and sharing discoveries, and in free comments about conventions of print and preference for books that they can read by themselves. Certainly one of the needs of children at this stage is time to read together. An adult audience is also desirable, particularly because newly proficient readers can get so tied up in the act of reading that they miss the story. Like the children in this study who read By the Shores of Silver Lake, they need to have someone talk it over with them. If there are special cautions at this age level, there are also special opportunities. Children who begin to notice conventions of print are ready to have some features of literature made explicit - the page arrangement of poetry, for instance, and the use of chapter divisions and titles.

Children in the nine to eleven age range include many who are established readers and who can be intent on a book to the point of being oblivious to their surroundings. These children need more time to read, preferably on a schedule flexible enough to let those who choose to do so, read on. Although their preferences may fall within a predictable range, individual likes and dislikes are strongly felt. Self-selection from a wide range of material seems important if children are to find satisfaction in their own reading. Peer recommendation influences choice at this level, facilitating the possibility for having some books read in common by small groups. Fortunately, most children seem willing to listen to stories which they might not read on their
own; teachers can introduce neglected forms or unfamiliar authors or more challenging material by reading aloud.

In this age group, children seem to have considerable control over the simpler conventions and frames of literature. Some know the fairy tale frame well enough to compose a parody of it; many deliberately use the patterns of picture book stories as models for their own writing, with varying degrees of success. The conscious manipulation of literary conventions can be taken as an indicator of children's readiness to look at those features in stories; for instance, teachers may want to ask explicit questions about traditional beginnings and endings, the use of stock characters, or patterned plots.

4. Children's responses reflect their level of thinking and language development. Teachers who understand developmental constraints on response can be spared the frustration of unrealistic expectations and futile questions, and can better interpret children's work. The following observations are based on contrasts between K-1 and 4-5 children.

Young children's responses are centered on parts rather than wholes, and tend to reveal more about the child than about the book. K-1 children's frequent reliance on partial retelling and partial summary was an element in this pattern. They frequently commented about details in pictures or texts, without relating that bit to a wider perspective. "Itemizing" would be a fair description of this strategy, which was evident in pictures as well as comments. Many kindergarteners painted scenes that were collections of objects and characters from a story; in contrast, fourth or fifth graders usually
painted scenes showing relationships of settings and characters - except in cases where they had given only superficial attention to the book and reverted back to the itemizing technique.

Comments on story items were frequently associated with personal references; bits of text seemed to provide cues that set children thinking, but not necessarily about the story. While there is no profit in trying to push children beyond their developmental constraints, it is probably appropriate to ask them to try to explain the associations and connections they are making, with questions like "Why do you say that?" and "What made you think of that?"

Young children have some familiarity with story frames. They show it by using conventional beginnings and endings, relying on generic or prototype characters, identifying lessons or themes in terms of the story, and noting similarities to other stories. Even though children tend to comment about parts rather than wholes, the indications here are of a more generalized underlying concept of story.

One thing of particular interest is children's use of literary prototypes ("the witch," "the little girl," "the wolf") in storytelling, writing, and dramatic play. Evidently their focus is on character function rather than character delineation; young children are more interested in what a character does than in what makes him tick. While primary teachers might ask some questions about what characters are like, detailed discussion of characterization might better be saved for older children.

It is also of interest to note that some young children can identify a story theme if asked, but it is important to see that their own
phrasing is usually tied directly to the context of the story; the statement has meaning only in its concrete terms. A strong argument could be made here against premature analysis on the grounds that analytical questions tend to be abstract, requiring that meaning be disembedded from context. However, questions that encourage talk about literary elements operating within an immediate frame of reference ("What did Red Riding Hood learn?") may help children understand the story.

Young children have a primary concern with making sense - achieving a fit between the story as they see it and the world as they know it. K-1 children tend to comment on whether a story is true or not, based on what they know about the real world. Since their personal knowledge about the real world is limited, they are often confronted with puzzles. Judging by their attempts to explain away those puzzles, as in trying to account for the dragons in The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch, the need to make sense must be very strong. This is one of the things that children probably need to talk about, but in child terms rather than teacher terms. Six-year-olds do not need to have on authority that a story is make believe; it is more profitable to help them sort out the necessary evidence, as the K-1 teacher did in asking her first graders about Max's hot supper in Where the Wild Things Are.

Older children are better able to deal with a story as a whole, and in more generalized terms. Fourth and fifth graders do itemize and retell parts of stories and refer to details, but almost always as a deliberate strategy, manipulating the response for a purpose. Pictures and writing and comments all reveal that older children see
parts in relation to wholes. Summaries are more efficient, and likely to include more of the plot in briefer terms. Theme statements are often expressed as general lessons, disembedded from the context of the story, an indication that children have at least an implicit knowledge of the author's intent to convey meaning beyond the simple sum of the words.

Metaphorical interpretation does not seem to come spontaneously at this level, however. In this study occasional flashes of insight that tied a story to symbolic meaning marked children's sporadic functioning as abstract thinkers. An extension of the teachers' emphasis on similarities and connections between stories would seem likely to increase children's chances of making metaphorical interpretations; as would focused discussion of books with clearly ironic themes, like The Mountain or The Shrinking of Treehorn; or wider experiences with poetry.

Older children are more concerned with the probability of stories - their "reality" - rather than their possibility. While younger children attend to character roles, older children begin to question if "people are really like that." Instead of trying to establish whether or not a story could indeed happen, they are concerned with its appearance of likelihood (even if it is clearly a fantasy). Like younger children working on their puzzles of logic, however, fourth and fifth graders have limited evidence about what people are "really" like. They may recognize prototypes like the fairy tale princess, but not her stereotype counterpart in modern realistic fiction. A contrasting difficulty arises with highly particularized characters in unfamiliar settings.
who seem improbable because they are so far removed from children's own store of experiences. These would seem to be situations calling for in-depth discussion, the pooling of children's ideas, and the teacher again calling attention to evidence rather than giving answers.

5. **Children's response strategies are learned behaviors.** Although some of what was noted about age-level characteristics of response is certainly tied to development, the effects of cumulative experience and direct teaching are evident. Children's familiarity with many stories, their references to past projects and activities, and their deliberate imitation of teacher-talk and teacher strategies all speak for the influence of schooling.

Not surprisingly, older children seem to be better critics than younger children, but the effect is most pronounced when both are working with simple picture book stories or folk tales. However, when the form or the content of the material is distinctly unfamiliar, older children have some of the same problems that younger children do with the simple material. Apparently children do their best critical thinking about material that is easy for them. Material becomes easy as it becomes known and therefore predictable, just as a response strategy becomes "easy" with familiarity ("Any questions or comments?" is a case in point). If response strategies are learned behaviors, then children will probably not become articulate, self-aware lovers of literature all on their own. The implication is basic: what the teacher does, matters.


Creating a Nurturing Environment for Response

What kinds of things can elementary teachers do to create an environment which encourages the development of response to literature? Guidelines can be derived from successful practices observed during this study; Parkland Elementary School exemplified an unusually rich literature program.

1. **Provide books in the classroom.**
   - Make sure to get books of sufficient literary quality to support rereading and reflection.
   - See to it that most books bear some relation to others; provide books focused on a theme like "Mice" or "Colors" or "Bridges," books by one author, books of one type such as historical fiction or animal fantasy, books that portray different versions of the same story.
   - Arrange to have multiple copies of some books for small group reading.
   - Include some picture books even at upper grade levels, since these are good choices for response and extension projects.
   - Change a part of the collection frequently to maintain interest.

The selection of books is the skeletal structure of a literature program, on which all else depends. Teachers ought to approach the task with purpose, a basic plan for the kinds of connections they hope children will make from the selection, and a sense of the types of responses that will be generated. They ought to be aware of developmental
interests and personal preferences so as to get books which children have a chance to like. A thorough acquaintance with children's literature or the advice of a good librarian, or both, is almost a necessity at this stage.

2. Provide for contact with books.
   - Make books immediately accessible. Place them within easy reach, in several locations.
   - Display books prominently and attractively, so as to highlight the focus around which they were chosen.
   - Give children time to browse and choose from the books available in the room.
   - Provide time for children to read alone, as well as time to read together if they choose.

The accessibility and "touchability" of books at Parkland seem to have been of inestimable importance to that program. Children talked about books and worked with books that they could have at hand, and for the most part did not talk about or work with books they could not touch. Bringing books into the classroom will be of little value if children do not have the opportunity to get at them. Time to browse and choose is a corollary necessity, as is time to read.

3. Present literature to children.
   - Read aloud every day.
   - Introduce books which children might read or look at on their own. Emphasize connections and relationships.
   - Offer specially chosen books to small groups or to individuals.
- Share your own appreciation and satisfaction in books.

The teacher's presentation of literature accomplishes several things. In providing common experience – particularly in classrooms committed to individualized work – it furnishes a basis for group discussion and, over the long term, shared meanings and points of reference. At any level, reading aloud to the group gives non-readers access to stories and poems and helps to build their interest in reading as well as in literature.

The connections and focuses which guided the teacher's choice can and probably should be made explicit as new books are introduced, unless the children are invited to look through the selection and discover categories of their own. Finally, the child's image of the teacher as a person who responds to literature is an important part of this context, making it legitimate and satisfying for the child, too, to express response.

4. **Discuss books.**

- Discuss books read aloud with the whole group, common reading with small groups, and free reading with individual children.

- Include opportunity for free comment as well as a focus for discussion, such as, comparison of two versions of one tale.

- Be explicit about literary conventions and critical terminology when children have the idea but need the words.

- Give children an opportunity for free discussion without an adult present, using a tape recorder.
Discussion is the context for most direct teaching about literature, at least among those who reject workbook exercises. Good discussions should accomplish two things: let the teacher know how children are thinking about the story, and give children a chance to tune in on the way the teacher is thinking about the story. Learned response strategies come in large part from discussions; thus the structure used by the teacher should be planned in advance, at least in its basic outlines.

The child-structured, tape recorded book discussion is a special context intriguing in its potential. At its best, the tape recorder serves to keep the children on task without intimidating them as an adult group member might do, and provides a means by which they can reflect on their own responses. It offers real value also as an evaluation or assessment tool for teachers, who can listen without classroom distractions as children demonstrate their approach to the task of talking about a book.

5. **Provide for book extensions.**
   - Provide time and space for projects.
   - Furnish appropriate (inexpensive) concrete materials: felt for felt stories, paper and paint for murals and pictures, cloth and textured scraps for collage, cast-off paper and plastic products for construction, simple props and adult clothing for dramatic play, writing paper and felt tip pens or other writing instruments, bookbinding material, and so on.
- Introduce new or unusual materials from time to time to renew children's interest.
- Help children think of and choose from a variety of means for representing stories. Suggest appropriate ways and offer encouragement.
- Talk to children about work in progress to find out what they are thinking and to help them stay focused on the book.

Just as the accessibility of books influences talk, the accessibility of concrete materials seems to inspire representational response. Frequently materials suggest their own uses; the quality and variety available - though not their cost - will affect the final products.

It has already been noted that the book extension context is an important one to encourage because it provides a particularly childlike way for concrete operational children to work through the meaning of a story. However, maintaining the quality of children's attention to the story may be of special concern, and may require some monitoring. In the beginning of a project, teachers could help children to determine a focus, and follow up by talking with them about what they are doing at some time while the work is in progress.

A special case of the book extension content involves the attempt to reproduce or replicate an illustration from a picture book. With some children this seems to be a strong natural inclination, its success bringing great satisfaction. While it may not be the sort of response that teachers would deliberately solicit from children, neither
should it be forbidden or undervalued as a spontaneous choice. As discussed in Chapter V of this report, the attempt to reproduce an illustration may be linked to retelling and echoing the action in a generalized mimetic phenomenon which is different in character from representational responses.

6. **Provide for group sharing and display of work.**

- Make time for formal sharing of some representational responses.

- Help children phrase questions that are appropriate to the situation.

- Help the presenter "rehearse" by thinking of different ways to talk about the work and the book that inspired it.

- Mount and display children's representational responses so as to invite attention and reflection on the work as well as on the original stories.

- Provide focus for displays with captions and labels; consider content themes or other connections.

Formal sharing and display provide an audience for children's work and lend importance to response tasks. It also provides a public face for the classroom environment, one that suggests commitment to a literature program. Advance preparation and focus are key terms here, as in other contexts. Displays of children's book-related work may themselves lead back to the book, particularly if several children have reacted to one commonly known story. Since the process of working through an extension often gives children new things to say about content, discussion at this stage need not be a simple repetition of
earlier comments. Most teachers will probably want children to participate in the planning of displays, and rightfully so; in that case the teacher would need to help children decide on the proper focus and arrangement.

7. **Provide for long-term and cumulative experiences with literature.**
   - Give children time to fully develop their response products.
   - See that children have an opportunity to return to a familiar book in different contexts.
   - Provide a consistent, cooperatively planned literature program that extends throughout the elementary school.

For quite practical reasons, investigations of response to literature usually center on quick indicators of reactions. But in classrooms the important things usually happen over the long haul. Time and patience are needed: a whole day for the first grade story that was an elision of *Noah's Ark* and "The Wreck of the Hesperus"; more than a week for a fourth grader to take the pattern of *If I Were a Cricket*, improvise, and claim it for her own thoughts; months for the K-1 class that worked through the surface features of *Where the Wild Things Are*, finally confronting the problem of its reality. Teachers need to realize that the response process can continue while nothing is said and no product is seen, and for a very long time.

In view of the cumulative nature of response to literature, schools can best nurture its development through continuing, ongoing programs. One of the truly unusual aspects of the Parkland School setting was the
consistency with which so many of the staff viewed the importance of literature. Children had the possibility of going from kindergarten through fifth grade surrounded by well-chosen books that were easily accessible, with teachers who read aloud every day and discussed books regularly. They had continuing opportunities to represent stories in various types of extension activities, to share and display their products, and to take their time.

Since the program described here is such a strong one, it seems crucial to emphasize that it was largely staff-created and that it depends on human effort and commitment rather than a large budget and commercial materials. Other teachers in other schools can work toward the creation of similar literature programs and nurturing environments for response.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. Replication in other environments. In the present research, the use of ethnographic methods for gathering data about response to literature in classroom contexts was both an atypical focus for the method and an uncommon approach to the topic. The combination seems to have been sufficiently productive to warrant replication.

   - Would other school environments show children producing similar kinds of responses?
   - Would the relationships between response and context reveal the same kinds of patterns?

Documented comparisons might help to clarify the influence of specific context factors in both environments.
2. **Rule-governed behaviors.** Methods borrowed from socio-linguistics could be used to pursue the idea that the initiation of certain response activities might be rule-governed behaviors.

- Is "Talk about a book you can touch" an adequate statement of an implicit rule?
- If so, does it operate in other settings?
- Are there rules other than the ones proposed here by which the occurrence of children's responses could be predicted?

3. **Individual response styles.** In the present research it was obvious that some children produced consistently more and consistently more interesting responses than other children, but no attempt was made to track one individual for any significant period of time. A case study approach could be used to follow the development of a small number of children as they respond to literature.

- Do children behave according to personal styles of responding?
- How do children move from one type of response to another, and how do they change and refine their ideas about literature in the process?

4. **The transition stage.** When developmental differences were considered in this study, some contrasts between the youngest and the oldest children were clear, but it was much harder to understand what was happening in the middle group, where the changes were evidently being made. If we are to learn how change occurs, this transitional second and third grade level needs to be studied more closely. Particular response characteristics might provide a focus.
What features of language indicate that a child is moving from the embedded theme statements common to primary children toward the disembedded theme statements made by older children?

5. Concept of story. Children's comments about similarities of stories rather than their differences, and young children's use of generic characters both indicate development of story frame.

- Are these tendencies common to young children or peculiar to the Parkland setting?

- What evidence indicates children moving toward a more differentiated frame of reference?

6. Book extension contexts. Since it is not immediately clear just how children operate in book extension contexts, and why some children have experiences with the same activity that appear to be qualitatively different, these contexts might be more thoroughly explored.

- Is it generally true that child writers depart from a literary model over time and with successive attempts? How do children perceive what they are doing?

- Do book extensions like making a picture based on a story help children to formulate ideas and statements about books? Children might be interviewed before and after such an activity, and the process of their work observed and analyzed.
- How do children approach the task of creating a skit from a book? Of making a sequential board game? How do they make decisions about what to include?

7. **Effects of a literature program on reading activities.**
Children who have experienced rich elementary school literature programs seem to have good attitudes about reading, an interest in reading as an out-of-school activity, and generally high estimation of their own abilities.

- Are the interests and attitudes associated with a rich literature environment more positive than those of children in more restricted environments?
- Which children do more reading out of school? in school? all together?

8. **Beyond elementary school.** Finally, if the development of strategies for response to literature depends on cumulative experiences, as this study suggests, it would seem appropriate to follow some children into middle school or junior high school.

- Do students who have experienced an active elementary school literature program approach response tasks differently from students who represent classroom environments where literature was restricted or ignored?
- Do early adolescents who have had limited opportunities to respond to literature show behaviors common to younger children in rich literature environments?
Such research might help teachers to establish priorities by identifying prerequisite behaviors and experiences, the ones that are so crucial to the development of response that they must be made up if they are missed at the elementary level.
APPENDIX A

FACSIMILE SAMPLE OF ON-SITE NOTES
Monday, November 27

Warren is writing The Great Atlantis by The Great Warren B.
I ask how he knows about Atlantis - was it from a book? from TV?
Warren: This isn't from TV. It's about very far away, under the sea. There are lots of creatures - I'm studying underwater creatures.

- You like the ocean, then?
- Yeah, and forests. There's all that shade.
[His pic. is X-ray view]

He says there's someone in the boat who's going to be scared.
- This looks like a ray of light.
- It is! It's coming from that creature.

-Later he writes

Once as a child you were fright by a ciller wale tho the wale is being nise.

[Note: use of 2nd person - possible connection with "But Now?"?]}
Tuesday, November 28

Sammy, Mark, Holly making salt and flour clay with Student teacher circle - K reads Stone Soup
D. J. leans into it, rapt attention - seems familiar with story - so do several others.
K passes out 3 stones (Jared, Warren, Kandi hold during the reading)
As they finish, Jared, Warren and D. J. (mostly Jared) say "We could make Stone Soup"
Warren says we could put in the other stuff first and then put in the stones.
Carl - I'm not 'eanin' it.
Warren - It'll be good! Like chicken soup with rice.
[Reference to last spring's activity]

Library period. Kade reads to group.
The Three Feathers
Jack gets up and dances and says "That was a nice book"
[He was sent out of regular class at storytime]

In carpeted area - adjoining classroom; gives play about Johnny Appleseed
With music, some costuming
Kids: "Question you are writing. Who did you ask?" "What did you ask?"
"What does the idea?" "How long did it take?"
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SAMPLE RESPONSE TO

THE MAGICAL DRAWINGS OF MOONY B. FINCH
Interview Guide for

The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch

1. What kind of book would you call this?

2. Could Moony Finch really draw things that came to life?
   Is the big dragon real?
   (If no, then, why are the people running from him?)
   Is the little dragon real?

3. What would you say about the people who gathered around Moony in the park?

4. If you had been there, what would you have done?

5. Did Moony Finch learn anything in this story?
   What did he learn?
Sample Response To

The Magical Drawings of Moony B. Finch

Free Comment

Group: 2-3

Respondents: Mickey, Doug (Grade 3)

Situation: Investigator reads book aloud to both boys, demonstrates operation of tape recorder, leaves them to record "all you can think of about the book."

Mickey: All right, now. Me and Doug was thinking of it - it was really good. Right, Doug?

Doug: Yes, I thought it was good because I like to draw too. But I don't have a magical 'raser and I don't have a magical pencil and I don't have no magical crayons but still I love to draw.

Mickey: So I liked the book 'cause when he draws the pictures, they come out - when somebody touches them they come really true. And we really like it. Right, Doug?

Doug: Yeah. And I like the part when that old man asked for a limousine.

Mickey: Yeah. Well, we can show you it on - on - sharing. Well, bye.

Doug: Bye.

Interview

Group: 2-3

Respondent: Doug (Grade 3)

Int.: Doug, if somebody said to you, "What kind of book is that?", what would you tell them?


Int.: Anything else?

Doug: It's a good book.
Int.: Okay. Let's say that you had this book under your arm and Greg came up to you and he said, "What kind of book is that?" What would you tell him?

Doug: It's a - magic book.

Int.: Okay. Fair enough. Now tell me about Moony Finch. Could he really draw things that came to life?

Doug: Yeah.

Int.: Okay. In real life, could he do that?

Doug: No.

Int.: What's the difference?

Doug: That is fantasy.

Int.: Tell me about this dragon. Is that dragon real?

Doug: In there it is.

Int.: Okay. Is that why the people are running from it?

Doug: Yeah.

Int.: How about this dragon? Is that real?

Doug: Uh-huh.

Int.: Is it any different from this big one? I mean, you said this one wasn't real except for in here. Is it the same for this one, or different?

Doug: The same.

Int.: What do you think he's going to do with that dragon?

Doug: He's gonna keep it for a pet.

Int.: Would you like that?

Doug: Yeah.

Int.: Remember this part where ... the people said draw this, draw that. What would you say about those people?

Doug: I'd say they're selfish - 'n greedy.
Int.: You think people are like that?

Doug: Yeah, some of 'em.

Int.: Tell me, if you'd been a kid in this crowd somewhere, what would you have done?

Doug: Aww - it's hard.

Int.: Well, just guess.

Doug: Well. I'd have to be greedy if I was in the crowd.

Int.: Well, if you weren't? Would you have done something different from them?

Doug: Uh - yeah. I'd ask 'im to erase 'em. I'd ask 'im to make a picture of them and then erase 'em.

Int.: You'd have got rid of them, huh? Would you have wanted him to draw you a picture, maybe?

Doug: Yeah. Draw a picture of them 'n then erase 'em.

Int.: One more thing. Do you think that Moony Finch learned anything in this book?

Doug: Yeah. Don't be greedy.

Int.: Anything else? You think he's going to draw any more pictures for people now?

Doug: No, but he'll draw his own for hisself. I'll tell ya, if I was, I'd draw something that'd be in the future.

Int.: Oh. Like what?

Doug: Car.

Int.: For himself? Draw himself a car, you mean?

Doug: Yeah.

Int.: You like those cars, don't you, Doug? Is there anything else you can think of to tell me about that book?

Doug: I'd erase my sister. (Laughs)
APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PARENTS
Dear Parents,

During the last three months a study of children's response to literature has been conducted at ___________ with the special cooperation of Miss ________, Mrs. ________, and Mrs. ________. The research was conducted by Janet Hickman of Ohio State University. She observed for several weeks in each of these classrooms, sometimes using a tape recorder or camera to collect examples of children's comments, their art work, writing, and other activities.

Since this study will be of interest to other teachers, reports of it may be published in professional journals or possibly in some other form. It would be helpful to include pictures and direct quotes from the children's work in any such report. (Of course, individual students or their work would not be identified by real names.)

To give permission for use of your child's photograph or examples of his/her work, please complete the form below and return it to school with your child. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Hickman at the school (_______) or at home (268-6641).

Thank you for your cooperation.

________________________________________
Child's Name

________________________________________
Child's Birth Date

I consent to the use of my child's photograph and/or examples from my child's classwork in reports of a study of response to literature conducted by Janet Hickman at ___________ Elementary School in autumn, 1978.

________________________________________
Parent's Signature

Date
APPENDIX D

CHILDREN'S BOOKS RELATIVE TO

REPORTED RESPONSES
Children's Books Relative to Reported Responses

The following books represent only a fraction of those in use at the school which was the site of this study. These are the ones which generated the responses reported here, however, and they are listed alphabetically by title for the convenience of readers of Chapters IV and V. In cases where children were known to have used a paperback edition, the paperback publisher is listed in parentheses.


By the Shores of Silver Lake by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Illustrated by Garth Williams. New York: Harper, 1953. (Scholastic)


"Clouds" by Christina Rossetti in Poems Children Will Sit Still For compiled by Beatrice Schenk De Regniers and others. New York: Citation Press, 1969.


Grandma Didn't Wave Back by Rose Blue. Illustrated by Ted Lewin.


How To Eat Fried Worms by Thomas Rockwell. Illustrated by Emily McCully.


Mr. and Mrs. Pig's Evening Out by Mary Rayner. New York: Atheneum, 1976.


Pinnell, Gay Su. Language Functions Exploration of First Grade Students as Observed in Informal Classroom Environments. Dissertation. The Ohio State University, 1975.


