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GIFTED MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' RESPONSE
TO NONFICTION/INFORMATIONAL BOOKS
ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

DISSERTATION

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

By
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This research investigated ways in which gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs. Eighteen seventh grade students at a suburban, midwestern middle school read books they chose from a set of six books selected by the researcher because they exemplify the term literature of fact.

The questions that guide this research were: (a) In what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs? (b) In what ways do photographs, used as illustration in nonfiction/informational books, contribute to the meaning gifted middle school readers make with text and in what ways do the photographs elicit emotional or empathetic response from these readers? (c) What concepts about the genre of nonfiction literature are held by these gifted middle school readers?

The researcher assumed the role of participant observer and was part of the Accelerated Studies Program language arts classroom in the participants' middle school during an entire school year, meeting with participants two times each week. The participants were asked to read at least three of the six books and to respond by answering a set of questions in a reading log; participating in audio taped, small-group discussions; creating their own nonfiction/informational book illustrated with photographs the participants took; and being interviewed by the researcher at the end of the year (exit interviews). Additional data sources
were an interest survey prepared by the teacher and a video tape of a morning TV broadcast produced by students for their school.

The findings showed that the observable responses of these participants can be grouped in four categories: (a) text and graphic design features; (b) the feelings of the characters in the books and the feelings of the participants as they read; (c) characteristics of nonfiction/informational books; and (d) specific and inferred information from photographs used as illustration in nonfiction/informational books. Participants' discussion focused on specific elements of the text and specific features of the photographs and of the book's design. These readers demonstrated their ability to read critically, and they expected to understand what they read and saw and to expand their information repertoires. They demonstrated that they used information from multiple sources within books, from their fellow readers, and from prior experiences to make meaning as they read. Participants used text and graphic design features and their understanding of other characteristics of nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs as they wrote and illustrated their own nonfiction/informational books.
This work is dedicated to my husband Guy Wolfenbarger.

Love is patient... There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.
I Corinthians 13:4,7

and to Charlotte Huck, who started me on this path.
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FIELD OF STUDY

Education
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the problem that this research addresses and describes methods used to investigate the problem and to analyze the data that was collected. Chapter One includes the assumptions that underlie the research questions and the research design. Next, terms used in this dissertation are defined and lastly, limitations of this study are discussed. I have chosen to use pronouns she, her, her's, and herself when referring to “the reader” who is not otherwise identified with a given name.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of my research is how gifted middle school language arts students respond to nonfiction/informational literature illustrated with photographs and written for children and/or young adults. My goal for this research was to better understand these students, and students like them, and to contribute to the body of knowledge that directly affects their education.

A common, immediate answer from many middle school students regarding what distinguishes nonfiction literature from fiction literature is that nonfiction books are true and fiction books are made-up. I investigated ways in which textual and aesthetic features of nonfiction/informational books convey to the participants in my study: (a) The assurance of truth and a representation of
verifiable facts; and (b) ways these features encourage an active engagement between the reader and the book.

This research undertaking is timely for four major reasons:

1. There have been few investigations specific to the response of middle school readers to nonfiction/informational books.

2. The current research on the structure of middle school curriculum shows that an integrated curriculum implemented by team planning and teaching is the most developmentally appropriate educational program for young adolescents.

3. Using literature for children and young adults for instruction and to foster attitudes that promote life-long reading can accomplish goals of an integrated curriculum. Many schools are using trade books (rather than anthologies) as a means to implement language arts and social studies curriculums.

4. The body of research that focuses on the responses of identified gifted middle school readers is very limited. Most research involves quantitative studies. Because some students are identified as having exceptionally strong language abilities, it is important to investigate how students' needs can be addressed and how their talents can be developed, in particular, using nonfiction literature when implementing middle school social studies and language arts curriculums.

Basic Assumptions Underlying the Study

What is there about books and reading that enfolds even infants?

Pleasure. There is pleasure in being close, the intimacy between the listener and the reader. It is the sound of the reader's voice. It is the visual stimulation of the book as an object: color, texture of the paper, illustrative art, typeface style, size,
tactile experiences. It is the comfort of familiarity, hearing the same words repeatedly. Words from the pages will be the same during the second, or third, or fifth reading. Beside comfortable familiarity walks pleasurable excitement. The reader is excited by exotic places and characters and by encountering the unknown. It is a safe, protected place where the listener finds herself reflected in the words and the art and can experiment with and test how new ideas fit her world at that particular time.

Language has the power to change and manipulate, to control and liberate. Language is stronger if not more immediate, than physical force. Language transmits and perpetuates our humanness. Language, music, visual arts, and dance are human means to participate in nature's acts of creation.

Interpreting and responding to various symbolic representations of actual, vicarious, or imagined experiences constitutes reading. Reading involves collaborative experiences between the creator of the symbols and the reader, mediated by the wide and varied life encounters of both. Reading has the potential to provide pleasure, satisfaction, gratification, enlightenment, and escape. It vicariously connects the readers with people and places and experiences and ideas that are new or renewed in different settings. Reading also has potential to persuade, manipulate, and indoctrinate. When readers critically engage with the text, they attempt to reconcile what they know and believe with the meaning they make with the words and visual art on the page in front of them.

As an individual becomes a reader, one who evokes this pleasure herself by taking the book and initiating the experience, the reader recreates and reinvents the transaction between herself, the author, the artist, and the text. There is confidence in one's own power as a reader. The reader emulates those
other readers whom she admires and seeks the sense of her own power, the mastery of symbols on paper, of becoming the meaning maker.

Text and art combine in books for children and young adults and can offer younger readers lasting and transforming experiences. Sometimes the word book has a utilitarian connotation: used for reading, used for teaching, used for entertainment, used to level a table. When a book becomes art, the word changes to literature. Literature is defined in a variety of ways.

**Literature** is a broad, inclusive term that represents many genres of text. Literature can be fictional, imaginative accounts or accounts that rely on verifiable facts, nonfiction. Literature signifies an exemplary use of language to convey the writer's ideas. Applying literature to language symbols connotes the writer's exceptional skill to engage the reader, the creation of a world shared by the writer and the reader as they meet.

In their book, *Children's Literature in the Elementary School*, Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1992) write, "... we think of literature as the imaginative shaping of life and thought into forms and structures of language ... we consider pictures as well as words, asking how both sets of symbols work to produce an aesthetic experience ... This aesthetic experience may be a vivid reconstruction of past experience, an extension of experience, or creation of new experience" (p. 6-8). These authors state that children's literature is determined by content "limited by the experience and understanding of children ... the uniqueness of children's literature lies in the audience that it addresses" (p. 7). The child reader is at the center of the narrative.

Molly Hunter in her book *Talent is not Enough* (1976) writes, "A good book, which is also truly for children's reading, has the child's eye at the centre" (p. 2). Literature for younger readers reflects concerns, perspective, interests,
and point of view of a child or adolescent. This point of view will be varied, as we are varied by our life experiences, but young readers will find a kind of kinship. They will recognize a place in the book’s world where they fit. Jane Yolen (1981) argues that “even very young children can absorb the meanings and wisdom of (traditional stories) and use them as tools for interpreting their own day-to-day experiences” (p. 18).

Betty Brett (1989) says, "... (literature) evokes emotions; (it) invite(s) thought and reflection; (it) engender(s) ideas" (p. 25). Susan Lehr (1995) writes, "As readers we crawl into the authors’ minds and connect for a brief bit of time. We listen to their voices, experience their lives, see through their eyes—literally crawl under the skin of another living being. When created with passion, these stories become a permanent part of us" (p. xv). These qualities provoke the reader to examine her ideas and to break the constraints of being fixed in a certain time. This also defines informational text as literature.

Darton (1982) wrote that literature for younger readers is created “to give children spontaneous pleasure, not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet” (p. 1). Lukens (1986) refers to imaginative and artistic qualities inherent in literature as she defines it. She understands that along with pleasure, literature facilitates understanding. Lukens sees life as a series of happenings for which literature can help the reader establish a sense of order. Literature sorts the world out into segments we (as readers) can identify and examine. Literature provides a sense of life’s unity and meaning. Nodelman (1992) argues that the reader should expect “insight into reality” (p. 81) from both fiction and nonfiction. He says, "... the world is inherently interesting, and having knowledge of it is inherently pleasurable" (p. 85). Pleasures experienced by the reader increase as her specific vision of
reality is broadened by literature which is characterized by the author's careful selection and organization of ideas and by the author's voice speaking intimately to the reader.

Using Iser's (1980) argument that literary text needs the reader's creative participation, one can understand how unsatisfactory or lacking in pleasure a text is that offers no challenge to the reader's expectations. Literature leaves open spaces and invites the reader to fill them. Nodelman (1992) adds to this idea of gaps: "... most of what a written text is capable of communicating is not actually on the page" (p. 59). The artistic, imaginative author provides only enough information to evoke the reader's contextual knowledge and experience for her to make meaning.

**Nonfiction Literature**

*Nonfiction literature* is not a misnomer. The Velveteen Rabbit (Williams, 1922) asks the Skin Horse, "What is REAL?" and "Does it hurt?" This is the question refined to its essence. Nonfiction literature presents what is real, what is known, and sometimes the topics do cause the reader to flinch. It may not be physical discomfort, but the mind must make spaces for new ideas and that isn't always comfortable. The challenges of well written books of fact will be exhilarating and that stimulation moves the reader to that place of cognitive dissonance requiring her to reconfigure her ideas in order to accommodate new ones.

Vardell (1991), as part of the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Using Nonfiction in Elementary Language Arts, says that nonfiction for younger readers "provides a literary experience that is also a learning experience (and) offers an outstanding model of quality of writing,
individuality of style, beauty of expression, and creativity in use of language” (p. 475).

When considering nonfiction as literature, it is important to know what award-winning authors of nonfiction for younger readers write about their work. Kathryn Lasky, Milton Meltzer, Leonard Everett Fisher, and Russell Freedman are all recognized for the excellence of their work. Common themes emerge from the thoughts of these authors on writing nonfiction for children: the importance of story, the passion they feel about their topics, and the necessity of a transactionary experience between their text, themselves, and the reader.

Kathryn Lasky (1985) refers to her own nonfiction writing, “for me in writing I am searching for the story among the truths, the facts, the lies, and the realities” (p. 530). To accomplish this, she tries "hard to listen, smell, and touch the place" (p. 530) that she writes about, recreating in the book a sensory experience for the reader. She talks about seeking "the mystery of (the) seemingly ordinary", (p. 530) that allure of mystery, what is unknown drawing the reader into the text. When describing puppets that she saw as she researched for her book *Puppeteer*, Lasky (1985) recalls "they were actors waiting for their voices, for their moves, and like the rest of us a chance at that little slip between two eternities that we call life" (p. 531). Lasky's nonfiction books are literature. She is an author of exceptional skill and her work does engage the reader. "What I do hope is that they (the readers) come away with a sense of joy—indeed celebration—about something they have sensed of the world in which they live" (p. 531).

Milton Meltzer (1976) in a *Horn Book* article, "Where Do All the Prizes Go? A Case for Nonfiction,” writes:
Literary art has, I think, two related aspects: the subject and the means the writer uses to convey his ideas—the craft. The craft is the making, shaping, forming, selecting. And what the reader gets from the exercise of the writer's craft upon a subject is an experience. If the subject is significant, and the artist is up to it, then the book can enlarge, it can deepen, it can intensify the reader's experience of life (p. 17).

He argues for the need of criteria by which to evaluate nonfiction written for young readers. Meltzer's work certainly conveys his passion for his subjects, but more, his work conveys the belief that young people can recognize strength of conviction from examples in books they read and can make positive contributions to the betterment of society. Literature of fact is excellent writing and intensifies the reader's experience of life.

Leonard Everett Fisher (1988), who both writes and illustrates nonfiction literature for younger readers, writes in another Horn Book article:

I'm trying to create the emotion of history, the dynamics of history, together with the fact of history. I'm trying to communicate what events in history felt like. These feelings will bring children back to reading information to find out the facts—back to reality (p. 319).

Again a writer of exceptional talent addresses the combination of the aesthetic experience with efferent reading. Nonfiction/informational books are literature of fact when the reader increases her understanding of some topic and simultaneously has her imagination called into play. Her response is to the emotional experience and to the satisfaction of knowing more.

Russell Freedman (1994) in an article for School Library Journal describes himself as first a storyteller. The research for his topic is the foundation for his writing, but his style incorporates techniques of storytelling.

When I speak of storytelling, I'm using the word "story" in the sense of igniting the reader's imagination, evoking pictures and scenes in
the reader's mind. Storytelling means creating vivid word pictures of people, places, and events—creating a convincing, meaningful, and memorable world. It means pulling the reader into that world. And it means using a narrative framework, a storytelling voice that keeps the reader turning the pages with a mounting sense of anticipation and discovery (p. 139).

Nilson and Donelson (1993) repeat these ideas with, "Literature—fiction and nonfiction—is more than a simple recounting or replaying of the life that surrounds the writer. It is a distillation and a crystallization" (p. 303).

Literature is defined by its power to elicit strong emotional response in the reader. The language of literature captures the reader's imagination; it recalls those experiences in the reader's life that have touched the most essential receptors that make us human. Through literature, reader, author, and text come together to create a new place that is uniquely personal and at the same time commonly shared. Literature is not limited by the time in which it was created. Literature informs, something is added to the reader's life. Literature's voice beckons and is answered by many. Nonfiction/informational literature, literature of fact, achieves all of this.

Part of the experience of literature is sensory: shape, texture, color, the experience of holding the book in our hands. Part of the experience of literature is the visual: colors on the dust jacket and cover, page design, typeface, the art that is the book which offers its own narrative of the text. Part of the book is the sound of the words joined by the author in patterns that create images in the reader's and listener's mind. Part of the experience of literature is the smell, the crisp smell of a new book, the aging smell of an old book.

This experience of literature is poetically described by Gary Paulsen in the opening of his Newbery Honor Book, The Winter Room (1989). Paulsen says if books could have smells, if they could have sound, if they could have light, they
still require one essential element: "If books could have more, give more, be more, show more, they would still need readers, who bring to them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can't be in books. The book needs you" (p. 6).

So often books for younger readers are described as literature only if they are fictional stories, poetry, or traditional stories—folktales, fairy tales, myths, legends, stories that are part of a religious heritage. While the reader usually experiences these books aesthetically, there is also a part of the experience that is efferent—the reader takes away information. We read not only to feel but to confirm and extend what we know. Nonfiction/informational books, literature of fact, can provide a similarly strong aesthetic response while informing the reader. It is my contention that an author who is concerned about authenticity and accuracy, who is able to make readers aware of more than one perspective of the issues, who challenges and excites readers with rich language, and invites readers to consider the complexities our world, creates literature. The artist who brings a visual perspective of the text enlarges the potential for readers' engagement with the book. The final object that artfully joins text and art, thought and feeling into a unique kind of wholeness is the book.

Nonfiction/informational books which meet all the qualities ascribed to literature thus are literature of fact.

Research Questions

The questions that guided this research were:

Question 1. In what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs?

Question 2. In what ways do photographs, used as illustration in nonfiction/informational books, contribute to the meaning
gifted middle school readers make with the text and in what ways do the photographs elicit emotional or empathetic response from these readers?

Question 3. What concepts about the genre of nonfiction literature are held by these gifted middle school readers?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, these are the definitions of terms used throughout this investigation.

aesthetic and efferent: These terms are the opposite ends of a continuum conceived by Louise Rosenblatt (1978) to conceptualize her theory of the transaction between the author, the text, and the reader. Aesthetic response describes an emotional transaction or stance. Efferent response refers to a reader's stance that assumes that something will be carried away from her interactions with the text. The reader approaches the text with the intent to learn something, to gain information.

children's literature: These are books, all genres, whose intended audience is children from birth through upper elementary school age. [For the Caldecott and Newbery Awards presented by American Library Association, children applies to ages 0 - 14.

clustering: This is a strategy for meeting the needs of identified gifted students in the regular classroom. Students who are identified as gifted in a specific academic area, e.g. language arts or math, are grouped together for instruction that recognizes and addresses the special needs of these students.

gifted: Piirto (1994) says, "... the gifted, for the purposes of schools, are those individuals, who, by way of learning characteristics such as superior
memory, observational powers, curiosity, creativity, and the ability to learn school-related subject matter rapidly and accurately, with a minimum of drill and repetition, have a right to an education that is differentiated according to these characteristics” (p. 34). The State of Ohio recognizes an achievement of a ninety-fifth percentile score on a standardized achievement test as an indication of giftedness in a specific academic area.

literature: Literature is a broad, inclusive term that represents many genres of text. Literature can be fictional, imaginative accounts, or accounts that rely on verifiable facts. Literature signifies an exemplary use of language to convey the writer's ideas. The term connotes the writer's exceptional skill, the writer's ability to engage the reader, the creation of a world shared by the writer and the reader as they meet.

nonfiction literature: Nonfiction literature is text that embodies the definition of literature and is critiqued by the criteria for evaluating nonfiction cited in this paper (Huck, Hepler, and Hickman [1992] and Dowd [1992]. Nonfiction literature draws on verifiable facts and is text whose purpose is essentially to inform the reader about these facts. It includes both primary and secondary sources. Nonfiction, informational books, and literature of fact are terms that are interchangeable with nonfiction literature and mean the same in the context of this study.

reading: Reading is interpreting and responding to various symbolic representations of actual, vicarious, or imagined experiences.

response: Response is the manifestation of the reader's engagement with text. This may take the form of the reader's discernible physical or verbal action. The reader may indicate her level of engagement with symbolic
representation of ideas (text or graphic symbols) through spoken or written language or use of various art media. The reader also may show her engagement with text through physical movement or posturing—nonverbal actions.

stance: This is the reader's view of the world. It is the reader's orientation to the task at hand. The reader's approach to a single text may follow a recursive path along Rosenblatt's continuum.

young adult literature: These are books, all genres, whose intended audience is readers from twelve years of age through high school. It should be noted that these two designations, children's and young adult, are not rigidly applied. The best match between reader and book will depend on the reader's experience and level of development.

Limitations of this Study

This investigation reports the response of a group of middle school readers to six books of nonfiction literature. The breadth of the findings is limited by the size of the participant group, the group being 18 students within one class of 26 students. The findings are derived from the responses of seventh grade students identified as gifted specifically in the area of language arts. This delineation of the participant population possibly limits the applicability of this description of middle school reader response to other readers of similar ability.

Using only nonfiction literature illustrated with photographs to elicit reader response could also limit a description of the contribution of illustrations to the kinds of responses these readers demonstrate. Other forms of visual art, different media, artist's style, and the spatial relationship of art and text may contribute differently to a student's response to nonfiction/informal books.
The effect of the features of the book as an art object—the size, the color, quality of the paper in the book, style of the print, the kind and quantity of the illustrations, the visual and tactile experiences with the book—can only be described for the particular set of nonfiction literature presented to the participants.

Summary and Overview of Chapters

The purpose of this research was to observe and describe how a small group of middle school students, who are identified as gifted in the academic area of language arts, responded to a set of six nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs. The participants in the study were able to respond in several different manners to the books they read: by discussing in small groups with their peers and me; by writing in reading logs answers to questions I gave them; by choosing a topic and writing, illustrating, and publishing their own nonfiction book; by discussing their own books in a peer-editing group; by talking to me at the end of the data collection about their book and the experience; and by appearing on a student-produced morning TV program at their school.

During the analysis, data from each of the sources was coded. Broad categories emerged as this initial sorting took place. The categories were refined, and subcategories formed within these categories. After looking at the threads spun from each source, patterns of participant responses were woven using what the participants said and did in each data collection situation. I present analysis of the findings as a whole cloth, and I also present the findings as swatches in which all the data collected from individuals shows the distinctive colors of the larger patterns.

Chapter Two contains a description of theoretical frameworks for reader response, focusing on the work of Louise Rosenblatt and Judith Langer. I cite
the work of James Britton, Michael Benton, Wolfgang Iser, and show how the ideas of these theorists align and define the reader's role in the transactionary process of reading. In Chapter Two is a review of developmental theory as it applies to young adolescents, the characteristics of gifted learners, the nature of informational text, and a review of research on response to informational children's books. Features of middle school students' responses to literature are also part of this chapter. Included in this review is literature that addresses ways readers construct meaning with illustrations in books.

Chapter Three explains the research methods. I describe the setting in which my research was conducted, how my data was collected, and how it was analyzed.

Chapter Four allows the readers of my research to meet the 18 seventh grade students who participated in the study through what they said to me and what they showed me through books they wrote and illustrated. Chapter Four is the analysis of data and the description of the process by which I made this analysis.

Chapter Five presents my conclusions and discussion of the study. In this chapter I discuss how my findings might be used in other middle school classrooms and with gifted middle school language arts students. In particular, I suggest how nonfiction literature can be used for reading aloud to students, for language arts instruction, and for slaking the curiosity of young adolescents. Finally, I suggest implications for further research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of related literature begins with research that focuses on the characteristics of the participants in this study, middle school gifted students. I present developmental theories that apply to adolescents and theories which apply to students with exceptional cognitive and specific academic ability. Research that has contributed to understanding ways in which readers respond as they read follows in the next section of Chapter Two. My review continues by presenting research that has investigated the characteristics of nonfiction/informational literature and readers responding to nonfiction/informational text. The last section of this chapter includes research that focuses on ways that readers respond to the art that illustrates books, in particular, photographs used as illustrations.

Developmental Theory

The middle school, early adolescent student is a complex individual experiencing dramatic changes, involving physical, emotional, and cognitive development. Being responsible for guiding these young people can be
challenging to one's patience, creativity, endurance, and capacity to be loving and understanding all at the same time. Theories of human development and of cognitive and moral development provide insight to the changes experienced by middle school children and to ways of meeting their changing needs.

Erikson's theory of personality (1963) proposes that the individual progresses through eight stages of development. Each stage is theorized as having two extremes and in order to move to the next level of development, the individual must resolve the conflict that is inherent in the opposition of the two extremes. These stages are: (a) Trust vs. Mistrust; (b) Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt; (c) Initiative vs. Guilt; (d) Industry vs. Inferiority; (e) Identity vs. Role Confusion; (f) Intimacy vs. Isolation; (g) Generativity vs. Stagnation; and (h) Integrity vs. Despair. Stages (d) and (e) are most relevant to the early adolescent.

While a satisfying transition from one stage to the next requires resolution of the conflict between the two poles of each stage, if the individual does not completely resolve this conflict, later experiences may contribute to her finding a fulfilling resolution. Experiences with others in one's society—teachers, family, peers, other role models, the physical environment—facilitate Erikson's concept of development.

The middle school student is moving beyond the basic physical and social skills to acquiring the abilities to accomplish productive work, gain independence, and demonstrate responsibility. Because these are not easily attained, the adolescent often experiences feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. One's sense
of self resides in successful resolution of the conflicts of these middle stages. The individual must establish a balance between assumptions about her place as a young child in the scheme of things and her role as an adult.

Maslow's (1943) theory of human motivation helps one understand the adolescent's particular view of life and how to react to adolescent behaviors. Maslow argued that all individuals have five basic needs: (a) physiological; (b) safety; (c) love and belonging; (d) esteem; and (e) self-actualization. The middle school student is experiencing rapid physical change. Safety needs require a sense of order and predictability/consistency in the life of this student. Part of this need for consistency is having the perception that rules are fair and applied equally. Often the school is the only place an adolescent can find this. The early adolescent wants to belong, and friendships, group affiliations, and role models are extremely important. Self-esteem for the adolescent comes with achievement and recognition which work for a sense of confidence in one's ability to be in control of one's own life. Because these experiences are shared by middle school aged students, there is a bond that almost becomes a barrier for adult intervention in the lives of these individuals. Working with middle school students is an awesome challenge because of the urgency adolescents feel to accomplish the move between being a dependent child and an independent adult.

Lerner's (1985) more recent model of adolescent development addresses the responses from others to the dramatic changes the adolescent experiences. It includes the following ideas: (a) the adolescent may be a stimulus that causes
certain reactions from others in the individual's environment and these reactions in turn influence the individual's behavior; (b) the adolescent as a "processor" of information is influenced by the way she cognitively and emotionally assimilates what's happening around her and to her; (c) the adolescent becomes increasingly able to act as "agent, shaper, or selector." She becomes more capable of initiating action to affect her life. The key to successfully achieving personal satisfaction and becoming a productive member of one's community is finding what Lerner calls "goodness of fit." The individual must be able to match her behaviors to the norms of her society. Lerner sees the adolescent as playing an integral and dynamic role in her own development.

Piaget's (1979) ideas (in Wadsworth) about cognitive development have greatly influenced how the educational setting can best facilitate the adolescent's development. Piaget argued that cognitive development progresses through four stages: (a) sensorimotor—concepts of space, time, and objects; (b) preoperations—concepts of symbol systems; (c) concrete operations—concepts of rule systems; and (d) formal operations—logical, hypothetical, and reflective thinking. The adolescent is moving between concrete and formal operations. The kind of thinking the individual applies during this transition time depends on the demands of the task at hand.

Keating (1980) and Elkind (1980) elaborated on Piaget's theories. Keating offers five characteristics of adolescent formal operational thinking: (a) consider possibilities and alternatives; (b) generate and test hypotheses; (c) plan ahead; (d) reflect; and (e) project beyond the immediate situation. Elkind takes the
position that the adolescent entering the stage of formal operations assumes she is the focus of everyone's attention and this sense of importance incorporates ideas that catastrophic events only happen to others.

Cognitive and moral development are seen as related. Two prominent theorists of moral development are Kohlberg (1976) and Eisenberg (1982). Kohlberg said that adolescents base their moral decisions on conforming to what they perceive as pleasing others, peer pressure, or rules of authority. The onus is on imposition of standards from outside the individual. Eisenberg saw moral development occurring from conflict between the individual's desire to satisfy her own desires and to meet the desires of others. Adolescents begin to empathize with the conditions of others. The adolescent is seldom at ease with her changing body and her changing view of the world. There are differences in the rate of physical and world-view change influenced by gender and environmental factors. Because schools are the major socializing influence on young adolescents, it is of the utmost importance that educators understand the multiple roles they must assume for addressing the academic and social/emotional needs unique to the middle school age student.

Theories of Giftedness, Intelligence, and a Model of Talent

A theory of giftedness must go beyond one that presupposes giftedness and a high IQ score being one and the same. Cohen (1988) said that theory must be framed by an understanding of the totality of the individual, how the individual is identified, and what the implications of the theory are for the education of that individual.
Joseph Renzulli’s (1978) theory, *The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness*, is visually represented by three interlocking rings, a Venn diagram, that shows an area in which the three traits: Above Average Ability, Creativity, and Task Commitment intersect. An individual in which these three attributes converge is one who is capable of demonstrating exceptional performance and who can be a significant contributor to society.

Abraham Tannenbaum (1983) visualized his theory of giftedness as a five-point star; each point represents one of the five factors of giftedness as a psychosocial phenomenon: General Ability, Special Ability, Environmental Factors, Nonintellectual Factors, and Chance Factors. Within this theory there is also a convergence of the factors. Tannenbaum says the nature of giftedness may be regarded as holding "extraordinary promise for productivity or performance in the areas of work that are publicly prized . . ." (p. 89).

Roberta Milgram, Tel Aviv University (1996), has postulated a theory of giftedness which incorporates ideas about the hereditary and environmental influences connected to giftedness. She calls it the *4 X 4 Structure of Giftedness*, which has direct implications for identifying and educating gifted and talented students. The Milgram structure explains giftedness as resulting from complex interaction of cognitive, personal-social, and socio-cultural influences. Her four constructs are: (a) general intellectual ability or overall general intelligence; (b) specific intellectual ability or specific intelligence; (c) general original/creative thinking; and d) specific creative ability. Milgram visualizes these four constructs on one dimension; four levels of
giftedness—profound, moderate, mild, and non-gifted—as the second dimension; and the third dimension being three settings: community, school, and home. In the graphic representation of this three dimensional block, the cube is circled, and in that circle are: Personality, Subculture, Culture, Gender, Age, and Sex. Subscribing to Milgram's theory, one can conceive of an individual being gifted in one of forty-eight units of this model or in multiple units. This theory and Milgram's work support current ideas that there is not a unidimensional definition of giftedness (IQ), nor can our definition be limited to only two identifiers, IQ and specific academic achievement excellence.

The work of Howard Gardner (1983) has strongly influenced thinking about what giftedness is, how it is identified, and the implications for education. Gardner's is a theory of intelligence rather than a theory of giftedness and must be included because of the impact his ideas are having on the way schools are developing strategies for recognizing and meeting the needs of students. In his Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Gardner posits that there are seven distinct "competencies": Linguistic, Logical-mathematical, Spatial, Bodily-kinesthetic, Musical, Inter-personal, and Intra-personal.

Fancoys Gagne (1991) has developed a model of talent. In his model there are five general fields of talent: Academic, Technical, Artistic, Interpersonal, and Athletic. He says that giftedness is an aptitude for achievement in these fields. He identifies four spheres of activity or aptitude domains of giftedness: Intellectual, Creative, Socioaffective, and Sensorimotor. Giftedness is manifested in the various talents when impacted by Intrapersonal
Catalysts (Motivation and Personality) and Environmental Catalysts. Talent is the product, i.e., behavior or actions that can be witnessed or for which there is some evidence.

These theoretical models share a common ground because they all conceptualize exceptional abilities as behavior or action exhibited by the individual. Because human activity seeks many avenues of expression, exceptional talent may be demonstrated by highly elevated intellectual perception, creative thinking that produces innovative and original solutions to complex problems, artistic expression of the human physical and spiritual experience, or by leadership which inspires and encourages others to utilize their collective strengths. The understanding of exceptional abilities that these theories promote will lead to greater awareness of the critical need to make recognition and development of such abilities a priority in this time of education reform.

What Does It Mean To Be Gifted. In our egalitarian society, using the term or label "gifted" often has the consequence of raising the hue and cry that all are created equal, therefore are entitled to a certain unspecified sameness. Coinciding with this demand for a utilitarian likeness, our society voices its high regard for individualism, for originality, for self-determination. We applaud the heroism of accomplishment in the face of awesome obstacles. We admire those individuals, who because of some great ability, stand out from the rest of us.

There seems to be less reluctance to laud exceptional athletic ability, or popular musical ability, or artistic forms that don't challenge the familiar. But in
public education, there are some attempts to silence talk of students with uncommonly high ability as having special educational needs. If we are to continue to explore and stretch the boundaries of human potential, this will be accomplished by the original and creative thinking and leadership of gifted and talented individuals. Jane Piirto (1994) says, "...the gifted, for the purposes of schools, are those individuals who, by way of learning characteristics such as superior memory, observational powers, curiosity, creativity, and the ability to learn school-related subject matter rapidly and accurately, with a minimum of drill and repetition, have a right to an education that is differentiated according to these characteristics" (p. 34).

A broader characterization is put forth by Renzulli and Reise (1991) when they argue that giftedness should not be seen as an absolute—one is gifted or not gifted—but rather from a relative view. They said that the emphasis should be on the “development of gifted behaviors” (p. 34) in individuals who have potential. Exceptional abilities are nurtured through programs such as mentoring relationships.

**Being Gifted vs. Being Talented.** I find *gifted* a difficult term to use, either to describe students or to use when discussing an educational philosophy and teaching strategies that are first and foremost grounded in the belief that all students are most likely to reach their potential if they are actively involved in meaningful, challenging work. *Gift* implies something received that isn't deserved in the sense that it was not earned. Eye color, or hair texture, or body shape are characteristics not bestowed, they occur as a result of human biological and
genetic process. They are not randomly or capriciously given. This is heredity. Just as the physical part of our being must be nurtured and cared for, so must the emotional and cognitive parts be nurtured and developed. This is the environment. Talent implies being able to do something exceedingly well. It also requires some demonstration of exceptional ability. I perceive talent as being genetically induced, but that exceptional ability is not developed without motivation, the willingness to take risks, passion, and the association with a skilled teacher or mentor. Heredity and environment must be wed.

Twenty-eight years ago Education of the Gifted and Talented (1971), a report to the United States Congress, which has become known as The Marland Report, listed six kinds of giftedness and included a label and definition which established parameters of exceptional ability. Gifted and talented children were identified as having some outstanding ability which they demonstrated by superior performance utilizing this ability. The Marland Report distinguished between gifted and talented by saying that those in the upper 5% of the population intellectually were gifted, and those in the top 11-15% were talented.

In 1991, twenty years after the Marland Report, another federal report, National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent, eliminated the term gifted in favor of outstanding talent or exceptional talent and increased the parameters. This change represents "that talent occurs in all groups across all cultures and is not necessary in the test score, but in high performance capability in the intellectual, in the creative, and in the artistic student" (Piirto, 1994, p. 9).
National Excellence . . . has broadened the system of identification by saying: (a) talents will be evidenced throughout a range of disciplines; (b) many assessment measures will be used; (c) students from all backgrounds will have equal access; (d) recognition is given to different rates of development and interests; (e) potential ability is recognized as well as obvious ability; (f) the individual's passion for an interest should be taken into account. John Feldhusen (1992) said:

Schools should abandon efforts to identify "gifted students" as though they were a biologically distinct category of human beings and concentrate our efforts instead on: (a) searching for talent and strengths in all children; (b) searching for those who might have very high levels of talent or precocity in a "worthwhile area" of human endeavor; and (c) seeing to provide the best instruction possible to help develop their talents to the fullest (p. 123).

Gifted or talented or gifted and talented, the designation/term will continue to be used interchangeably, but recognition of individuals with the special needs to develop exceptional ability also necessitates that there be the appropriate means of addressing these talents provided by those of us who influence public education—teachers, parents, legislators, politicians, tax payers.

Gifted and Talented Identification in the State of Ohio. The State of Ohio (Department of Education and the Legislature) is in the process of revising the State Standards. The language and intent of these revisions will directly impact the identification of students with exceptional abilities and the delivery of services to these students. Because these revisions will not be complete until 1998, the middle school students with whom I work are affected by the Rule, as it now stands and also by the currents of change.
The State of Ohio requires identification of students "gifted" in one of these four areas: (a) cognitively gifted; (b) gifted in a specific academic area; (c) creatively gifted; and (d) gifted in the visual and performing arts. But neither the state nor the federal government mandates services for gifted students. Mandated service would require mandating funding. Public school districts in Ohio can request one or more of the limited state funded units, but the number of available units is not equal to the number of students identified for services. A state-funded unit can provide money to be used for the salary of a coordinator of gifted programs and/or a teacher certified in gifted education. If an Ohio school district receives a "School Foundation Unit for Gifted Children," it must follow all specifications in the Rule for School Foundation Units for Gifted Children.

Under Section B of The Rule (1984), Eligibility/Identification, in order for a child to be identified as gifted, he or she must:

1. be of legal school age, including those approved for early admission.

2. demonstrate superior cognitive ability (two standard deviations above the mean, minus the standard error of measurement). This may be on an individually administered intelligence test or on a group intelligence, and the child must score in the ninety-fifth percentile on an individual or group achievement test and have documented superior performance (grades and/or a checklist).

or

3. have an academic ability which is superior to that of children of similar age as measured by an individual or group standardized
achievement test. If a group test is used, the child must have documented superior performance in applied academic settings (grades and/or a checklist).

or

4. creative-thinking ability as measured by scoring at least one standard deviation above the norm on an individual or group intelligence and an individual or group test of creative ability or the intelligence test and a check list of creative behaviors.

or

5. visual and/or performing arts as shown by demonstrated superior ability and a checklist of behavior related to a specific arts area.

The Rule goes on to specify what the Education Program for identified students shall be, and that "The program shall reflect the criteria used in determining eligibility." There is no one-size-fits-all according to the State Department of Education. The school district's program is to match the needs of the student. The Rule says that services may be provided by:

1. clustering within the classroom. This means putting two or more identified students in a classroom and "the classroom teacher will extend, replace, and/or supplement the regular school program by providing appropriate special instruction for the gifted child during the regular school day."

2. having the identified child spend part of his/her day in a "Resource Room." This means the child will be with a teacher certified in Gifted
Education, who will provide experiences that meet that child's identified needs for a minimum of five hours per week.

3. having the student be in a self-contained classroom all day, with no more than nineteen other identified students. Instructional services will be "different from those normally provided in the regular classroom."

If a school district requests and receives State money, it must comply with The Rule. Many districts don't receive Gifted Units, so that if the needs of gifted/talented students are addressed, the services are not necessarily as specified in The Rule. Some districts deliberately don't seek State funding because they choose to identify students with superior ability by other than the measures stipulated in The Rule. Such districts elect to provide services to the identified students designed to fit the particular district's identification criteria. If a district does not receive State money, it does not have to comply with the specifications for services of The Rule.

The scope and quality of services for gifted students varies among school districts. It is dependent on the understanding of the needs of gifted students by school boards of education, school administrators, parents, classroom teachers, and the community in which the students live, and on the portion of available resources subsequently provided for meeting the needs of these students.

A Theoretical Framework for Reader Response

Louise Rosenblatt, Judith Langer, James Britton, Michael Benton, and others have theorized what postures the reader assumes and what leads to a particular attitude that directs the reader's inclination toward a specific text. A dance metaphor may be useful as one envisions the fluidity and grace of a gifted dancer. The choreography (the text) provides the structure of the dance, the
artistic director (the features of the text) guides the dancer on stage, but the dancer's movement through the piece is the interpretation (the reader in an intimate interaction with the text) that brings life to the piece. In the audience, the patrons create their interpretation of the dance's text, as does the dance critic for the local newspaper. Readings flow back and forth between a shared emotional experience and an expanded understanding that blends prior experiences and new interpretation.

How a reader situates herself, close or at a distance, within or outside the setting, the action, and the characters in the books she reads, depends on her understanding of the roles of the reader, the text, and the author. It also is influenced by the reader's perception of what is real and believable—when real-world rules are governing or when the rules of an imaginary world are in place. In fact and fantasy the reader's position is initially determined by her expectations, but is adjusted and realigned as she proceeds.

"Stance can be thought of as a posture of the mind . . . Stance is part of how humans consider that which is possible." Stance is attitude, a reader's view of the world, it "assists in determining possible meanings . . . dispositions of the reader to interpret the literature in a certain manner" (Hade, 1994, p. 3). Tierney and Pearson (1983) call the reader's orientation to a particular text alignment, "a foothold from which meaning can be more readily negotiated" (p. 573). They argue that alignment presumes the combination of the reader's stances and the roles of onlooker or participant, which the reader takes as she becomes immersed in the text.
Because reading is a lived-through experience and reflects the context in which the experience occurs, the reader starts from a collective position, considering what others around her are doing. Bateson (1972) calls this social parameter a frame. He argues that the perceptions of book, reader, and audience guide the reader's reception, the author's production, and I would add, the illustrator's conception. Frame seems to be best perceived as like one piece of a film, the action that happens in a frame is contained but is not realized as complete until that segment is connected with what comes before and what comes after.

Tannen (1979) extends this by including the element of expectation, the influence of the reader's prior experiences on what she expects of the text. Fish (in Beach, 1993) broadens this concept of one's society influencing meaning-making with his term interpretive community. Fish argues that meaning is the function of the interpretive strategies and conventions of a group or community of readers of which one is a part. This becomes an issue of values or priorities or prominence shaping the understanding. I believe that the reader's peers, the reader's mentors—the models for the reader's behaviors—are part of reading as a transactional experience. Langer's (1990a) espousal that the reader ultimately chooses her stance toward the text must be weighted equally with the social influences as we try to understand why and what are the indicators of the reader's involvement with text.
Louise Rosenblatt

*Literature As Exploration,* (1983) is widely recognized as the first, empirically based, theoretical statement of the reader's equal contribution to the meaning of a text. Rosenblatt (1986) sees meaning being created in the transactional process that occurs between the author, the text, and the reader, which she calls a "triadic relationship." John Dewey's characterization of *transaction* as distinguishing a "reciprocal, mutually defining relationship in which elements or parts are aspects of a total situation or event" is cited by Rosenblatt (1986, p.122) to emphasize the difference between transaction and interaction. *Interaction,* being a more limited association, does not accommodate the symbiotic nature of the relationship of the author, the text, and the reader as does Rosenblatt's critical theory that forms the foundation of *reader response.*

The reader is an active participant in the reading process. Rosenblatt (1964) says that the reader:

1. must select from various referents that occur to him in response to verbal symbols.
2. must find some context within which these referents can be related.
3. must be ready to reinterpret earlier parts . . . in light of later parts.

This is a self-ordering and self-correcting process for the reader's part. The *author* provides the sequence of the text according to his experiences and intent. The *text* is a unique pattern of words, symbols representing particular semiotic associations for the reader, which serve as a guide, or in Rosenblatt's words, a blueprint (1964, 1978) to the stances the reader assumes while reading. Rosenblatt (1983) states that although the text guides the stance assumed, it
does not dictate the stance. In addition to the features of the text, the reader is attending to the images, feelings, and attitudes evoked by the text.

The reader's assuming a stance does not occur in isolation or independent of the reader's community of readers. This social aspect of the reading process has dual functions of designing the set and of offering stage directions which provide for the reader's "seeing other interpretations (and) enabling him to discover elements of the text that he has ignored or exaggerated" (1964, p. 126).

Rosenblatt (1986) says, "some principle, whether conscious or unconscious, is required to guide selection from the multiple potentialities resonating between the reader and the signs on the page . . . selection and synthesis thus become fundamental activities in the making of meaning" (p. 123). Rosenblatt (1980) further states "the reader's focus of attention during the reading transaction is of paramount importance" (p. 387). The reader makes connections between the verbal signs of the text and what Rosenblatt (1991) refers to as their private associations—personal or inner feelings—and their public meaning—generally accepted and logically defined. These coincide with the range of the response continuum that Rosenblatt has designated as from aesthetic to efferent or efferent to aesthetic, as the reader's response flows in both directions.

Rosenblatt's continuum (1991) is best graphically represented as a rectangle rather than a line. The rectangle is equally divided by four vertical lines labeled A, B, C, and D. The rectangle is also separated into two equal parts by a diagonal line going from the bottom left corner to the top right corner. On the
vertical axis, above the diagonal Rosenblatt has labeled the area *Public aspects of sense* and below the diagonal, *Private aspects of sense*. Along the horizontal axis, from left to right, is the range from efferent to aesthetic. (See Fig. 2.1).

This picture enables one to see that the reader's stance toward a particular text involves different intensities or levels of kinds of involvement. Rosenblatt (1991) says, "In the continuum from efferent to aesthetic, these terms are end points in a changing proportion, or 'mix' of elements" (p. 446).

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![Diagram of Response Continuum](image)

Fig. 2.1: Response Continuum (Rosenblatt, Language Arts, Vol. 68, October 1991, “Literature-S.O.S.!”)
When the reader focuses predominantly on what will be retained after the reading, Rosenblatt calls this half of the continuum, *efferent*—from the Latin *efferre*, to carry away. The meanings made from this stance are created "when we read for some practical purpose, (when) our attention is focused on the information or ideas or directions that will remain when the reading is over" (1983 p. 33). In the other half of the continuum, the reader is focusing on the lived through experience in which the reader is participating with the text and the author. This Rosenblatt calls the *aesthetic*, from the Greek word meaning to sense or to perceive. "In aesthetic reading, sound and rhythm and associations and sense are perceived together, blended into an experienced meaning" (1980, p. 388).

"Both the text and the reader are essential aspects or components . . . of that which is manifested as the *poem*" (Rosenblatt, 1964, p. 127). Rosenblatt (1964) defines *poem* as an event, that happening which occurs when the reader, through the action of her resources and visualizations, "brings forth the new order, the new experience" (p. 126)—the meaning and all the consequent promptings to additional action that this occurrence initiates. Rosenblatt (1978) applies the term *poem* to what results from the aesthetic transactions between the reader and the text, and she does not restrict this reference to any particular genre.

A part of the genius of Rosenblatt's theory is sometimes overlooked when *literature*, is assigned a place in the educational nomenclature. She (1978) says,
"Aristotle's complaint that he had no single term for all the kinds of literary works of art still holds" (p. 22). Literature is defined by the "character of the reader's relationship to the text" (p. 23). The reader can be focused on what she is living through as she reads a nonfiction/informative text. The reader's awareness of the pleasure and excitement, fear and anxiety, or different measures of these feelings combined can be the consuming experience of reading about real events and real people as easily as reading fictional narrative. Aesthetic reading, where the event becomes a literary reading or literature, is infused with life by the reader's imagination. Imagination is not only visions of the unreal. Rosenblatt (1978) says, "It (imagination) . . . enables us to deal with things and events that are not present or that may not have occurred . . . imagination (is) required in any reading—history, science, legal or philosophic persuasion —since it requires the reader to conjure up the referents for the verbal symbols and to entertain new ideas" (p. 32). The reader's increasing understanding of what is real, is formed by her prior sense of the nature of reality along with her imagination as it allows her vicariously to accommodate experiences from literature.

**Judith Langer**

Judith Langer's theory of reader-based teaching of literature describes four stances that the reader assumes as she engages with text. Langer says that the reader becomes involved through the processes of these four stances whether the reader is approaching a fictional piece or a nonfiction piece. While the outcome of the reading experience is different, the reader's stance is instrumental in the meaning the reader makes of the text.
Langer (1990a) worked with 18 seventh and 18 eleventh grade students. She field-tested eight poems, eight stories, four social studies texts, and four science texts for her study. Of these, two stories, two poems, one science piece, and one social studies piece were chosen. The participants were trained in think-aloud protocols on six texts, and each student participated in six think-aloud sessions. The participants were not directed to read any of the selections either for a literary purpose or an informational one. "(T)he choice of orientation was left to the students . . . they made the choice based on the influence of the text's structure and the purpose they set for themselves" (Langer, 1990a, p. 236).

Langer (1990b) calls this coming-to-understanding envisionment, "what the reader understands at a particular point in time, the questions she has, as well as her hunches about how the piece will unfold" (p. 812). According to Langer (1990b), envisionment is the world of the text and has three strands with temporal qualities: a level of certainty of present understanding; a reviewing of what has preceded but is not reconciled; and a predictive sense of what is to come. Langer (1990b) sees the envisionment as "a series of changing relations that the reader adopts toward the text" (p. 813). She describes four stances that comprise envisionment.

1. **Being Out and Stepping In**—For the reader's first encounter with the particular text, she brings her repertoire of experiences, life experiences that include prior associations with the features of print and expectations for functions of different genres. In this stance, " . . . the reader tries to establish a context for understanding the piece"
(1990a, p. 238). In Langer's study of adolescent readers—7th and 11th graders—she found this stance occurring as the reader began to read and when the reader encountered unexpected or unfamiliar signals from the text.

*Stepping in* is a very satisfying metaphor for me. As the dancer steps or moves onto the stage, the reader steps into the unique place that is being created by that reader and that text.

2. **Being In and Moving Through**—The reader is "immersed" in the text, surrounded by her knowledge of how this text is working, and how the syntactic features are coupled with other visual elements of the tangible form of the text, within the context of the reader's expectations of story and/or gathering specific information. The reader is developing meaning.

3. **Being In and Stepping Out**—The reader is making connections between her life and the lives of the people about whom she's reading. The reader visualizes herself as a partner, as a conspirator, as a champion who rights wrongs, as an onlooker. In what ways are her experiences similar to or different from the world the author presents? The reader steps out of the world of the text and reflects on her life experiences. For adolescents who are trying to find their sense of self and seeking a position from which they can experience an increased measure of control, this stance seems to be a time of shifting or broadening perspectives.
4. **Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience**—Assuming this stance, the reader makes judgements about her understanding of the text and also reflects on her feelings about the experience and during the experience. There is also an evaluation of the experience that is based on the content and on the reader's expectation of a particular genre. Langer says the reader distances herself from the envisionment in the sense of visualizing herself as an agent outside the world of text rather than one who acts within the world of the text.

Langer notes that fluent readers, as well as those who are developing readers, experience these four stances during reading. She also theorizes that these four stances direct one's reading of both fictional and information pieces. Differences among readers with strong ability and those of weaker ability will occur because of the way the reader has approached the text. What is the reader's intent, what is her perceived purpose for this reading? Other circumstances that can be related to differences are the reader's level of confidence and the strategies that she uses to create meaning from the text. The less fluent reader will more often be swayed by other readers of the same text to change her envisionment. Does the reader see herself as readily able to make sense of text? Does she construct this meaning by considering separate movements or by considering the text as a whole ballet score?

Langer (1990b) makes a distinction between literary and informative text but really seems to be distinguishing a literary reading from an informative reading (my terms). By adding reading to these two categories, there is a blurring of an artificial line between nonfiction (informative) and fiction (literature). Too often the two words that form each of these pairs are considered
synonymous or interchangeable. They are not. Readers can take away much quantifiable knowledge from a superbly written novel and can realize great empathy for actual persons in real events that have been depicted with careful attention to fact. Langer's literary reading and informative reading are very like Rosenblatt's aesthetic and efferent. They stretch across a continuum.

Langer (1992) characterizes a literary reading as "lived through experience" (p. 36). During a literary reading, the reader assumes a subjective relationship with the text and calls on her inner, more personal feelings as she creates a world of the text. An informative reading is objective, outside of the reader's personal world. Langer (1992) says, the reader "holds meaning apart in quest of a more rational or logical understanding" (p. 36).

Langer addresses what happens during the reading experience. Differences between the two approaches to text are dependent on the reader's expectation for the text and on what signals the text's features send to the reader about how the text should be read. When reading for literary purposes, the space in which the reader engages with the author and the text is more expansive, the stage is wider and deeper. The reader develops a sense of the wholeness of the narrative. There is an ever-emerging new horizon of possibilities (1990a) that defines what the literary text 'means' to the reader. This horizon of possibilities is contained by the reader's sense of wholeness of the text. The reader goes beyond the foreground of her first contact with the text; moves within the text by making personal connections; raises questions and makes predictions to move deeper into the text; and evaluates the experience for
the broadest picture with very minimal distortion. The story assumes the proportions of a panoramic photograph.

In contrast, when reading for information, Langer (1990a) says the reader perceives the text as creating one scene and therefore the reader uses her vision of this scene to focus or monitor her developing understandings, to place new pieces so that they fit consistently within this set. If this were a family photograph, you would see the people and very little background showing where the photograph was taken.

In her study of adolescent readers Langer (1990a) found that the readers' understanding of literary texts seemed encircled by their ideas of what is possible for humans to accomplish or experience. Understanding of informative text seemed organized by what they saw as the topic of the text. Langer theorizes that both purposes, literary and informative, can interplay during any one reading experience, but each reading tends to have a primary purpose. The reader's primary purpose guides her overall approach to meaning making. It is important for the researcher and the classroom teacher to surround their work with readers with the view that the reader chooses how to orient herself as she approaches the text, from either a literary or nonliterary position. What motivates the reader's choices and how the choices are part of the reader's engagement with the text and final envisionment are the pursuits of research and the strategies that teachers regularly apply in their work with students.
James Britton

We use language to participate in the communities of which we are a part; as close to us as family, as far reaching as the global environment. Britton (1984) argues that language also allows us to assume the role of either the participant or the spectator. As spectators, we are both speakers and listeners as we contemplate "a reconstruction of events, . . . we contemplate imagined events, . . . we construct an imaginary future" (p. 320). Speech-in-action, transactional speech, the participant role is imbued with responsibility and risk. For the participant, language is a way to get things done. It is functional and instrumental. In this sense Britton sees language as a verbal transaction. "As participants we apply our value systems: as spectators we generate and refine the system itself" (1984, p. 326).

Britton (1963) says, "The distinction that matters . . . is not whether the events recounted are true or fictional, but whether we recount them (or listen to them) as spectators or as participants" (1963, p. 37). Britton's spectator role bears on the reader because "we never cease to want more lives than the one we've got . . . It is not enough that things happen to us, that we act and are acted upon. We need to turn back, and by the power of imagination seek the pattern, the order, the meaning" (1963, pp. 42-44). Literature, what Britton calls a verbal object, is a space in which this can happen.

According to Britton, we use language to construct the world of ideas and the words that give form to these ideas are in the company of images. In his essay in *The Cool Web: The Pattern of Children's Reading*, Britton (1977) calls
the "handling of the images as play" (p. 42). Language is a means for us to control conditions around us, and we use language to explore, to test, to find out. This is a kind of play—an imaginative experimenting. The first use of language is an adaptive behavior and the second is a reflective behavior—the participant and the spectator.

The place where play, as an means to assimilate experiences, such as those in the reader's transaction with text, is "between the world of shared and verifiable experience and the world of inner necessity—'a third area" (Britton, 1977, p. 46). This play space of Britton's is what Langer has termed an envisionment. Will Hillenbrand, who creates art for children's books, calls this "the landscape of the story" (personal communication). Michael Benton has labeled it the Secondary World.

Michael Benton

Although we know that something is happening as readers read, the evidence of this phenomenon shows it to be as elusive as the reported inhabitant of Loch Ness, according to Benton. But, one must array the observations and from this array construct a model with details from several sightings (or citings). Benton (1983) has done this to posit his "conceptual model of the imagined world we make each time we read a story" (p. 73). It must be noted that Benton builds his theory based on the reader encountering a fictional, narrative piece. Benton (1979) describes the activity of reading a story as being: (a) active—the reader is aware of meaning being made, the focus is not on the symbols—words on the page; (b) creative—each reading is newly made by the reader; (c) unique—it is the
experience the reader makes—he cannot simply slot in someone else's experience; (d) cooperative—it is a newly formed substance composed of what the text presents and what the reader brings.

Benton calls the location of this process the *Secondary World*. For this term Benton (1983) credits Tolkein who said that "children are capable of literary belief" (p. 68). Literary belief occurs because the story-maker has created a space for the reader to enter where action may be fantastic, but does not violate the reader's sense of the possible. The *Secondary World* is governed by rules that parallel the rules the reader knows for the *Primary World*—the physical place in which the reader resides.

Benton (1983) graphically represents his idea of the reader creating this space, to which the reader moves as she reads, by describing the intersection of three planes of response (see Figure 2.2). Plane one, *psychic distance*, represents the level of the reader's interaction—from detachment to involvement. The second plane, *psychic level*, represents "a mixture of conscious and unconscious activities" (p. 71)–how aware the reader is of the experience. The third plane and how these three planes intersect are what occurs as the reader reads—Benton's ideas about reader response. The third plane, *psychic process*, is the dimension of time. The reader moves between retrospection and anticipation. The point at which these planes intersect moves. The reader's place in the *Secondary World* can be positioned so that his level of involvement, his consciousness of the experience, his state either moving backward or forward in the time of the story are in flux.
Fig. 2.2: Benton's Structure of the Secondary World (Journal of Research and Developments in Education, Vol. 16 #3, p. 71).
Benton (1979) says, "The images stimulated by the text are the carriers of information about the Secondary World . . . and correspond to the functions of the five senses in our perception of the Primary World" (p. 78). This is image making and the linking of these images together is narrative— one of the two modes of cognition according to Bruner (1986). Bruner says we make meaning of our world through narrative, organization following the rules of story. Or, we make paradigmatic sense, we approach meaning making from a logical, objective, factual stance.

Wolfgang Iser and Textual Theories of Reader Response

Beach (1993) says that reader response theory seeks to account for how the reader makes meaning as she experiences text. He says that literary criticism focuses on discerning the meaning of the text. Theory is concerned with the process, criticism attempts to arrive at what the meaning is. Reader response is both theory and criticism, concerned with the essence of the reading experience and the distillation of the text.

Beach (1993) argues that there are five theoretical perspectives from which those who describe the reader's transaction with text, are speaking about the process. The five theoretical perspectives are: experiential, textual, cultural, social, and psychological. The two with which I am most closely aligned are the experiential perspective and the textual perspective. Experiential theorists are concerned with the behaviors/actions that are indicative of the reader's engagement with the text—describing the behaviors and recognizing patterns formed by these behaviors which point to the meaning that the reader is making.
from the visual and verbal clues (in the incidence of an illustrated book). I have drawn from perspectives of many theorists in order to establish a personal sense of consistency or continuity between the experiences I have had as a reader, a teacher, and as a focused observer.

Iser is considered a phenomenological response theorist, one who is "primarily interested in the relationship between the consciousness of the perceiver/reader and the perceived text" (Beach, 1993, p. 19). Iser says that text only becomes an animated thing when the reader actively and creatively composes a world of the text. This is similar to what Langer calls envisioning the text. Bringing the text to life, or bringing life to the text—the literary experience—happens because the reader and the text converge.

Iser (1980) sees the whole text as being two merging realms: the artistic, the text created by the author, and the aesthetic, the text as realized by the reader. Iser says that the reader can not randomly or capriciously interpret or realize the text, the reader’s envisionment is guided by particular features or characteristics of the text or indeterminacies of the text. Iser argues that meaning is actively worked out by the reader’s imagination and that the text imposes unwritten implications for the shape of the reader’s interpretation. To Iser (this) means that the reader must act as co-creator of the work by supplying that portion of it which is not written but only implied" (Tompkins, 1980, p. xv).

For Iser these are the gaps the reader must fill in based on the reader's experience with other texts and with her life experience—the reader reflects and anticipates. But, these gaps have different effects on the process of
retrospection and anticipation and each reader will fill in the gaps according to her own experiences. There are multiple possibilities for bridging these spaces. This accounts for different readers making different meanings of the same text and for the same reader making meanings that differ when approaching the same text at different times. Iser (1980) argues, "... the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations" (p. 55). This dynamic process, Iser says, produces the virtual dimension of the text—the coming together of text and imagination and experience.

Iser understands the text as a set of incomplete instructions which the reader completes with her knowledge of text conventions. Rabinowitz’s ideas (in Beach, 1993) add to Iser’s ideas about the reader’s knowledge of text conventions, the reader’s knowledge of narrative conventions.

Beach (1993) discusses Rabinowitz’s four types of conventions the reader internalizes and to which she attends as she makes meaning from narrative text. The first, rules of notice, gives privilege to certain aspects of the text such as titles and opening scenes. An example of the second convention, rules of significance, is the oldest sibling in a story having a particular role in the family. The third, rules of configuration, infers that certain patterns predict certain outcomes—goodness and virtue will be rewarded. In the last, rules of coherence, readers learn through the experiences of reading to expect particular connections between different parts of the text. The reader develops different expectations for different kinds of text/different genres.
Each of the theorists I have cited understand that meaning is made as the reader interacts with text on a page, the art on the page, the author who framed the text, and the artist who created the illustrations. There is not one sacrosanct meaning to be discovered, but the potential for varied meanings. The reader brings her life experiences and her understanding of the conventions of text, of books, and of art to bear on discovering meaning. Langer’s four stances assumed by readers is one representation of this process. The reader’s expectations are tempered by her purposes for selecting and reading a particular book. The way in which the reader responds to the book is some blend of her intent to expand her knowledge and to be titillated by the contents of the book. Rosenblatt’s efferent/aesthetic response continuum represents the reader’s emotional response as a range of purposeful engagements with text.

It is with much interest, that I read of Benton’s conceptual model with its three intersecting planes and Iser’s writing about retrospection, anticipation, memory, and perception. Iser’s ideas about the effects of retrospection and anticipation on how the reader approaches the indeterminacies she encounters in text seem to parallel Benton’s psychic process, the dimension of reader/text interaction. Both theorists recognize that the reader looks backward and forward in her effort to fit prior knowledge with new information and that this temporal dimension shifts between past, present, and future in a recursive manner rather than a linear one.
The multiplicity of connections made by the reader confirms the possibility of many different readings of the same text. Benton shows this in his model by indicating that the point at which the three planes intersect shifts. He theorizes that the extent of the reader's engagement on any of the three dimensions changes and is not equal. Iser (in Tompkins, 1980) discusses how memory and perception are different. Memory affects one's perception and one remembers a situation as one has perceived the particular event at a particular time. Memories arise as one consciously evokes them but can surface unbidden. This is like Benton's plane, *psychic level*—interplay between conscious and unconscious.

These understandings of the relationship among reader, text, and author are predicated on the reader's actively creating meaning, utilizing prior experience, approaching text purposefully, and eliciting the conventions of various symbol systems. Experience, conventions, and determination are in tandem with the reader's ability to imagine characters with means and the will to act in particular settings at particular times, to confront conflicts and find resolutions.

**The Nature of Informational Text**

Trying to compose or collect a definition of an informational book is like trying to put a fence around a portion of the sea. The characteristics that determine the boundaries can go beyond the edges like water through a chain fence. Carter and Abrahamson (1990) say, "Nonfiction books aren't defined by the degree of authenticity or fabrication within their pages . . ." (p. x) but, where
they belong in the Dewey decimal system. Librarians place novels and short stories in the fiction section but, plays, poetry, folktale, jokes, and riddles are among the books shelved with a Dewey number. Carr (1982) says, "Perhaps the qualities we look for (in an information book) are the same as those we find in a great teacher . . . Persuasive charisma and vast knowledge combine so effectively that we end up thinking or feeling in a completely new way" (p. 3). Carr attributes the term literature of fact to John McPhee.

Carr (1982) discusses what I think of as the aesthetic (Rosenblatt’s term) features of informational text. She calls these "the piper’s tunes": narrative, vivid language, fine art, graphic excellence, and the application of a " . . . pivotal concept, which might be considered an extended analogy . . . use(d) to unify (the author’s) ideas" (p. 11). Russell Freedman (1992) writes that as a writer of nonfiction he must "pursue that elusive quality called ‘the truth’" (p. 3). This he says " . . . adds a sense of exploration and discovery to a nonfiction book." To be effective the work should "animate its subject, infuse it with life" (p. 3). Freedman says that young readers are drawn into such books because they are intrigued by the events and the personalities—by witnessing that historical events and the characters who people the events, are as fascinating as any fictional character. The author of nonfiction can enable the reader to make a connection between life as she is experiencing it and the experiences of the characters in the book. The reader begins to recognize common human experiences that make us of one fabric with multiple hues and textures.
Younger readers are curious. They want to know why a phenomenon behaves as it does, who people are and were who live(d) exciting and exotic lives. They enjoy the vicarious travel to other places and other worlds, in the past, the present, and the future. Nonfiction is literature that brings the reader pleasure, the pleasure of satisfied curiosity, or new questions raised, of the urgency of the quest, the reward of finding what was sought.

Milton Meltzer (1976) wrote in a *Horn Book* article, "Where Do All the Prizes Go?", about literature as art and nonfiction work as both. He said that literary art has "two related aspects: subject and the means the writer uses to convey his ideas . . . " (p. 18). The means is the writer's craft, the ways ideas are chosen, developed, organized, the words, the sound and the rhythm of the language, the images that are created. Meltzer says, "If the subject is significant . . . it can intensify the reader's experience of life." (p. 18). The author's style " . . . is a quality of vision. It cannot be separated from the author's character because the tone of the voice in which the book is written expresses how a human being thinks and feels . . . Style in any art is both form and content woven together" (p. 21).

Meltzer talked about the need for criteria by which to evaluate nonfiction written for young readers. His own books certainly convey passion for his subjects, but more, his work conveys the belief that young people can recognize strength of conviction from examples in books they read and can make positive contributions to the betterment of society. *Literature of fact* is excellent writing and intensifies the reader's experience of life.
Molly Hunter (1976) in writing about the power of language used by a writer for younger readers, described language as magical. It is the writer/magician that, with language, "transmutes one set of circumstances to another" (p. 109). The road traveled may be as much emotion as the intellect. The function of a writer (of fiction or nonfiction) is to communicate, "the rhythm, simplicity, the word exactly right in context" (p. 113). Writers of informational books such as Russell Freeman, Jim Murphy, Walter Dean Myers, Patricia and Fredrick McKissack, Rhoda Blumberg, and Jerry Stanley speak with a compelling voice about the people and the times. The author's craft is the vehicle that transports the reader to a personal encounter.

Meltzer (1976) questioned why there was little recognition of quality nonfiction literature by critics and by those who award literature prizes. The National Council of Teachers of English established such an award, The Orbis Pictus Award, in 1990. This award is for "promoting and recognizing excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children" (Vardell, 1991, p. 474). In the Language Arts article, Vardell lists the criteria used by the committee to make its choices for the annual award: accuracy, organization, design, and style. The specifics in each of the criterion embody the qualities that make nonfiction of this caliber truly literature. Accuracy and Organization reference the importance of author's research using reliable sources and a balance between isolated facts and the theory or broad concepts from which these facts take their substance. There must also be a balanced of point of view. The organization creates a meaningful whole. Design and Style point to the artistic and evocative qualities of well
crafted nonfiction. As Crook and Lehman (1991) indicate, "... literary nonfiction
gives us knowledge, enables us to feel deeply, and has a style that weaves a
spell for the reader" (p. 35).

Marantz (1998) noted that "it seems no longer sufficient to examine what
information is being presented; it is necessary to come to grips with how it is
presented" (p. 24). Many nonfiction/informational books focus on single-subject
topics, for instance, I See the Rhythm (Igus, 1998), African-American music; A
Drop of Water (Wick, 1997), transformation of water; and Snowflake Bentley
(Martin, 1998), a biography of a man who photographed snowflakes. In each of
these award-winning books the art is bold, full of color, and brings its own vision
of the subject. The Igus text is illustrated with paintings by Michele Wood that
vibrate with the sounds of the music. Walter Wick created the amazing color
photographs for his text that even catch water drops on the head of a pin.

Mary Azarian's woodcuts give a gentle, small-town setting for the work of
photographer Wilson Bentley. These books exemplify Marantz's point that "those
authors and artists who create picturebooks dealing with that world (the factual
world) are most successful when they produce a fusion of the known with the
spirit of speculation" (1997, p. 70).

Response to Informational Children's Books

In their book, Delight to Wisdom (1990) Carter and Abrahamson look at
research on reader preference. In a 1984 study, Childress analyzed the choices
made by kindergarten and first grade children from books available in their
school library. Childress found that during the eighteen-week period she
collected data, forty percent of the books these children chose were nonfiction. She defined nonfiction by the Dewey assignations, but excluded folklore, poetry, and plays for the purposes of her study.

Carter and Abrahamson (1990) examined the results of the first ten years of "Children's Choices" and the first two years of "Young Adults Choices" (International Reading Association). They found that forty-three percent of the "Children's Choices" were nonfiction—twenty-one percent being "nonfiction books as informational works." In the "Young Adult Choices" nonfiction titles were fewer, ten percent the first year and twenty percent the second year, but the increased number of nonfiction titles the second year is significant. Purves and Beach (1972) found that reader interest in nonfiction increases for older readers.

Of particular interest to me, Carter and Abrahamson (1990) found that high-ability junior high school students—those identified as gifted—read twice as many books as did a randomly selected control group and that "thirty-four percent of the leisure reading of these academically able teenagers came from nonfiction books" (p. 10). Coincidental to these findings, Carter also found that fiction reading was assigned by teachers more often than nonfiction.

In her review of research related to children's use of fiction and nonfiction literature, Harvey (1994) cited support for (Fox, 1985) the influence of form and structure on reader ability to distinguish between the rule systems of various genres. Clark (1976) found that children who begin school already reading, read a variety of print materials at home. Bissex (1980) said that young readers are aware of different purposes of writing and that these readers can recognize that
genres differ by their characteristics. Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1983, 1984) found that text features convey signals to the reader that help her determine the type of text she's approaching. Children have strong notions of differences between genres. Newkirk (1987) looked at children's writing and found young writers often begin by making lists and by labeling objects in their artwork.

Freeman (1991) looked at what young children were writing and found that children will model their own expository text on the language and form of quality informational books. Freeman said that young writers who read and listen to informational books, begin to "explore topics" in much the same way as book authors. They use multiple sources, include personal experiences, and talk with others who might have information about their topic. Young writers also know that they can convey information through illustrations that accompany their text.

Crook and Lehman (1991) described how two fourth grade teachers developed an integrated unit with the theme "Life Cycles" that invited students to use fiction and nonfiction literature together. These researchers present a persuasive position for using text sets, groups of books from a variety of genres that provide different perspectives of the same topic. Such groups of books facilitate readers gaining "different perspectives that enhance their critical reading . . . (enable readers to) gain experience with literature as a whole" (p. 36).

Pappas (1991) investigated the retelling or reenactment by a kindergarten girl of a narrative book and an information book. This research emphasized the importance of providing experiences for emerging readers with both narrative
and expository text and demonstrated the competence these readers are developing for engaging with different texts in appropriately different ways.

Pappas's work included descriptions of the distinctive characteristics which seem to cue the reader's stances. The researcher addressed the "different cultural purposes of texts from different genres" (p. 451). Narrative engages the reader with interpersonal and intrapersonal concerns—fictional characters motivated to accomplish particular goals. The purpose of informational books is to inform. Each kind of text can be examined by looking at differences in texture and differences in global organization.

Pappas identified "three major distinctive patterns of texture:

1. **Co-referentiality** (fictional narrative) vs. co-classification (informational books). Co-referentiality is the way in which the author creates identity chains, use of pronouns and articles to link references to a character together. One could imagine the character moving through the story on this continuous, connected, perhaps bending course. For informational text, the reader perceives continuity because the author establishes that a class with certain members, having certain characteristics is being considered—co-classification.

2. **Verb tense**—past tense is used in narrative and present tense in informational text.

3. **Descriptive constructions**—attributes ways to identify, or things that are possessed. These features are more prominent in informational text than narrative.
Global structure is what Pappas calls "chunks of meaning." This means that both narrative and informational text have certain organizational elements—obligatory elements and optional elements—but that these elements differ according to the kind of text. In narrative the obligatory elements are: Initiating Event—a problem or conflict is introduced; Sequent Event—how the character attempts to resolve the conflict; and Final Event—the resolution. In informational text, the obligatory elements are: Topic Presentation, Description of Attributes, Characteristics Events, and Final Summary.

Pappas's (1991) findings are: "because stories and information books serve different social purposes, texts in each genre contain different linguistic patterns in order to realize these distinctive communicative functions" (p. 452) and very young are aware of these different patterns. Pappas argues that it is essential for emerging readers/writers to have many experiences with both story text and information text. If children are to achieve language fluency and flexibility, they must have opportunities to use language for narrative purposes and for organizing and conveying information.

McClure and Zitlow (1991) looked at the work of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students who responded both efferently and aesthetically in science journals. Students were provided opportunities to explore many possibilities for making connections between the informational texts and the poetic texts they were using to create their understanding of the science topics. The teacher's planning and the students' work demonstrated that "reading expository text is not simply a function of acquiring facts." When "an aesthetic perspective is
encouraged”, readers can develop a deeper understanding of content areas topics (p. 28).

Robb (1994) investigated the response of second grade students as they were involved in a science study on natural phenomena and disasters. The researcher’s question was how, or if, young readers would use narrative to create a "framework for . . . understanding . . . concepts they had not directly experienced or observed" (p. 240). The goal for the children during their science unit was for them to plan, make choices, inquire in new areas, and be problem solvers.

Children in the class were asked to bring something they could use as a journal. In this journal they would keep records of the questions they had, information they collected, and the workings of the group of which they were a part. The children used their written language as well as pictures they drew in their journals.

To begin the unit, the researcher and teacher brainstormed with students what they already knew about the theme. Then they looked at resources available to them in their classroom or the school library that narrowed the possible choices of topics to investigate. The teacher/researcher gave the children two options for planning and presenting the information they would find: plan and paint a mural, or develop a "What Do I Know?" chart. All of the children chose to make a mural. When it came time to present, each group explained its mural in terms of stories.
From this first presentation and enthusiastic class discussion, a list of questions was compiled for further investigation by the children. The children's interests lead to bringing resources from home. Keeping the parents informed of the children's work resulted in much parent involvement. To help second graders with challenging books, older students were paired with the younger one for buddy reading. The second graders continued to keep their journals. They incorporated what they were learning into stories and they each made a "wordbook with a minimum of five new words learned during the study" (p. 249). This involved "a detailed illustration and an explanation and/or story about the word." The children read their books to the class and did a self-evaluation of their own book.

The researchers found that young readers can become actively engaged in reading informational books and their response behaviors range from those that indicate the reader's efferent stance to those that show her feelings about living through the experience (Robb, 1994). [Note of personal response: I began reading this article in The New Advocate to "carry away" the information for the purposes of this review. When I came to the end of the text, I heard myself saying, "What a good story!" I learned about the researcher's methodology, but I was also in the world of that classroom, having been transported there by the author. Professional journal articles are examples of nonfiction text (we trust) to which a reader can have an aesthetic response.]

Short and Armstrong (1993) also investigated second grader's response to informational text used with a science unit. These researchers began with the
premise that if one perceives children as learners who search for answers to questions of significance to them, the children are both "problem-posers and problem-solvers . . . The role of literature is to support students in both finding and pursuing their own questions rather than only providing information" (p. 184). Their findings were that if readers are given the time to consider connections they are making between the various sources of information and their own experiences, a more aesthetic stance is assumed to the informational text. This then broadens the reader's perspective as she also takes an efferent stance toward the text.

Spink (1996) related how his experiences teaching young children, first graders, and upper elementary children, fourth and sixth graders, have provided insight to his understanding that "learning and reading in a personal, connected way is natural for learners of any age regardless of subject matter or literary genre" (p. 136). Spink connected his observation of the delight demonstrated by emerging readers while reading and hearing informational text, with the response of older readers involved in science and social studies units. He concluded that the students he worked with build "their understanding of both types of text (narrative and informational) through a narrative thought structure" (p. 139). It is this same position—that the literary nonfiction has the power to evoke the reader's aesthetic stance, because it tells a real story that engages the reader personally—which arouses my curiosities about reader response.

Farest, Miller, and Fewin (1995) described the response of fourth graders to informational literature and narrative used with an integrated unit on rivers.
Planning for this unit involved the two researchers and three classroom teachers, who were each responsible for different areas of the curriculum. The reading teacher, Fewin, decided to use Rhoda Blumberg's *The Incredible Journey of Lewis and Clark* (1987) as the focus book for her reading classes.

Part of the work the students did as they read Blumberg's book, along with other text materials available for their study, was to write letters to classmates. "These letters were written records of the children's understanding of, and developing insights into, nonfiction literature" (p. 275). Each of the forty-five children wrote four or five letters during this time, and from their analysis of the content of these letters, the researchers developed categories of response to nonfiction.

**Personal Connections/Involvement**

Children responded by considering personal decisions and exploring personal values

**Analyzing the Information**

Children offered comments about the informational text by noticing details, by interpreting newly acquired knowledge, and by judging accuracy and authenticity
Literary Criticism: children offered ideas about the literature itself—accuracy, organization, point of view, and the role of the author. [Note: the researchers report that "much of the time this literary criticism focused on the support provided by the authentic reproductions of paintings, diagrams, and sketches."]

Wondering: children wondered about certain aspects of the expedition and considered how this information fit into their view of the world.

Going Beyond the Text: children moved beyond the text to develop new and richer insights into, and deeper understandings of, the content (p. 276 - 282).

As a result of this study, the researchers concluded that "children followed similar patterns of response that they used when reading fiction, but, in addition, their responses reflected a more detailed analysis, showed content learning, illustrated a developing understanding of expository writing, and demonstrate an application of their own emerging value systems to people and events in history" (p. 286).
In her book *Information and Book Learning* (1996) Meek wrote, "When we read in order to understand something . . . the result is not a straightforward addition to the store of information" (p. 13). Along with efferent reading is aesthetic reading that gives readers confidence in their power to take new information and arrange it with earlier experiences and to develop a clearer or more complete understanding. Meek said, "in order to understand what counts as information we have to see it in relation to our view of the world" (p. 15). She likens the collaboration of text and illustration in nonfiction/informational books to "the kind of teamwork usually associated with the making of films and television programs and the mounting of exhibitions" (p. 44). Books provide a unique place for readers to have a kind of conversation with themselves. Books invite the reader to a space where she can have an internal dialogue with ideas she holds and new ideas that are forming as she reads. "Meaning has to be ascribed by the learner both to the text-in-book context and also to the difference the word meanings make to the reader's view of the world in thought" (p. 79). The illustrations in nonfiction/informational books give color and three-dimensional perspective to meanings that the reader makes.

**Features of Response to Literature of Middle School Students**

Squire's 1964 study of the response of adolescents, ninth and tenth graders, to four short stories is a milestone for the investigation of reader response. The fifty-two students in the study were enrolled in summer school and were in this summer session for different reasons. Some were making up work, some were taking courses early, and some were taking a course they were
unable to fit in their regular school schedule. Squire's methodology was to divide each of the stories into six segments. The reader would stop at the end of each part and tell his or her response to that part. These were audio recorded. Squire pointed out how the individual reader's experiences contribute to the complexity of the patterns of response. From his analysis of the data, Squire identified seven general categories for coding the responses of the readers he studied:

1. **Literary Judgment**—These are direct or implied judgements on the story as an artistic work... specific reactions to language style, characterization.

2. **Interpretational Responses**—The reader generalizes and attempts to discover the meaning... motivational forces... the nature of the characters... including references to evidence from the stories...

3. **Narrational Reaction**—The reader reports details or facts in the story without attempting to interpret.

4. **Associational Responses**—The reader associated ideas, events, or places and people with his own expedience

5. **Self-involvement**—The reader associates himself with the behavior and/or emotions of the characters.

6. **Prescriptive Judgments**—The reader prescribes a course of action for a character based on some absolute standard.

7. **Miscellaneous**—Responses not coded in the other six categories.

(p. 17 & 18)
Squire reported his finding for males and females separately, but for both boys and girls, the greatest number of responses [m. - 42.6%, f. - 43.9%] were coded as interpretational. These readers were indicating their attempts to make meaning of what they were reading. The second most frequent response for boys was narrational, a retelling of the story; while for girls it was self-involvement, associating with the behavior and/or the emotions of characters, self-involvement. A response involving literary judgement was third for boys and fourth for girls. Squire found this sorting of response categories consistent from story to story.

Squire looked at his data to find what he called "sources of difficulty in literary interpretation" and concluded "individual variation is caused by the unique influence of the abilities, predispositions, and experiential background of each reader" (p 50). He also determined at what point in the stories certain categories of response occurred. He commented on how the story's structure seemed to influence the kind of sense the reader was making, or to what structural features the reader seemed to be attending at that point in the reading.

Langer's (1990a) thirty-six subjects, eighteen eleventh graders and eighteen seventh graders—eighteen from an inner city school and eighteen from a suburban school—responded aloud as they read six different pieces of text. Langer's interest was in the strategies that the students used to create meaning. Students read two short stories, two poems, one piece from a science text, and one piece from a social studies text. The students practiced the think aloud procedure with other similar texts before reading and responding to the research
texts. While the subjects were given experience with the procedure, they were
given no directions for how they should approach the pieces used for the study.

Langer (1990a) found: (a) the process of reading involves a variety of
changing stances; (b) there are different characteristics of reading for literary
purposes than of reading for informational purposes; and (c) the stances the
reader assumes are recursive rather than linear. The reader is guided by her
sense of the whole, whether the text is fictional or informational. The way the
reader approaches the text differs for each, literary or informational. Langer
found that when reading a literary text, the reader expects many possibilities for
the piece's unfolding—what Langer calls the horizon of possibilities. When
reading an informational piece, the reader proceeds from a steady point of
reference. Her understanding of the topic is clarified, but the topic does not
change. The reader accomplishes this by using her sense of the whole to
monitor how she makes meaning from the text.

Other researchers looked at strategies that readers use when reading
subjects were forty-eight tenth and eleventh grade students at a suburban high
school. Twenty-four of the students were described as having good reading
ability, with scores above the seventy-fifth percentile on the reading
comprehension section of the California Test of Basic Skills. The other twenty-
four were described as having poor reading ability, with scores below the fiftieth
percentile on the same test. All subjects fell in the average range on an IQ test.
Kletzien selected three pieces from social studies textbooks, each piece was about 250 words in length. She used the Fry readability scale to determine the grade-level of each piece, making sure that each would fit the independent, instructional, and frustration levels of each group. The researcher modified pieces by "simplifying" them for the lower ability readers. She meets with each of the subjects individually "to familiarize the subject with the technique" (p. 73) and the tape recorder. The researcher's methodology was a cloze procedure in which she deleted "12 context dependent content words . . . from each passage" (p. 73) and replaced the words with blanks. The subject read each passage and placed a word he/she thought appropriate to fill the blank. Immediately after doing this, subjects "were asked to go back and explain their thinking processes as they chose their answers" (p. 73).

The researcher found: (a) both groups reported more strategies used with pieces at the independent level; (b) the good comprehenders used more strategies when they read materials at the frustration level than did the poor comprehenders; (c) good comprehenders were more selective about their use of strategies. Kletzien concluded that, "the differences between the groups was in regulation, rather than knowledge, of comprehension strategies" (p. 79). She speculated that the reader's concept of her abilities as a reader affected the amount of risk she was willing to take when approaching text.

I have related this study in such detail because the methodology and the means of analyzing and reporting the findings raise serious issues of what the purposes for reading are, of how the process of making meaning engages the
reader with the text, and how teachers can help readers stretch and strengthen their understanding of what they read. This study considers the aesthetic stance of these particular readers only when the researcher reports comments from one of the poor comprehenders in which the reader says, "I couldn't do this. You had to have somebody teach you about this, and nobody taught me" (p. 80). The lived-through experience for this reader must have been very defeating.

Another quantitative study (Dole, Valencia, Greer, and Wardrop, 1991) looked at the comprehension of narrative and expository text by sixty-three average ability fifth grade students. Texts were taken from fifth grade basal reading books. This research focused on the effects of two prereading instructional treatments on the students' comprehension, and asked how teachers can maximize students' prior knowledge which they will use as they make meaning of the text. The two prereading teacher strategies were: (a) the teacher explained what she thought the readers needed to know—teacher directed; (b) the teacher lead a discussion to help students voice what they already knew about the topic—interactive. The researchers cited Langer's work (1981 & 1984) as a model for effectiveness of the interactive strategy.

The researchers composed questions to measure students' prior knowledge of text topics. They developed "scripts" for both the teacher-directed and the interactive prereading instruction and devised a numerical scale, 0 - 3, for scoring students' responses to comprehension questions. The findings of this quantitative study indicated that the teacher-directed strategy was more effective in promoting reader comprehension than the interactive strategy. Researchers
also reported that the teacher-directed strategy was equally effective for both narrative and expository text. Finding the same results for both kinds of text seems likely because the purpose for reading, demonstrated for the readers by the research approach, was to get the "right" answers. It was what they "carried away" from their reading, their efferent stance, that was being measured.

Alvermann (1989) discussed the role of the text in three eighth grade science classes, taught by three different teachers and how the role that text is given affects the kind of talk that goes on in these classrooms. Alvermann described three ways that text was approached: (a) as the authority; (b) as something to be embellished; (c) as a participant in the meaning making process. When the text was understood to be the authority, readers efferently responded with very short answers—like a verbal filling-in-the-blanks. When the teacher embellished or added accounts of real experiences to the text in his presentation, readers accepted the information without questioning its accuracy. In the third situation, reading was understood as an interactive process. Students reading in this third classroom were supported in using their background knowledge and their new information to build new understandings, formulate questions, and discover new meaning. In this instance students are "being in and stepping out" (Langer, 1990a)—the reader is making connections between herself and the world of the text.

It is evident that nonfiction/informational text occupies a significant portion of the text that emerging readers and fluent/independent readers seek out. Research also shows that readers at all stages of their engagement with text
implicitly recognize features of text that cue the reader to approach informational text differently than one approaches narrative text. We know that readers can read nonfiction/informational text from an aesthetic stance and participate in a lived-through experience. The reader can experience literature from both perspectives, that of great feelings of pleasure and satisfaction and of carrying away from the text knowledge that has enlarged or in other ways changed the reader's prior understandings.

Much of our present understanding of how readers respond to text has come from work with young readers. Looking at the response of middle school readers to nonfiction/informational text will enable educators, researchers, and theorists to better understand the characteristics and strategies of young adolescent readers. A wider perspective can have implications for meeting the needs and interests of these readers and for curriculum development and implementation that includes literature for children and young adults in the content areas, as well as in the literature class.

The variety, quantity, and quality of informational books, including biography and those that focus on historic events and people involved in those events, have greatly increased in the last fifteen years. Dowd (1992) indicated, "Nonfiction titles account for at least 70 percent of most library collections in elementary schools and in children's sections of public libraries and 30 percent of the children's book space in bookstores" (p. 34). Dowd also discussed six trends in nonfiction literature for younger readers. Each of the trends indicates the increased variety and quality of informational books.
Humor—Dowd suggests since children learn most efficiently through experiences that combine logic and creativity, literature that presents facts with humor are appropriate for these readers.

Unusual Formats—Authors/illustrators/designers of books that offer opportunities for the reader to manipulate parts of the books recognize the advantages of active involvement in learning. Such things as pop-up illustrations, flaps which lift to reveal some dimension of the information, some features shown from an unusual perspective—e.g., magnification, a bird's eye view—contribute to exciting the reader's interest.

Simplification of Advanced Topics—Topics are discussed in an age-appropriate manner, but the authors/illustrators do not talk down to young readers.

Emphasis on Graphics and Illustrations—More color, more precise detail, photographs of exceptional quality, attention to the design of the book which creates an object of fine artistic character—all of these result in visual appeal and increased information for readers.

Evidence of Research—Documentation is included in the book. This not only assures readers of the accuracy of the information, but also serves as a model for younger readers for their own research.

Focus on One Particular Aspect of the Subject—Dowd says, "the approach of children's nonfiction (is) concise writing focusing on one aspect of a topic in order to reveal other characteristics of that topic" (p. 36).
Readers Make Meaning with Art

We must understand reading as a process of making meaning that is not limited by symbols of written text. Reading is interpreting and responding to various symbolic representations of actual, vicarious, or imagined experiences. It is joined experiences between the creator of the symbols and the reader. Reading has the potential to provide pleasure, satisfaction, enlightenment, and escape, and it connects the reader with experiences and ideas both new and renewed. We read nonverbal symbols of visual art (i.e., color, composition, metaphor) and the actions of humans and of animals depicted in the art.

Reading implies making meaning. Reading is not merely recognizing a visual symbol, but interpreting its significance in the context in which it occurs and the broader context of the reader's world. Semiotics, a literary and a response theory, posits the relationships between the sign and the signified on which communication meaning depends. According to Beach (1993), as he discusses Saussure's semiotic model, these signs may be: "symbolic, color, sounds; iconic, a similar structural resemblance; or indexical, one image is likened to another related image" (p. 36).

Marantz (1978) argues that we must consider written language and art in books, particularly the picturebook, as other than "a matter of parallel symbol systems" and consider the book in toto as an art object. The reader makes meanings with each and all of the symbol systems that mingle in the book. The various signs: illustrations--color, artistic style, composition; written text--genre, figurative language, organization; design--page, typography, size, color, all
convey separate messages and at the same time messages that converge. "The visual elements don't operate singly; they are designed to function together. There are conventions of visual organization just as there are of verbal syntax" (p. 80). The reader discovers the significance of the symbols in part because each is bound by certain conventions and because the book as an object is governed by assumptions the reader holds.

Marantz (1978) focuses his argument by stating "the writer of literature relies on the open-endedness of interpretation (for the reader to create meaning using the author's words) . . . as fuel for the imagination" (p. 77), but "the visual qualities affecting response to pictures are of a different order and magnitude than those affecting the reading of texts" (p. 79). He says that words "can claim only symbolic functions" (p. 85), but that pictures can both represent ideas and objects and "provide a direct experience" (p. 85). Two questions raised in this research are: in what ways photographs in the books participants read, did both represent ideas and provide a direct experience, and what do the participants' responses indicate about their engagements with books as objects?

Books as "art objects are important because they have the potential for producing a transcendental experience, a state of mind where new and personal meanings can take shape" (Marantz, 1977, p. 151). As Marantz's arguments support understanding the picturebook as an art object, this research investigates how seventh grade readers consider broad general information and also specific meaning they make with the books they read.
Nodelman (1988) applies ideas about relationships between the sign and the signified to what he calls "the narrative function of illustration" in books for younger readers. The American Heritage College Dictionary defines illustration as "Visual matter used to clarify or to decorate a text." Nodelman argues that "clarify" can be understood as confirms or makes more specific. But, this confirmation and specificity is achieved within the bounds of the reader's experience and any new information that accompanies her transaction with the visual images. "Consequently, the meanings of visual representation of objects are rarely if ever limited just to their literal evocation of actual objects" (p. 10).

John Stewig (1992) pointed out the similarities in reading text and reading pictures. He suggested that younger readers interact with visual meaning with variations of the strategies they use to create meaning from text. Strategies identified are:

1. Readers draw from their own experience, comparing and contrasting what they know of life with what they see in the art of the book.
2. When making meaning with the art, the reader "examine(s) individual components in larger contexts. The first context is the entire book . . . " (p. 12) in which the piece appears. The second context is the entire illustration. The third part of the picture is in which some object or person appears. The reader's attention moves between the whole and the discrete parts and back to the whole.
3. The reader considers how the art extends the meaning she is making with the text; what additional information is contributed by the art; and what meaning results because of the merging of the text and the art.
Not all art in books for younger readers invite this kind of transaction. Unless the art intrigues the reader, she will find no particular reason to consider it closely.

The particular art form that interests me because of its aesthetic appeal and its contribution to the perception of realism or fact is photography. Barrett (1990) says:

> When looking at photographs, we tend to think of them as "innocent"—that is, as bare facts, as direct surrogates of reality, as substitutes for real things, as direct reflections. But there is no such thing as an innocent eye. We cannot see the world and at the same time ignore our prior experience in and knowledge of the world (p. 34).

Barrett argued that photographs are metaphors with two levels of meaning, the literal and the implied. Meaning from this visual art emanates from what it denotes or shows and from what it connotes or implies. The meaning will be mediated by the transaction between the viewer and the art.

Barrett and Marantz (1989) say that "The more realistic the photographs appear to be, the more ideologically persuasive they become" (p. 229) and that a part of visual literacy for younger readers is awareness that "camera images, whether in books or on screens, are made by people with beliefs and biases who make persuasive images from their point of view" (p. 230). Photographs for nonfiction/informational books, whether archival or created for the particular text, contribute their own voices to the chorus of the narration. It is the timbre of these
voices and the creation of harmony or dissonance for the reader that I am interested in investigating.

When investigating the response of younger readers, in particular middle school students, to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs, I considered: how the readers made meaning with the text and the illustrations; how the readers negotiated the signs they perceive from the text and from the art; and how readers made meaning from the union of text and art with influences outside the book.

Barrett (1985) uses Roland Barthes's *channel of transmission* as he discusses the ubiquity of context in making meaning of any photograph. This channel of transmission is "a complex of concurrent messages with the photograph as center and surrounds constituted by the text, the caption, the layout and in a more abstract but no less informative way, by the very name of the (news)paper" (p. 53). I would replace paper with book. Barrett says that there are three sources of information to be tapped when one is interpreting photographs: (a) the *internal context* which includes the image, the title (if there is one), the date when the photograph was made, and the photographer; (b) the *external context* which is where the photograph is place; and (c) the *original context* which is "what was physically and psychologically present to the maker at the time the picture was taken" (p. 59). The middle school reader is most likely to use only parts of internal context and original context that are supplied by the book's author or the reader's prior knowledge and the second of Barrett's information sources, external context.
Michael Cart in an article for *Booklist* (1995) entitled "The Eye Behind the Camera" quotes a *Time Magazine* obituary for photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt: (before Eisenstaedt) "people still believed cameras could only take dictation; he figured out their potential for poetry." It is this distinction between the merely operative and the creative use of photography as an art form, which endows some photographs with a strong emotional narrative. This strong emotional narrative of photographs used as illustrative art in literature for younger readers forms a union with the text and results in the meaning-filled transaction between the reader and the book.

**Summary**

Readers are actively involved in making meaning with the books they read. The process of making meaning is the same for all readers in that they use their experiences and understanding of the world and the way it operates and their understanding of the conventions of text, books, and art to discover meaning in what they read. The elements of the process become increasing discrete and focused as the readers' experiences expand their knowledge of the world and of text and art, therefore the range and depth of meaning will change as readers develop cognitively, physically, and emotionally.

Research that involves observing, recording, and interpreting what readers do as they read shows that readers read for a variety of purposes. These purposes are determined by the reader, but the reader is influenced by her perceptions of text and of others' expectations for her reading of a particular
text. Readers read to learn; they read to be excited and reassured; they read and are informed and gratified at the same time.

Reading is making meaning with some symbol system used to represent experiences of the one individual or group in order that another individual or group may share that experience. For the purpose of my research, the venue in which this reading/meaning-making takes place is nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs.

Powerful narrative is associated with nonfiction/informational literature as well as with fictional text. The nonfiction/informational writer’s words, which create vivid images and transport the reader through time to exotic places and places with familiar landscapes, are as seductive as those of a writer of fiction. People and animals become extraordinary in their accomplishments and also are familiar and easily recognized by experiences that the reader shares.

Photographs, which illustrate nonfiction/informational literature, can heighten the reader’s aesthetic experience of the book. Photographs offer the reader tentative connections with people and events about which she is reading; these connections are tentative until the reader welds them to the experiences she brings to the art. Photographs have the potential for alerting the reader to elements of the story; for focusing her attention to details that enrich the story; and for bringing a unique perspective that would otherwise be missed.

The reader, the text, the author, the artist, the book designer touch in a space that’s only imagined. What happens there can go unnoticed because the associations are tenuous and fleeting or the sounds from that encounter can be
thunderous and send vibrations that shake the foundations upon which the reader has constructed her view of the world.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study was undertaken to observe and describe the responses of a group of seventh grade students, identified as gifted and talented in the academic area of language arts, to a set of six books classified as nonfiction literature. The topics of these books: the Chicago Fire; orphan trains that took children from eastern United States to live with families in states west; Japanese internment; Czar Alexander and his family; coal mining in eastern Pennsylvania; and arctic exploration; all focus on people involved in these experiences. The photographs used as illustrations in five of the books could be described as archival ["Of (or) relating to . . . archives. (An archive being a) repository for memories or information . . . " [The American Heritage College Dictionary, 3rd Edition, 1993] The sixth book is illustrated with color photographs taken at the time of the trek across the Arctic Ocean.

The questions that guided this research were:

Question 1. In what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs?

Question 2. In what ways do photographs, used as illustration in nonfiction/informational books, contribute to the meaning gifted middle school readers make with the text and in what
ways do the photographs elicit emotional or empathetic response from these readers?

Question 3. What concepts about the genre of nonfiction literature are held by these gifted middle school readers?

Theoretical Perspective

What does it mean to know something, to be intimately familiar, to be able to describe its parts and the workings of the whole—to become knowledgeable? Is there a reality that is so clear and precisely manifested that it can be recognized and acknowledged with unanimity by all who experience a particular phenomenon? I think not. Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 6) say, "... qualitative methods are generally supported by the interpretivist paradigm, which portrays a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and ever changing."

To know something, in the words of John Moffet, one must examine it carefully.

"If you would know that thing, you must look at it long . . . you must be the thing you see . . . you must enter in . . . you must take your time and touch . . . " the thing that is being explored. Qualitative research is like this (in Huck, 1976, p. 316).

Some things can be best measured, described, and interpreted by the investigator systematically counting: counting people; the number of times each person performs an act; the amount of time the person spends on each event; etc. Other phenomenon is best described and interpreted by observing the context in which it occurs and the elements within that context: the actors, the conditions of the setting, the objects that the actors manipulate, and the results of the interaction of these parts (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

To understand the transaction that occurs between the reader and the book is the life's work of many researchers and still there are several different,
well formed understandings. Because of the dynamic nature of this transaction, qualitative research methods are the best choice for this study.

Qualitative research is conducted in naturalistic settings. Wilson (1977) argues that setting influences participants' behavior. Marshall and Rossman (1995) extend Wilson's ideas by saying, "... one cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which participants interpret their thoughts, feelings and actions... (p. 44). Situating this research in a middle school classroom and becoming a participant observer enabled me to balance my analysis of the student participants' tangible responses—verbal responses in group discussions, written responses in reading logs, and student created books—and nonverbal participant responses from the researcher's observations of students' activities as they worked on their books and as they interacted with each other.

Choosing participants who were seventh grade students identified as gifted in the academic area of language arts and who are clustered in one classroom with a teacher experienced at working with identified gifted language arts students is an example of what Patton (1990) calls intensity sampling. "An intensity sample consists of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely (but not extremely) . . . The purpose . . . is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 1990, p. 171).

Patton (1990) also says, "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples . . ., (and) the logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases (italics in the original) for study in depth" (p. 169). By choosing subjects who are identified as middle school, gifted, language arts students from a classroom taught by an experienced teacher, this researcher
selected such an information rich setting in which to conduct this qualitative study.

Site of Study

Summit Middle School is one of five middle schools in a midwestern school district. The school district is the seventh largest district in the state and encompasses urban, suburban, and rural communities. The most current statistics show that there are approximately 18,000 students in 17 elementary schools, five middle schools, three high schools, and a vocational school. Its attendance area is 127 square miles within which are several municipalities. At the time of this research, there were 1194 teachers and 783 classified personnel as well as administrators.

Summit Middle School has a population of 812 students in grades 6, 7, and 8, and a faculty of 48 (administrators and teachers). There are 185 students on free or reduced lunch and 17 students receiving English as a Second Language services. The percentage of the student body who are considered minority is 7.6%—African-American, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian.

Students are drawn from the southwestern part of a large metropolitan city, from a rapidly growing suburb of this city, from several small communities, and from rural areas. Housing within the school's attendance area range from $200,000 to government subsidized housing. The school board was having difficulty convincing voters in the district to pass a bond issue that would provide for additional classroom space to adequately accommodate the rapidly growing number of students. During the 1998/1999 school year, the district began operating on split sessions in order to have classroom space for all its students. In November of 1998, the school district voters passed bond issues that will
provide for the building of a new high school, a new technical school, a 7th/8th
grade building, and three 5th/6th grade buildings.

Services for Gifted and Talented Students

For many years in this district, the gifted and talented program was a 4th
and 5th grade pull-out program servicing 120 students with two teachers.
Students were "pulled out" of their regular classroom one day each week and
transported to the enrichment classroom housed in one of the middle schools.

Within the last nine years, the gifted and talented staff has increased from
three to eight people. There is now a teacher who works with students in K-2nd
grades; three elementary teachers—still a pull-out program in grades 3 - 5; two
middle school educators—the coordinator and a math specialist; one high school
coordinator; and the district gifted coordinator.

A portion of the salaries for these eight people comes from state funding
for gifted units and the remainder is paid from district operating funds. The
stipulations for state funding include certain guidelines for identification, number
of students served by each teacher, and the number of hours of service a student
receives. A uniform state curriculum for gifted education did not exist until 1998.
There is currently a state model for the gifted and talented course of study
comparable to the academic area courses of study such as math, science, etc.
The school district in which this research was conducted is now in the process of
revising its own gifted and talented course of study to conform to the state model.

The school district's gifted and talented course of study in its unrevised
version is composed of process based goals and learner outcomes that have six
foci: (a) Oral and written language; (b) higher level thinking skills; (c) creativity
and problem solving; (d) interpersonal relations; (e) career education; and (f)
research techniques and independent study. The classroom teacher, in whose

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classroom the students identified as specifically-academically gifted in language arts, is responsible for implementing the school district’s adopted language arts course of study and the gifted and talented course of study.

While the range and extent of services vary, students, K - 12 identified as gifted in one or more of the four areas recognized by the state—cognitive, specific academic, creativity, and the visual and performing arts—have contact with the staff of the gifted and talented department. See Appendix A for the Gifted and Talented Department staff’s years of teaching experience and education.

Gifted and talented 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in each of the district’s middle schools are identified in a specific academic area of language arts and/or math. This identification is done using standardized tests scores per the state department of education requirement for receiving funding. Students qualify for this specific academic program by scoring in the 95th percentile or above in reading, language arts, or math achievement using the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (McGraw Hill). The cognitive measure for identification as gifted and talented is a score of 127 on a standardized group intelligence test. In this school district the Test of Cognitive Skills (McGraw Hill) is used. Identified middle school students are placed in the Accelerated Studies Program [ASP].

ASP students receive services in their regular classrooms. Teachers who have these identified students do not need the special licensing category of gifted and talented as an area of certification, but work with a resource person from the district’s gifted and talented department who does have this special certification. This plan follows the inclusion model for delivery of services which is also used with students who have other special learning needs—physical, cognitive, and behavioral.
According to the inclusion model, identified students receive instruction in the regular classroom. A teacher specialist in the area of the students' special needs works in the regular classroom with the classroom teacher to provide instructional modifications to meet the educational needs of the identified students.

At the end of the last school year, 1997/1998, there were 28 math and language arts classes, grades 6 - 8, in which students identified as gifted and talented were placed. For the coming year, 1998/1999, there will be 30 teachers in the Accelerated Studies Program.

The Classroom

On the first day of school, the 7th grade teacher with whom I worked had 28 students on her roster for language arts. After the students arrived, she was notified that two of these students had been withdrawn. This left her class list with 26 students. Of these 26 students, 18 were identified gifted in the academic area of language arts, three were identified as cognitively gifted, and five did not meet the criteria for gifted identification.

Because of the constraints of the teacher association contract with the school district, the class in the middle schools is limited to 28 students. In order to maintain this balance of students, it is necessary to include students who don't meet the state gifted and talented identification criteria in the Accelerated Studies Program classes, if there are not 28 identified students. Usually students who are added to the ASP roster are students who demonstrate strong ability, interest in the subject area, and responsibility.

All five of the students who were not identified as gifted by the state and national standards [scoring in the 95th percentile or above in specific academic area and/or a cognitive level of 127 or above] did score at least one standard
deviation above the norm on the cognitive measure and in the 80th percentile or above in language arts/reading on the standardized achievement measurement. These students did demonstrate strong ability and were well placed to fill this ASP class. See Appendix B for a listing of achievement and cognitive ability scores for all students.

At Summit Middle School, each class period is approximately one hour long. The class with which I worked met from 11:05 A.M. to 12:05 P.M. This was the third of four seventh grade language art classes that the teacher taught each day. After this class the students went to lunch.

In this classroom, the teacher had individual desks with attached seats for each student. The desk/chairs were usually arranged in rows and the usual seating arrangement was alphabetically by last name. The teacher often had students move their seats during class so that they could work in smaller groups. The teacher used flexible grouping, a strategy for combining students based on specific instructional objectives, so the composition of the groups changed often. This enabled her to work with small groups while the other students worked independently or with a partner.

The teacher began each class with silent reading. The routine was established at the beginning of the year; the students entered the room, settled into their seats and started reading a book of their choosing. Students could bring their own books or select one from the teacher's large paperback collection. They were to come prepared to start reading. After sustained silent reading, SSR, the teacher read aloud novels and picturebooks to the class. Her selections for read-alouds were either tied to the broad theme of the unit her students were studying, by authors that she wanted her students to know, or were books that in other ways appeal to most middle school students.
In this classroom, students' opinions were valued. Their participation in decisions about how their assignments would be completed was encouraged. Respect for other students and for adults in the classroom was expected. Responsibility for high quality work was shared by the teacher and the students.

The Teacher and the Researcher

The teacher in whose 7th grade Accelerated Studies classroom the data for this study were collected has been teaching language arts for 20 years, has her master's degree in reading, and continues with post graduate work in gifted education. She has been working with gifted and talented language arts students since the school district instituted the Accelerated Studies Program to serve identified middle school students nine years ago.

I am the district's middle school gifted coordinator and have served in this capacity for two years. Prior to this, I was a teacher in the elementary gifted and talented program and was the language arts/literature gifted specialist for the five middle schools. My work in the Gifted and Talented Department and my nineteen years as a teacher in this school district enabled me to obtain the permission necessary to conduct this study. I received the approval of the district supervisor of personnel, the administrator of Summit Middle School, and the permission and support of the teacher in whose language arts classroom the participants were scheduled.

The Student Participants

The original plan for this research was to limit the group of participants to eight identified gifted and talented students in a 7th grade ASP class. The classroom teacher would select four students and I would select four. After I presented my plan to the 7th grade class and the selection of the eight students was made, it became clear that more than those eight students were eager to
read my set of nonfiction literature and provide their responses to the books. It was evident to me and to the teacher, that some students who were not part of the original two groups of four were unhappy about not being included.

Having received signed permission forms from the parents of 23 of the 26 students—identified gifted and not identified gifted—in the class for them to participate in the study, I decided to include all of the students who wanted to be included.

Of the 18 students who participated in one or more discussion groups with me, nine were females and nine were males. Fourteen of the participants were identified as gifted and four were not. Of the 14 identified students, seven were males and seven were females. Two females and two males participated who were not identified. This equal number of males and females was coincidental.

Each student who indicated that he or she wanted to be part of the study received a small notebook and was asked to respond to a set of questions as he/she read at least three books from the six titles that I chose. I also met with the students to make audiotapes of the discussions of the books. The students wrote, illustrated with photographs which they took, and published their original nonfiction books. I audiotaped interviews with the students at the conclusion of the study. A videotape of five of the students talking about their participation in the research project was made for their school morning news broadcast.

Eleven of eighteen students created their own nonfiction books, eight females and three males. One student did not complete his book. One book was created by a pair of students, a female and a male. Ten books were published.

Of the 18 participants, three students not identified as gifted, wrote nonfiction books as part of the research. The contributions of the not-identified
students in the discussion group and all of the student-authored books were included in the data.

Characteristic of individuals identified as verbally gifted, (VanTassel-Baska, 1988) all of the participants very ably expressed their ideas about the books they read. The participants provided much more lengthy responses for the discussion groups than they did in the written journals. It seemed that each time we met they were anxious to talk about the books they read. I never sensed that they begrudged any of the time they spent as research participants.

Sources of Data

Multiple sources of data are valuable to qualitative research because this adds depth and breadth to the scene, allowing the researcher to notice details that might be missed, if only a portion of the picture were visible. Multiple sources enable the researcher to consider how the form of the data or the setting in which it was collected contributed to the response. Having multiple sources, the researcher can look for ways in which the responses are alike and different as patterns emerge from the data.

There are multiple data sources for this study:

1. book discussion groups led by the researcher that were audiotaped and an audiotaped discussion among four participants about the nonfiction books they wrote—the context of the discussion was peer-editing
2. reading logs in which participants responded in writing to a set of questions
3. ten nonfiction books written and illustrated by participants with the photographs they took
4. exit interviews with those participants who wrote their own nonfiction book
5. a videotape of a morning TV broadcast produced by students at the middle school the participants attend
6. my field notes while observing the participants during book discussions and while they were working on their own nonfiction books and my notes from conversations with the classroom teacher and other adults who had contact with the participants during the research
7. a beginning-of-the-year student interest survey designed by the classroom teachers.
8. to determine/to identify gifted by state/national standards.

The Timeline

The original plan for the research was to begin collecting data at the beginning of the school year and to finish by the winter vacation break for winter holidays. When I started working with the participants, I tried to meet with students twice a week. It became evident that the time frame would need to be stretched. See Table 3.1, Timeline.
August 27, School year began.

September 3, - September 16, I set the stage.
See Appendix E Outline of Information Presented to Participant
See Appendix H Parental Consent Letter
See Appendix F Survey of Book Features

September 18, - November 5, Small-group discussions are audiotaped.
During this time (on October 13,) participants receive disposable Cameras. On November 5, I picked up participants’ reading logs.

December 20, Winter holidays break begins.
By this time, participants had their photographs and had discussed topics and first drafts of the books they were writing and illustrating.

March 16, Participants’ books are bound.

April 28, - June 4, Exit interviews are audiotaped.

May 22, “Good Morning, Summit Park” is aired.

Table 3.1: Timeline of research data collection.

There were several reasons for adjusting this plan: the need to change the scheduled time for the class to meet because of a school-wide assembly; the teacher being away from the classroom; students being excused for rehearsal for a music program; standardized testing; my being at another building because of my full time job in the school district. Each of these is a legitimate occurrence during the course of a regular school year. As a result, I met with the discussion groups until the winter holidays break and worked with the students who were writing their own nonfiction books as they planned and started their first drafts. During January and February, I met with the participants who were writing their
books. In March, the student authors were excused from their classes to meet with me to bind their books. In April and May, I met with students to tape final discussions with them about what they had accomplished, what they thought they had learned, and what they thought of being involved in my research project.

These are the twelve questions I prepared for this final interview of the participants:

1. Who is the audience for your book?
2. What will this audience find interesting about your book?
3. What do you know about nonfiction books now that you didn't know before?
4. What parts of the process of creating your book are you most likely to use again?
5. How do the photographs in your book contribute to the information in your book?
6. Which of the books you read would you rank as #1?
7. What are the features of this book that make it #1?
8. Of the book you read from my set, which is yours most like?
9. In what ways are they alike?
10. How would you describe the differences between good fiction and good nonfiction?
11. In what ways are good fiction and good nonfiction alike?
12. What else would you like me to know about working on this research with me?

In May, four of the participants appeared on the morning TV broadcast students plan and produce at their school. One of the girls in my research group
was the interviewer, three of the other student authors talked about their books and the research project, and a fifth participant was the person who operated the video recorder to record the program. The students who appeared had volunteered to do this. The student interviewer prepared her questions herself.

A copy of this taped broadcast is part of the data for this research. A benefit to me as a researcher working with this particular group of students is their interest and participation in a wide range of school activities. They are involved in many extra curricular programs at their school, the morning broadcasts being one. This also allowed me to interact with the teacher/advisor of the morning program. I believe that her willingness to have the students' nonfiction books as a feature on the TV broadcast indicated that I, as a researcher, was considered a part of what this middle school provides for students.

The Memoirs Unit

The teacher chose to begin the school year with the "Memoirs" unit for these reasons: (a) asking the students to write from their personal experiences draws from a readily available information source; (b) the writing that results provides the teacher with baseline data on students' writing skills; (c) the teacher and students become acquainted with each other; (d) students become familiar with the teacher's classroom procedures.

The teacher's instructional goals for the unit were: (a) to "mine" student memories and personal experiences as a source for written expression; and (b) to recognize the commonality of human experiences through the memories of others in literature. Measurable objectives for the unit were taken from the district's language arts course of study:

1. Be able to write from what they know.
2. Use the expository and expressive forms of writing, especially diary or journal forms.
3. Demonstrate a knowledge of the writing process.
4. Write in response to fiction and nonfiction.
5. Recognize and write from the first person point of view.
6. Respond to text on an individual and group basis connecting new concepts and ideas using prior knowledge.
7. Recognize authors' attitudes/bias toward a subject.
8. Recognize in literature, and write, details that support the main idea.

The time line for this unit was shorter than for units that would follow. During 1997/1998, the school year began with a three-day week (Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday). Labor Day was the following Monday, so the next week was four days. The unit proceeded through the next two five-day weeks. The teacher was able to accomplish her plans, and I was able to become acquainted with the students and begin my research.

In connection with the Memoirs unit, and as a means for the teacher to better know her students, the teacher constructed a student survey that she titled “Interest Inventory” [Appendix C]. It consisted of nine items, statements that students had to complete. These surveys became an unexpected but useful source of information about the participants. I will show how the participants’ statement-completions contributed data which added another dimension to my research.

Choosing Literature for the Memoir Unit

The teacher planned to use literature with her students in these ways: a novel to be read aloud to the class; novels the students chose for silent reading in class; and picturebooks.
The teacher read aloud each day to all of her classes. She chose a read-aloud novel for several combinations of these reasons: (a) being read to is a pleasurable experience; (b) the novel in some way connects with the thematic unit; (c) the students might not choose the novel for themselves, but shouldn't miss it; (d) the novel is another work by the author of the book she's using for instruction; (e) the author's use of language is exemplary and can be a model for the students' own writing.

The novel chosen for the "Memoirs" unit was Journey by Patricia MacLachlan (Delacorte Press, 1991). A brother, Journey age 11, and his older sister, Cat, are left with their grandparents by their mother who no longer wants the responsibilities of being a single parent. The story revolves around Journey's struggle to know who he is and to find answers to his questions about his family. When the children arrive, Journey's grandfather begins taking photographs with a camera that Cat has discarded. Journey finally realizes that his grandparents' love and care are providing him with memories and images to connect with those memories, which create that sense of belonging to a past and being in the present. This exchange between Journey and his grandfather capsulizes what the grandfather is helping Journey to realize: [The I in the following is Journey. The he in the third line refers to the grandfather.]

"Things don't look the same through the camera," I said. "Not the way they are in real life."
Putting the camera strap around his neck, he paused, then straightened.
"Sometimes." He tilted his head to one side and spoke to himself in the mirror. "And sometimes pictures show us what is really there."
"How? How can that be?" I asked.
Grandfather lifted his shoulders in a familiar way, then said something unlike him.
"I don't know Journey. Maybe that is why people take pictures. To see what is there" (page 19).
This novel would connect what the students would be doing with their own memories and what I would be asking them to consider in the nonfiction books I was bringing for my research.

The students did not have a core novel to read for this unit. This was because the focus for the teacher’s instruction was the writing objectives from the course of study and because she wanted to establish as routine that students bring a novel of their choosing to class each day for silent reading.

The group of picturebooks that the teacher chose to share with students and to make available for them to read were chosen with these criteria: (a) exemplify the idea of memories; (b) have situations to which middle school students could relate; 3) be examples of exceptional use of art and text to narrate the story. A bibliography of these books can be found in Appendix D. [Note: the term picturebook in this context denotes books with 32 to 48 pages. The art for the book is essential for completing the narrative—the text and the illustration jointly tell the story. Because of the themes and topics and the situations in which the characters are placed, these books can pique the interests of many middle school students. The size and shape of the book and the length of text do not preclude enjoyment by older readers.]

Also, using picturebooks fit well with the teacher’s plans for a unit that could be completed in the first seventeen days of school. The group of books she chose offered many examples of the theme around which she had planned her instruction. Multiple books could be read during a short period of time, and picturebooks provided a way to sharpen the students' visual literacy skills. The students could consider—reconsider for most of them—how the art brings its narrative of the story.
The Nonfiction Books Used in this Study

Nonfiction literature is defined in this study as text that embodies my definition of literature:

*Literature* is a broad, inclusive term that represents many genres of text. Literature can be fictional, imaginative accounts or accounts that rely on verifiable facts—nonfiction. Literature signifies an exemplary use of language to convey the writer's ideas.

Applying "literature" to language symbols connotes the writer's exceptional skillful use of language; the writer's ability to engage the reader; and the creation of a world shared by the writer and the reader as they meet. Nonfiction literature draws on verifiable facts and is text whose purpose is essentially to inform the reader about these facts. It may include both primary and secondary sources.

The critical concepts in the definition of literature are: (a) literature signifies an exemplary use of language to convey the writer’s ideas; (b) the writer’s exceptional ability to engage the reader; and (c) the creation of a world shared by the writer and the reader as they meet through the book.

The six books chosen for use in this study were selected because they exemplify nonfiction literature, and the topics of the books fit the theme and instructional goals for the "Memoirs" unit. These are the six books chosen for this study:


3. *Over the Top of the World: Explorer Will Steger's Trek Across the Arctic*; Will Steger and Jon Bowermaster; Scholastic Press, 1997
Each of these books was chosen because it fit my definition of literature. I read these books with the five parts of the Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) criteria for evaluating nonfiction books for younger readers in mind: accuracy and authenticity, content and perspective, style, organization, and illustration and format. I also used Vardell’s (1991) description of the National Council of Teachers of English criteria for determining its winners of the Orbis Pictus Award: accuracy, organization, design, and style.

Each of the books used for this study describes events in the lives of real people. The authors have assumed points of view similar to those of many middle school readers. Most of the photographs used to illustrate these books were not made originally to be included in a book for younger readers. The photographs served as records of past events and were selected by the authors to illustrate their texts. The exceptions are the color photographs in Anastasia’s Album and in Over the Top.

I was not investigating participants’ preference for one book over another, or their preference for particular design features such as color or quantity of illustrations. My research sought to investigate: (a) what, if any, empathetic connection middle school gifted readers might make with people and situations in nonfiction literature; (b) what they might notice, if at all, about the design features of the books they read; and (c) what kinds of information they gleaned from the text and from the illustrations of particular books classified as nonfiction literature. For the purposes of this study, I chose six books that would facilitate my
investigation of these three areas. The book choices were deliberate; there was no random selection of titles for this study.

I Become Part of the Classroom

I observed in the classroom during the time I was collecting my data and assisted the classroom teacher on several occasions.

The classroom teacher and I met before the school year began to plan the teacher’s first unit, looking at how I could introduce my inquiry to the students and when the students would be available to work with me. It was important for me to be seen as part of the class routine, and for the students to understand that their participation in the research was not additional work, but rather that the nonfiction books they were reading contributed to their knowledge base for the “Memoirs” unit.

To introduce the set of nonfiction/informational books I asked the participants to read, I brought four sets of the six books and passed them to the class. Students could look through the books and then trade books with another student, or look through the books with a partner. My idea was that letting the class see the kind of books would minimize what uncertainty they might have about participation.

I was in the classroom beginning the Tuesday after Labor Day. The students had started school the previous Wednesday. The teacher and I told the students what I would be doing, how they could participate, and that I needed their parents’ permission for their participation. (See Appendix E.) This first week, the teacher read aloud to the students and introduced the “Memoirs” unit. During the second week, my role in the classroom was to read a picturebook, that fit with the theme of memoirs to the class and discuss it with them.
The purposes of my reading to the class were two-fold: (a) to have them see me as another teacher in the classroom; and (b) to model how a reader draws on the visual as well as the textual information in picturebooks. I chose to read *The Worry Stone* by Marianna Dengler, illustrated by Sibyl Graber Gerig (Northland Publishing, 1996). This is the story of an old woman who meets a young boy in the park. She recognizes that he is lonely and tells him a story that her grandfather had told her. The grandfather's story is prompted by a smooth stone that the old woman, as a child, had found on a walk with her grandfather. The old woman passes the stone to the boy along with the story.

Examples of questions that I asked the seventh grade students were:

1. showing the students only the cover—"What do you think the story is about?"
2. after reading "A Note from the Author"—What does the author mean when she says, "Thus the Chumash legend within this story is not authentic." What's the difference between authentic and accurate?
3. looking at the illustration of the woman and the boy—How old do you think the woman is? What makes you think so?
4. Why do people seem to not have time for old folks or a child? What are some of the reasons?
5. There are three stories, nested one inside the other, in this book. How does the author's organization of the text and the illustrations help the reader realize this?

Following my introduction of the six nonfiction books I was asking them to read and my sharing *The Worry Stone*, I made a presentation to the whole class that was planned to draw attention to design features. These were features that I hoped they would notice in the set of six books I had brought. I used Russell
Freedman’s *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse* (Holiday House, 1996). This was an appropriate choice because it meets the criteria I used for selecting the six books in my research set, but was not one of the six and it is in the school library. I made transparencies of the half title page, title page, copyright page, table of contents, and flaps of the dust jacket. I showed the book to the class and then used the transparencies to discuss what information a reader could get from each of the pages and what the pages were called.

I did not want to jeopardize the spontaneity of my participants’ responses when they read books of their choosing from my set. But, I felt that using another book to draw attention to general design features which they might not notice, would not bias their responses.

I also suggested four questions, different in wording from the questions that participants were to respond to in their reading log, that the students might consider as they read:

1. Notice things that are alike (refers to design features) in the books you read.
2. What is unique or sets each book apart?
3. With which character in the book do you have the most in common?
4. What parts or features of the books you’ve read, do you think are important to include in a great nonfiction/information book?

I provided a matrix for students to use if they chose, that listed design features on the horizontal axis and the titles of the six books in my set on the vertical axis. There were directions for using this matrix on the reverse side of the chart. [See Appendix F.] I planned that one of the discussion times when I
was tape recording small groups would include talking about these sources of information in the books they were reading.

The Process of Data Analysis

As all readers must grapple with making sense of text, I had to make meaning with all of the various texts that I assembled with the participants in this research. I had to rely on what I knew about how text of a research project works: where did I begin; what did I know about the characters and the setting; what clues to look for in the illustrations; what themes would emerge. Now that this analysis is finished, my story of how one group of middle school gifted students responded to nonfiction/informational literature is ready for other readers.

Data Sources

There are multiple data sources for this study:

1. book discussion groups that were audiotaped
2. reading logs in which participants responded to a set of questions
3. an audiotaped discussion among four participants about the nonfiction books they wrote
4. ten nonfiction books written and illustrated by participants
5. exit interviews of those participants who wrote their own nonfiction book
6. a videotape of a morning TV broadcast produced at the middle school the participants attend
7. my notes and observations of the participants during book discussions and while they were working on their own nonfiction books
8. my notes from conversations with the classroom teacher and other adults who had contact with the participants during the research
9. student scores on standardized tests to which I had access because of my job as the district's Middle School Coordinator
10. a beginning-of-the-year student interest survey designed by the classroom teacher.

Each source was initially analyzed separately. My observations were used to describe the participants and the context in which the data was collected. I subsequently looked at similar patterns that were present across all of my data collection sources. My search for similarities was driven by wondering what the participants would carry over from their reading and discussing the six books to the writing, illustrating, and publishing of their own books.

First and foremost, the analysis was driven by the three research questions for which I sought answers. What was I hearing and seeing that would help me understand the ways in which these seventh graders were responding to the nonfiction books I asked them to read?

**Transcribing the Tapes**

I transcribed the first audiotape myself and then had a secretary who was used to working from audiotapes, transcribe all other tapes. Having someone else transcribe tapes was appropriate for this research because the number of students in the book discussion groups was small, and there were no peripheral voices to distract from the participants' conversation. I listened to all the tapes as I read the transcriptions and made necessary corrections in the transcripts. Because I was familiar with the books and the participants, it was clear to me what the participants were talking about when it was not completely clear to the transcriber.
It must be noted that the decision to have someone else transcribe the tapes was not done without considering that I knew the participants and the circumstances of the book discussions and the person who did the transcriptions didn’t. Having considered restrictions that might result from having the tapes transcribed, I scrutinized the transcripts to make sure they accurately matched the audiotapes as I began the analysis process.

Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 111) say that “data analysis is the process of bringing order” and is a “search for general statements about relationships among categories of data.” Analysis began for me the first time I met the 7th grade class. I observed their body language as they listened to my introduction as someone who would be in their room all of the school year in two capacities: the Accelerated Studies Program person and a student/researcher. They were attentive and noncommittal, typical of 7th graders and of many adults when hearing a proposition for the first time. Analysis continued as I talked with the participants during the book discussions.

My first plan was to use the questions that I had given the students to answer in their reading logs. I did this, but recognized that these questions were not as open-ended as I wanted and did not encourage the extended responses for which I was hoping. It was necessary for me to call on questioning strategies that would offer the opportunities for the participants to more freely associate their prior knowledge and experiences with their current experience reading the nonfiction books. I was drawing on “unstructured data” (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994), and I was also drawing on my own teaching experience and understanding of how the structure of the question can encourage an expanded response.
Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 278) discuss the interactive context of collecting and analyzing and note that the one doing the analyzing is a "significant interactant" in the process. Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 111) say that under a constructivist paradigm the researcher and what's being investigated are "interactively linked," and the "findings are literally created (italics in the original) as the investigation proceeds."

Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 113) note that each phase of data analysis involves interpretation. I made meaning and provided my insight "to the words and acts of the participants in the study" as I collected and considered the data all during the course of this research.

Coding the Data

My initial sorting or coding of my data involved marking with colored, narrow "Post-It" notes parts of the transcripts that seemed to answer my broadest question, "In what ways does this group of 7th grade gifted language arts students respond to the nonfiction books I've brought to them to read?" I was following Strauss and Corbin's (1990, p. 62) "open coding." In this and subsequent analysis I was looking at conversational turns, each instance of a participant's speaking during the book group discussions.
From this initial coding came five broad categories:

1. Reading from this set of books prompted more questions. The text and the photographs seem to raise other questions from the readers. They wanted to know more.

2. The participants spoke and wrote about the importance of story/narrative to their involvement with the book.

3. The participants attended to design features of the books they read. They noticed placement of illustrations. They noticed the use of color and how choice of color in some way coordinated with some facet of the book’s theme or subject. They spoke of the effect of the appearance of the book’s cover in attracting their attention.

4. The participants made three kinds of connections with the books:
   a. intertextual connections—They made comparisons between the nonfiction books they read and other books they read.
   b. real life connections—They made comparisons between other real life events and the events in the books they read.
   c. personal connections—They commented on knowing how an individual from the text felt. They told of how an event in the books they read made them feel. They commented on what a character in the books must be feeling based on the expression or posture of that character as seen in an illustration/photograph in the book.

As I tried the fit of these categories on other data as it was collected, it became apparent that my categories needed refining and adjusting. This demonstrates what Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 111) recognized as a “constant interplay between proposing and checking” and using what Lincoln and Guba, (1989) refer to as constant comparative method.
The next step in the analysis process was to look for broader relationships between categories and subcategories. I then choose inclusive labels or designations that would sufficiently link these and establish a framework upon which to arrange the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 96) describe this as axial coding.

Finally, I began selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 116) during which I looked for ways in which these more inclusive categories related to each other. This whole process of analysis was iterative; I went back to prior considerations of my data as I continued to collect and analyze each data source.

I continued to use the "color coding" method to sort my data. This is a kind of pattern coding referred to by Miles and Huberman (1994). Miles and Huberman say that this pattern coding serves several functions: (a) reduces large amounts of data into small chunks; (b) begins analysis during the collections process; and (c) helps the researcher to develop a schema for understanding the interaction between herself, the participants, and the data collected from each source.

I duplicated the transcripts and cut apart conversational turns attaching each to an index card. This was a means for me to physically manipulate the data, placing parts into different categories. I have created displays or "visual format(s) that present(s) information systematically" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 91) included in Chapter 4 and in the appendices to this study.

I did a kind of "memoing" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 72). I made notes in the margins of the transcripts as I connected what I was reading to other parts of my data and to the work of other researchers upon whose grounded theories of reader response and of how meaning is made from text and from
visual arts I reflect in my work, e.g. Langer, Benton, Rosenblatt, Iser, and Nodelman.

Each part of the analysis process could be thought of as circles forming in a small pond after a pebble is dropped into the water. The circles begin with one, tightly surrounding the disturbance. Then, they spread out and repeat themselves, getting larger. One generates the next, until they are contained by the edges of the pond.

Trustworthiness

Schwandt (1994, in Denzin & Lincoln) positions the constructivist paradigm as understanding the “world from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 118). Schwandt cites Lincoln’s and Guba’s ideas that a constructivist recognizes that there are “pluralistic and relativistic” (p. 128) conceptualizations of how political, cultural, social, etc. systems function. Knowledge is a human construction. Criteria for judging the trustworthiness of postpositivist inquiry (I include constructivism in this broader designation) is different than that which is used to measure positivist (quantitative) studies. The alternative constructs or parallel criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1989) are: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. I believe that these more accurately reflect the assumptions that support my study.

Credibility

Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 143) say that the goal of this criterion, credibility, is to assure that the subject was “accurately identified and described.” Employing the following techniques (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) can support the researcher’s claim for credibility: prolonged engagement, persistent observations, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, and member checks.
**Prolonged engagement.** I collected data during the 1997/1998 school year, from September through May. I was in the classroom twice a week until the winter holidays break. I worked with students as they wrote and published their nonfiction books after the winter vacation up to the spring break. After students returned from spring vacation until the end of the school year, I helped student authors who needed more time, and I also conducted exit interviews.

This persistent engagement with and prolonged observation of the participants enabled me to establish familiarity and trust that might not have resulted from more limited time with the students. I believe that I achieved my goal to be considered a usual part of this class.

**Persistent observations.** I collected data from audiotaped interviews with the participants, from reading logs kept by participants, from written notes of my observations of the participants in the classroom and as they worked on their own informational books, from finished informational books the participants wrote, designed, and illustrated. Data from exit interviews with the participants and a video tape of four participants appearing on a school television broadcast were also included. I kept notes of meetings with the classroom teacher during the school year and other adults who interacted with the participants during the time of this study.

**Peer debriefing.** I discussed my ongoing work with other doctoral students who were pursuing investigations in children's literature. The members of my doctoral committee provided their insights and advice. The gifted coordinator and other teachers in the Gifted and Talented Department of my school district willingly listened to my research experiences and offered their perspectives on what I was observing from the participants in my study.
**Progressive subjectivity.** By calling to mind my expectations, my “a priori construction” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 238), each time I planned to meet with the participants, I noted how what I was seeing and hearing was altering what I did. Initially this made me uncomfortable, thinking that a standardized procedure would provide more trustworthiness for my study. I soon recognized that these progressive changes were necessary and appropriate.

Adapting my discussion questions as the participants talked, varying the composition of the participants in the discussion groups, being flexible about the times and places for meeting with participants, recognizing the usefulness of unexpected data sources [See Appendix C—“Interest Inventory” which was prepared by the classroom teacher.]—all of these enabled me to enlarge my view of ways in which the participants responded to the nonfiction literature they were reading.

**Member checks.** Meeting with the classroom teacher regularly enabled me to lay my observations of the participants as readers and writers beside hers. She served as a sounding board, cheerleader, and valued source of information about the daily classroom behaviors of the participants.

Member checks were used to insure *reciprocity*. Patton (1990, p. 253) defines this as an “exchange relationship,” a relationship of “mutual trust, respect, and cooperation.” I believe that the participants—students whose responses to nonfiction literature were collected and the teacher in whose class the researcher worked—subscribe to the exchange relationship because: (a) the books that the students read were not seen as additional work; (b) the teacher welcomed me as a researcher and as a colleague in planning for implementation of the regular curriculum courses of study; and (c) I became a part of the classroom community.
The exit interviews with the participants and the video tape of four of the participants talking about being part of the study for the school's morning TV program also served as member checks. I wrote my exit interview questions with two purposes in mind: (a) to find more specific information about what the students knew about their writing, e.g. are they aware of the audience as they write; and (b) to look at how closely the middle schoolers' understanding of nonfiction, after participating in this research, would match my perceptions of their understanding of nonfiction after analyzing my data. Because the school TV program was done by the students without any input from me, I take their remarks about the research project as freely given and unprompted.

**Dependability**

Dependability is "concerned with the stability of the data over time" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). In positivist inquiry, changes in procedure are seen as contributing to unreliable findings. The opposite assumption can be made about procedural shifts in a postpositivist study. Tracking data collected from participants in different settings can facilitate a broader understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The analysis of my data will show similarities in the participants' responses in the several data collecting situations in which I worked.

**Confirmability and Transferability**

Confirmability is demonstrated by showing that the integrity of the findings can be vouched for by the data. What the participants said and did is the source of my findings.

My claim for the transferability of my findings is that another researcher could observe similar responses from another small group of very able middle school readers who read books similar to the ones chosen for this study. Geertz (1973) says that providing detailed description of the study should enable
another person reading the study to ascertain if the procedure will translate to a similar situation. An exact match or replication of the findings is not to be expected.

**Summary**

The methodology for this research was chosen to best address the three questions upon which my investigation focused: (a) in what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction literature; (b) in what ways do photographs used as illustrations in nonfiction/informational literature contribute to the meanings that readers construct as they read, and in what ways do the photographs elicit emotional or empathetic response from these readers; and (c) what concepts of nonfiction/informational literature do these middle school gifted readers hold.

The methodology is appropriate because of the beliefs I hold that reality is socially constructed. By observing the context, the elements within the context, and noticing patterns that occur from this interaction, I interpreted and reported what I learned.

I carefully chose: an information-rich setting for my research; the participants; and the nonfiction/informational books which the participants read and to which they responded. Using multiple sources of data increased the realm of my data collection. I was able to consider participants' discussions of the books they read and conversations about the process of creating their own books; their reading journals; and the nonfiction books they wrote and illustrated with photographs.

The research timeline that spanned the 1997/1998 school year enabled me to know the participants well and to allow them to work without the pressure that a shorter time frame might have imposed.
Initially my analysis found four large categories emerging. Participants were: (a) describing ways the books made them feel; (b) calling attention to design features of the books—color, placement of text and illustrations, decorative motifs repeated on pages, etc.; (c) talking about "detail" that authors included; and (d) raising questions that weren't directly addressed in the text or in the photographs. I looked more closely at the data in these categories to create more discrete classifications for the responses from the participants. Chapter 4 will describe in detail the findings of this study.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of my research data. The data was analyzed using the methodology described in Chapter Three. I begin this chapter by describing the seven sources of data and the conditions surrounding the situations in which the data was collected. The heading for this section is Data Sources.

Next, I discuss the findings from each separate data source, and then examine what the data from all seven sources taken together reveals. The heading for this section, "In what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books?", includes several subheadings: introduction and four categories describing participants' responses.

Last, I discuss my analysis of the nonfiction books the participants wrote and illustrated with photographs. The heading for this final section of this chapter is "How do participants use what they know about nonfiction as they write their own books?" This section begins with an introduction and then an in-depth analysis of four of the ten books written and illustrated by participants in this research. Each of these four is distinctive because of the topic, the overall design, or the steps in the creative process through which the participant/author(s) worked. I describe the other six books in lesser detail.
In this last section, I will also discuss data from the exit interviews. The exit interviews were conducted with only the 11 participants who completed and published their nonfiction/informational books. In these exit interviews, participants seem to elaborate or to expand what they know about nonfiction/informational books. Secondly, because these exit interviews came after the participants had finished their books, some of their answers to my questions reflect on their books and the process of creating them.

My analysis shows that the findings that emerged from data are consistent across the seven sources.

Data Sources

Small-group discussions. I collected data from audio taped small-group discussions during which students talked about the books they read. Twelve discussions were taped between September 18, 1997 and November 25, 1997. Eighteen seventh grade students participated in one or more of these discussions with me. The number of times each student met for a small-group discussion ranged from one to six (see Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Times in a Discussion Group</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Identified</th>
<th>Unidentified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Small Group Discussions
For these discussions, I met most often with the eight participants whom the classroom teacher and I had originally selected. Of the five students with whom I met only once as part of a small-group discussion, four were identified as gifted, but not part of the initial group of eight. Of the 18 students who participated in a small-group discussion, 14 were identified as gifted in language arts.

These discussion groups met in the school library. The library was not used by other students during this time, because the school aide who supervises the library was at lunch. There was very little to distract the participants, and we did not interrupt anyone's use of this room. At the beginning of the language arts class period, I went to the classroom and took students to the library. We left after their teacher read aloud to the class and gave any directions for assignments for the next day. I chose students for these groups in four ways: (a) how often I'd already met with them; (b) whether or not they were identified as gifted; (c) by gender—I met with a group of females once and a group of males once; and (d) by what I knew about how they interacted with each other. The membership of the groups changed. The least number of students in a discussion group was three and the most was seven.

I varied the questions that I used during these discussions. I started by using questions similar to those I had given students to guide their written responses in their reading logs:

1. how did they choose the book they were reading
2. what questions occurred to them as they read
3. how did they cope with these questions—did they try to locate answers in the text or the illustrations
4. what were the strengths and weaknesses of the books they read
It became evident to me that a specific set of questions would not facilitate the interaction and spontaneity that I was seeking in these discussions. I changed my approach. I started the discussions by asking the participants what they were reading and then asking them to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of their books. I asked other questions during the discussion to extend participants' answers or for clarification. I tried to let the participants' observations guide the discussion.

The discussions were lively. As would be expected from most adolescents identified as verbally gifted, participants were able and usually anxious to talk about what they were reading. The willingness of these students to read the books and to talk with me was very evident and gratifying to me as the researcher. I credit this to the students' knowing at the beginning what my expectations of them were, that they chose to participate, and my flexible time table for this research. I believe that the data shows that the unique features of the six books chosen for this research, which identifies these books as literature, was a determining factor in the participants' enthusiasm.

Reading logs. Any student in the class who wanted one was given a small (7" x 5"), spiral bound notebook to use as he/she read books from my set of six. I specifically chose the small size notebook because I thought it gave the impression of short answers. Also, there seems to be something intimate about small journals. With the notebook was a list of questions. I wanted readers to write about their thoughts as they were reading and after they finished a book. These are the questions:

What questions come to you as you read?
What questions come to you as you look at the illustrations?
How do you look for answers in the text?
What do you look for in the illustrations to answer your questions?
What if you don't get the answers from the text or the illustrations?
After you have finished the book:
What are the strengths of the book?
What are the weaknesses of the book?
Would you recommend this book to someone else? Why?
If you could step into one of the photographs in the book — go back in time and actually be there—what question(s) would you ask?

I asked students who were keeping reading logs to read and answer my questions for any three of the six nonfiction/informational books I brought. Table 4.2 indicates the number of books to which students responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number of Books Considered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Reading Logs

I collected 11 logs on November 4, 1997, ten weeks after school started. Nine of the 11 students who kept a reading log were identified as gifted. One
reading log was given to me without a name. Table 4.3 indicates how many students responded to each book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Books Included in Reading Logs</th>
<th>Responses from:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anastasia's Album</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over the Top</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Fire</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am An American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphan Train Rider</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing Up in Coal Country</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Books Included in Reading Logs

There were 28 responses in the reading logs, a total of 16 responses from girls (F), 10 from boys (M), and there were two responses in the journal with no name (?). In general, I found the responses in the reading logs to be limited, not expansive answers to the questions. While the written responses provided insight into what these readers thought about the books they read, having the oral discussions that included more of the students in this seventh grade language arts class broadened my data base. Having multiple sources increased the amount of data, giving me a richer vein to mine.

Student produced video. A student produced video tape occurred near the end of the school year, May 29, 1998. Each morning students at the middle school produce a TV broadcast. The students who participate come about an
hour before school starts to tape the broadcast, which is shown only in their
building. The students write the script, interview other students, and operate the
video camera and equipment that transmits the program to all of the classrooms.
The advisor for this program is a sixth grade language arts teacher. The format
is a morning news program, and is called "Good Morning, Summit Park."

After the participant-written books were finished, I asked the teacher who
developed and supervises this morning TV program if she would like to have
students with whom I worked talk about their books on "Good Morning, Summit
Park." She agreed right away. Two of the participants were members of the
program's production staff, so I asked if they were interested. They thought it
was a good idea. I had one conversation with the young woman who would be
doing the interview, to talk about the kinds of questions she thought she would
ask. I asked for volunteers from the author/illustrators. At that point the
students assumed ownership of the broadcast. Five of the participants took part
in the broadcast: the interviewer; three students who talked about their books;
and the person who operated the video recorder. The program aired on a Friday
morning, and I was given a copy of the tape.

My observations and conversations with other adults who had contact
with the participants. I incorporated my observations of the participants in the
classroom and when they were with me into my narrative of this research. Other
adults who interacted with the participants were: their classroom teacher; the
principal of their middle school; the Communications and Community Relations
Manager who was interviewed by one of the participants for her book; the
woman who helped the participants bind their books; and the District Gifted
Coordinator. I have included data collected from my conversations with these
people to frame the context in which the participants worked.
Exit interviews. I interviewed each of the participants after their books were finished either individually (5) or in pairs (3). These sessions were audio taped. I used a conference room in the office area of the school, and took students from their language arts class for these exit interviews. I interviewed the students on six different days (see Table 4.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 28,</td>
<td>Guy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30,</td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4,</td>
<td>Sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4,</td>
<td>Jeanne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25,</td>
<td>Alan and Marge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 28,</td>
<td>Linda and Helen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 4,</td>
<td>Kristi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 4,</td>
<td>Jake and Lily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Exit interviews

These questions were used for the exit interviews:

1. Who is the audience for your book?
2. What will this audience find interesting about your book?
3. What do you know about nonfiction books now that you didn't know before?
4. What parts of the process of creating your book are you most likely to use again?
Interest inventory. This is a nine-question student survey prepared by the classroom teacher. The questions on the survey were adapted from Susan Winebrenner's *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom* (1992). The classroom teacher asked students to complete this survey at the beginning of the school year in order to compile information about her language arts students. She shared the surveys from the students in the Accelerated Studies Program language arts class with me. I recognized that the participants' answers to survey questions could aid in developing a profile of the participants and that their answers could be incorporated with other data in my research. The items on the classroom teacher-made survey are found in Appendix C.

Student written and illustrated informational books. Twelve of the students started writing their own nonfiction books, and 11 completed their books. Two of the 11 worked together, so there were ten books written by the participants and illustrated with photographs which they took. By the second
week in October, I knew who was planning to write a book and the subject/topic of the book.

During the first six weeks of school, I read an illustrated book, *The Worry Stone* (Dengler, 1996), and discussed with the students how readers read the narrative from the art, from the text, and from the union of the two. I also used *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse* (Freedman, 1996) with the class to discuss features of a nonfiction/informational text that might be different from a picturebook or novel. During this time, I had begun the small-group discussions, and we were talking about how the books they were reading were organized and how the photographs in those books contributed to the information.

My plans for collecting data from each of the sources were that participants could respond in varied ways to the books they were reading. I also saw their reading, writing, and oral discussions as contributing to the process of the participants creating their own books. I anticipated that their books would reveal ideas these seventh grade gifted language arts students held about nonfiction/informational books.

In what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books?

Introduction. This section is divided into four subsections, one subsection for each of the four categories of responses I found in my data. I discuss the participants' responses as these responses create and develop a pattern around the nucleus of each category. The responses of the middle school readers who participated in my research fall into four large categories or types. The data analysis indicated that these middle school students, who are identified as academically gifted in language arts, were aware of and could describe their
experiences with a particular set of six nonfiction/informational books. Their observable responses can be grouped by these four categories:

1. text and graphic design features of the books they read
2. feelings of individuals in the books and their own feelings as they read about these individuals
3. characteristics of nonfiction/informational books
4. specific and interesting information from photographs used as illustration in nonfiction/informational books

To represent these four categories, I have grouped the participants' responses as answers to four questions:

1. What about the design and organization of the books they read, caught the attention of these middle school gifted readers?
2. What do participants say about the feelings of characters in the books and about feelings or emotions they (participants) experienced?
3. What concepts of nonfiction do these middle school readers hold?
4. How do the participants describe what they see in photographs in the nonfiction books they read?

A summary concludes the analysis of the data in each category.

What about the design and organization of the books they read, caught the attention of these middle school gifted readers? The first aspect of design and organization that these participants discussed was visible features: e.g., the cover, title, parts of the book. I asked the students in the small group discussions (SG) and as they wrote in their reading logs (RL), to tell me how they chose the books they read.

Gene: I've chosen my books because (of) the covers, most of the time, and I'll look through the book, skim the pages real fast and see the
illustrations and what the text is laid out like and see all the
different pictures, and if they're good, then I'll pick the book. (SG-
October 28)

Karl thinks that the book's cover should tell what the book's about. John,
Marge, Guy, and Lily call attention to the cover during four other discussions.

Karl: Otherwise they wouldn't have one. That's why it's there, it's kind of
there to whet your appetite for the rest of the book, and you think,
"Hey, this is a good book." You know, "I'm going to buy it and read
it." (SG-November 5)

John: I think in a nonfiction book, the way the cover looks and the way
you get the picture of it, because you know if the cover, if it just
said, you know, The Great Fire and it was a picture of a flame, I
wouldn't be as interested as I would because it's all just this huge
illustration on the front and back (of the city burning). (SG-
October 7)

Marge: . . . I chose the book because I like the artwork on the cover. (SG-
September 18)

Guy: I just kind of looked at the cover, basically, well, I guess they made
it attractive, and it looked kind of interesting, also bright colors.
(SG-September 22)

Lily: . . . I chose the book because in the picture on the cover, it looks
like she's wearing old fashioned clothes and, of course, the picture
is black and white, so I just thought it would be interesting to read
about an older life-style, or type of life-style. (SG-September 18)

Sue, Karl, Jerry, and Marge are talking about *Orphan Train Rider* during a
small group discussion on November 5, 1997.
unidentified: They want to make the book look interesting.
Sue: It just seems weird that it's all about Lee but Lee isn't on the cover.
Karl: The whole message of the book was that I think orphan trains were a bad idea overall. But why, if that's true, why are they showing like a little happy boy on the cover?
Jerry: Yeah, he should be sad face.
Karl: Yeah, it should be something dark and gray and mysterious.
Jerry: It shows him like taking a part (The picture is a studio photograph and I think Jerry means that the boy in the photo is posed.)
Karl: Well, a cover is like a little short summary, if you think about it. It's like a little short summary of the book. So why are they making him look happy?
Marge: This cover's very backwards . . . it's not the right kid. (Marge knows that the book's about Lee and the cover photograph is of Lee's brother, Leo.) They're not telling the whole, I know the cover is not supposed to tell you the whole story or anything, but they are not even telling what the whole book's about.
Mary: On the back (the back of the book jacket of Orphan Train Rider) it tells you what the book's going to be about, though kind of, cause it says . . . (I have her read the handbill advertising that orphans are available reproduced on the back of the dust jacket.) (SG-November 5)

Jake notices something else on the cover of the book he's reading which tells him about the book during a small-group discussion on September 18. He refers to the book cover's appearance again on September 30.

Jake: It has this sticker thing that says Newbery Honor Book.
researcher: And what does that say to you?

Jake: That it's a good book. (SG-September 18)

Jake: When I got The Great Fire, I just looked for one that looked the best, and I got The Great Fire. But, when I was finished with it, there weren't really many books (available to choose from), so I just chose Over the Top of the World because it looked interesting. (SG-September 30)

Kristi credits choices to a book's title on the cover.

Kristi: The title really caught my attention because it said Over the Top of the World and I like---

researcher: Did it put a picture in your mind?

Kristi: Yeah. (SG-October 28)

The book's cover (not the book jacket), endpapers, and color as design decisions are noted by Lily, Marge, Jake, Bob, Jeannine, Karl, and Alan in different small group discussions.

Lily: In Anastasia's Album it's just the title (on the hard cover). It's a plain cover. (She means one color, red.)

Marge: It kind of looks more like an album.

researcher: And what about the endpapers for Anastasia's Album?

Marge: It just looks like wallpaper.

Jake: Mine (the hard cover of The Great Fire) has a molded fire engine, fire pump thingy and two horses pulling it.

researcher: ... how do the endpaper ... why do you think they chose this color? Or, how does it fit with other colors that they've chosen, either in the book or on the book jacket, how does it all kind of work together?
Jake: Well, it's mostly or all black and red. And black, I think, show what color everything is after it's been burned, and red is the color of fire. (SG-September 18)

During a small group discussion on September 25, Marge and Bob cite Anastasia's Album. They talk about how the design features of the book convince them of the accuracy of the information in the book.

Marge: About the endpapers and things. The pattern shown here is the same as in Anastasia's real album. So, this is exactly what her album looked like . . .

Marge: This was in her album, too. (She's referring to the use of borders in the book and in Anastasia's photograph album.)

Bob: It's like they're trying to relive what her actual album looked like. (SG-September 25)

I'm talking with Jeanne and Jake about colors used in The Great Fire and Over the Top in a small-group discussion on September 30.

Researcher: Tell me how, whether or not you think that was a good choice—in light of the colors used on the cover of the book and what you know the book was about.

Jake: Well, I think it's pretty good because ice in the evening is blueish and that kind of water.

Researcher: What about the painting—on this book jacket (The Great Fire).

Jeanne: All of the colors are very bright—reds, oranges, yellows—and The Top of the World has more blues and white.

Researcher: . . . what do you think that book designer's purpose was in choosing brown here and another set of designers chose blue for Over the Top?
Jake: On *Over the Top*, blue is kind of a mellow color, and it would get you relaxed because the book is relaxed, it's just ice and snow. (SG-September 30)

Karl and Marge talk about the dust jacket for *Orphan Train Rider* on November 5.

researcher: ... it's yellow, kind of a pleasing color.

Karl: But this shade of yellow, it's like—

Marge: Pukey yellow.

Karl: It looks like it, it makes the book look old. So, that kind of says that it happened a long time ago and the black and white photograph and the old-looking junky train thing. (SG-November 5)

Alan notes the effect of color during a discussion on October 23.

Alan: Well, I think that one of the strengths of *The Great Fire* is, they have their pictures or drawings in a beige or dark brown and white and I guess it sort of expresses how the sadness is going on as the great fire like demolishes the majority of Chicago.

researcher: ... then you see the color—

Alan: Expresses how the feelings are in the book. (SG-October 23)

John commented about the contribution of color and the repeated use of a steam powered fire engine motif in the design of *The Great Fire* in a small group discussion on October 7.

John: ... on every, I'm sure it's every chapter, there's some little picture on a lot of pages

researcher: ... where else do you see this same picture?

John: I'm pretty sure I saw it on all the other beginnings of the chapters.
researcher: Have you looked at the cover of the book? Take the book jacket off and look at the cover.

John: There it is! . . . Cool! And I like how that's in gold.

researcher: What else?

John: I think the way—what are these called?

researcher: Endpapers.

John: They're brown and everything which is like the color of ashes and all the text was, I don't see it as exactly like a black type, more blackish brown.

researcher: I think that's called sepia. (SG-October 7)

In two different discussions, September 25, and October 7, Jake, John, Sue, and Guy call attention to the grid maps that showed the fire's movement, a distinctive design feature in The Great Fire.

Jake: . . . well, it doesn't show all of Chicago, which I think isn't very good, because I want to see the whole Chicago.

researcher: Tell me what you mean about the whole Chicago.

Jake: Because I want to see how big it (the area of the fire) is in relation to the rest of the city, how big the fire was.

Jake also wants directional clarification on the grid maps.

Jake: . . . another weakness is . . . it doesn't say which way is north, but from my point of view north is this way . . . in the text it refers to north and south of the fire itself, but on the map to see what way is north . . . you have to turn it sideways. (SG-September 25)

John: Another of my favorite things is, in the beginning I was just looking through the book, I was looking for different things, little maps and everything of Chicago and like how far the fire spread by each hour
or so. You know, how it just started in a little part and grew all the way out to, like this. So I thought that was pretty cool how they had that.

Sue: One thing that's kind of interesting is to look at the map, too . . . each square is a city block and that's like "Oh, my gosh, it went that far!"

Guy: The one thing I noticed about the maps, like at the end, the last map in the book . . . it showed the complete spread of the fire . . .

(SG-October 7)

The participants talked about the prologue in books they read, about captions for illustrations in the books, and how authors sequenced text.

Gene: And then you've got, the prologue is the story, the story before the real story. (SG-October 28)

Gene then told me that he skipped over the prologue of *Over the Top of the World* and I asked him why.

Gene: He's (the author) probably expecting you to read it at the end of the book so you know who all the people are and what they do so then you know all the stuff about them.

I asked Kristi, who was part of this discussion group, if she'd read the prologue.

Kristi: I read it all before I started.

researcher: What do you think the advantage is to reading it all before you start?

Kristi: You know, in the pictures you know what their names are and you kind of, in the prologue, it gives you a sense of what kinds of stuff they're facing. (October 28)
Gene seems to see the prologue as incidental to the rest of the book. Krisiti seems to know that the author puts information in this part as an introduction to what's to come.

The participants expected more explanation from captions in some of the books they read. They seem to think that the author is responsible for making clear what information is in the photographs. Marge and Lily shared this concern in a discussion on September 25.

Marge: . . . a weakness (of Anastasia's Album) I notice was that the captions were very confusing, and I think it would have been better to put the caption directly under or next to the corresponding picture because I couldn't, I was having trouble matching the pictures with the captions . . . And then there's like those ones where they're about 20 pictures on a page, and then they have the caption at the bottom corner, and they try to direct you, and I got all the pictures confused, and they didn't make any sense. So, it took me about 20 minutes to figure out which picture was which.

Lily: There is an example in here. I'm finding it, where I guess I could say that it's where they're bald. It does not show what their names are. (SG-September 25)

Lily had raised this same concern in a discussion on September 18, 1997, as did Karl and Kristi in separate discussions on October 23, and October 28.

Lily: There's one picture I don't understand, though. It's where they all have measles. It didn't say which one's which . . . and they're all about the same height.

researcher: . . . how would you figure out which girl was which? What else could you do?
Lily: Well, I was thinking, she has more of like a curve (I think Lily is
talking about a more mature female figure) . . .

researcher: Could you compare it with another photograph?

Lily: I've tried, like this one. Their noses were different.  
(SG-September 18)

Karl: There's a lot of pictures and I guess because it's supposed to be 
like a photo album (Anastasia's Album), kind of, but I don't think 
there was, there wasn't enough explanation for the pictures. I 
mean, they had little captions, and they said where they were and 
stuff, but they didn't say why they were doing or if there was a 
reason behind it or anything. (SG-October 23)

Kristi: A weakness of Growing Up in Coal Country would be that they 
have pictures, but in the text it doesn't really tell much about the 
pictures, and the captions really don't tell much about them either.  
(SG-October 28)

Guy says that the captions help him when he's making a choice of books 
to read.

Guy: I guess the information book like this, I look through all of the book 
and look at the pictures. I guess that kind of helps me choose a 
book. I mean, I think that a nonfiction book generally shows off the 
pictures. I mean, that helps illustrate, and I try to look for a good 
job in photography . . . it's best just to look at the pictures and read 
some of the captions. (SG-October 7)

The participants show awareness of the way the text was organized to 
combine information about individuals and the broader topic of the book and to 
show sequence of events. In Orphan Train Rider the author alternates between
information about the boy and information about orphan trains. Jeanne and Sue talk about the way the text is organized in a small-group discussion on October 7.

Jeanne: I like the way that it gives information along with the story and about orphanages and about the orphan trains, and just like why some of the children ended up being orphans.

researcher: Would you consider that parallel information to the story?

Jeanne: Yeah, kind of.

Sue: . . . I noticed that feature too, but I really didn't like it. I mean, I like finding out information, but how they have it is one chapter is about Lee, he's the boy in the story, and the next one will be just like an informational chapter. I kind of didn't like it broken up that way. I think I kind of would have liked it better if they just had the information with the story, just because I like the story alot better than the information. (SG-October 7)

In the discussion on October 23, Karl, Alan, Edie, and Mary talk about how information is organized in books they read.

researcher: When you think about information, other information books that you've read, are there other ways that an author organizes information, besides chronologically?

Karl: By importance of events.

Alan: I've seen where they show important events, but it gives, like in biographies that I've read, it has, their main achievement is like the first chapter and then it goes in their childhood, and then a few chapters later, when it gets to the main—what they really did big— then they really go deep into that using details. However, in the
first chapter, they just give a basic outline of what happened or what they did.

Alan: (discussing *The Great Fire*) A weakness, I had two weaknesses. A weakness in the book is that it keeps going from people to people to different people—their points of view—and it gets really, I guess you could say, confusing, because first you talk about someone and then they change it and then they go back to that person and they go back to someone else and then they go different places, and it's really hard to follow what's going on. I don't really think that he should have—or whoever did this—should have like a closeup on anyone.

researcher: How many people are you following, through the fire?

Alan: I'm following about four people and that can get really hard to follow . . . One is a twelve year old girl who lives far away from the fire. One is, has, is visiting a sister-in-law. One is where the fire started, and it tells what's going on with him, how he starts to put it out and how he's trying to help the other people put it out. And, the other person is a news reporter. And, that's all I have, that's all I've seen right now.

Alan seems to be saying that the author asking readers to follow four characters who experienced the Chicago Fire under different circumstances was challenging, but his comments reflect that he's managed the challenge pretty well. In two other discussions, October 28, and October 7, this organizational feature of *The Great Fire* was noted.

Edie: On this book, I like it because they have like a whole bunch of different stories going on, on about different people's lives and
what they're trying to do in the fire, to get away from it. (SG-October 28)

Sue: . . . and one other thing I liked about The Great Fire is how it followed different people during the book and it told what happened to them and 'cause it makes it more interesting to me than just reading about a fire, but when I read about the individual people it makes it more real. (SG-October 7)

Marge made these observations about The Great Fire on October 13.

Marge: . . . with Anastasia's Album and The Great Fire in the beginning it's different because at the end is when the tragedy happens (in Anastasia's Album), but in The Great Fire they just bring it on in the beginning, but they start out really calmly in all the books and then all the sudden it kind of hits . . . at the end of Anastasia's Album they're just, all of the sudden you hear about the war going on—it doesn't really affect them other than the fact that he was dethroned as king—and then they have to go down (to the basement) and then all of the sudden you hear, you find out that they're killed. And here (in The Great Fire) they're talking about a guy having a party, then all of the sudden Chicago's on fire.

Marge is saying that in both books ordinary, usual, everyday events surrounded by a kind of calmness precedes the climatic event in each book: the assassination and the fire.

researcher: Does that make the story more interesting, does it hold your attention longer?

Marge: I think it grabs it faster and keeps it there because you wonder if there's going to be something else that comes up that quickly again
later on in the story or if it's going to die down, or what happens next. (SG-October 13)

On this same day, I ask Marge:

researcher: I think, Marge, you said that you found Anastasia's to be a more personal story . . . How do you feel about the personal stories in The Great Fire?

Marge: . . . it seems like they're almost overshadowed by the fire. It seems like the star of the story is not the people that it involves, but the fire and it just seems like they're not, you're not getting to know them, you're getting to know the chaotic atmosphere, not them. (SG-October 13)

The over-arching story of the Chicago Fire surrounds the separate stories of four individuals experiencing the fire. The organization has brought the book's dominant character, the fire, into focus for Marge.

These four participants discuss the organization of Anastasia's Album on October 23:

researcher: How long a time period is covered in Anastasia's Album?
Alan: I'd say about fifteen years or fourteen years.
Edie: It's about seventeen.
Karl: Yeah, she died when she was seventeen . . . It's kind of like in a time sequence. It shows from the very beginning when Anastasia was born to the very end when they killed her. So it's kind of like a timeline with pictures and words. (SG-October 23)

During this same discussion (October 23) I asked Mary about I Am An American and Edie comments on the organization of Anastasia's Album.

researcher: How much time is covered in yours, Mary?
Mary: It's really just the year, 1942 and it goes month by month . . .

researcher: I was wondering if there's any way that the authors could have conveyed information differently than chronologically. Would it have been as strong a book if they'd organized it another way.

Edie: I don't think Anastasia's Album would because it's a description of somebody's life, and if you don't tell it from the beginning and start from say when she was ten, then it just doesn't work, it just doesn't fit together well. It would just kind of be going back and forth, and it would probably get very confusing with what age she is and what's happening.

researcher: Is there suspense, is there suspense created by keeping it in chronological order?

Edie: Well, not really because you don't exactly know what's happening unless you already know what the book is about . . . So I guess if it wasn't in chronological order then there probably would be suspense and that might make it a stronger book or in some way strong. But I still think I like it better in chronological order. (SG-October 23)

Here Edie seems to be interpreting "suspense" as a kind of confusion, but she thinks the straightforward approach is best when telling about someone's life. Edie expressed the same opinions about the chronological organization of Anastasia's Album in her reading log. She wrote,

"Another strength is the way that it is put together. The 'happenings' in Anastasia's life are ordered as they would be in real life. In other words, chronological order and that makes the book easier to understand. It also keeps up the suspense which is good because it keep you reading and 'wanting' more.
You have to know what's going to happen." In the reading log she seems to define "suspense" as the pull that keeps a reader involved. Either use of "suspense" for Edie seems to imply she is intrigued if the author piques her interest in what will happen next.

**Summary**

The participants in this research clearly expressed what they believe the cover of a book should bring to the reader. The visual elements of the book's cover should combine to indicate what the book is about. The book cover is like a short summary of the book and the title should catch the reader's attention. The appearance of the book's cover—the color, the art, the title—should be appealing, attractive, and accurate.

The discussion about the cover of *Orphan Train Rider* revealed how discerning these gifted middle school readers can be. They recognized that the photograph on the cover was not of the boy whose story *Orphan Train Rider* is. They matched information from the text with information from the photographs. They saw this discrepancy as a design error, and were concerned that this photograph on the cover would mislead a reader about the lives of orphans moved out of eastern cities to families in the west. These were critical readers using the whole book for information.

They expect the design features to convey assurance that the information inside the book is accurate. Elements such as endpapers, cover art, dominant color used in the book should match the theme, mood, and times of the book's setting.

These readers could recognize different ways in which nonfiction/informational can be organized and that a particular organizational structure best fits a particular story/topic better than another. They cited
chronological order, e.g. *Anastasia's Album*; alternating kinds of information, e.g. about the boy and about orphan train as a solution for children without families; telling about the same event from different points of view, e.g. *The Great Fire*; and focusing on an important event or accomplishment in someone's life.

These middle school readers showed awareness of how nonfiction/informational text works. They demonstrated that they understood that information comes from multiple features of the books they were reading—captions, illustrations, design elements. They were able to use these all to make meaning.

What participants said about characters in the books and feelings or emotions they (participants) experienced as they read

The data shows that feelings or emotions that these participants registered as they talked about the subjects in the nonfiction books used for this research can be grouped as three expressions: (a) the reader joins as a partner in the action; (b) the reader understands what the character is experiencing; (c) the reader seeks more information about the character's emotions.

**The reader joins as a partner in the action.** During small-group discussions the participants seemed to move themselves into incidents in the books they read. The students explained and accounted for the actions of the characters and assumed a kind of experienced authority as they emotionally joined the characters. After Guy talks about his reaction to the possibility of the explorers in *Over the Top* stranded if the ice should break up, Jake provides a pragmatic view of dealing with this.

Jake: It didn't really occur to me (to feel "scary," Guy's word) except that it said, in one of his journal entries, that they were afraid that if the ice broke while they were asleep and they got stranded away from
each other, it would be like hard to save all of them. Because if each of their tents were on a separate piece of ice and they all floated away, there's only one thingy that can tell where the exact latitude and longitude that you're at. So they'd have to get a helicopter to save them and go search around for the other tents. (October 21)

Guy becomes a partner in the action when he talks about the effects of working in the Arctic environment.

Guy: That's the other thing I also got from the book, *Over the Top of the World*, is the feeling that, I mean here in Ohio you think of say a 40 degree temperature is pretty cold . . . and like a 15 to 10 degree temperature outside it's really cold. I mean, people complain about that, but then when you read this book, and you get the feeling that the average temperature is like minus 40 and how like the warmest temperature it ever got was like . . . 40 degrees or so was the warmest and this was at the very end of the journey. You think about how hard it would have been just to keep warm. And to have to keep warm and to have to keep yourself from not being frostbite and not getting cold and to still have to use all your power to pull these sleds and dogs and all that, it would be hard. (October 21)

Seven participants, two males and five females (Karl, Jerry, Jeanne, Mary, Linda, Sue, and Marge), met with me on November 5, 1997 to talk about *Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story*. During this audio taped conversation Jeanne seemed to take the role of one who keeps the facts straight. As such she spoke up when she could clarify specifics from the text. Linda and Mary contributed less to the discussion than Karl, Jerry, Sue, and
Marge. Karl and Sue were the strongest defenders of the rights of the orphans who were depicted in *Orphan Train Rider*.

Karl: Yeah, I know. But that's, it's like they were orphans and that's all they were.

?: They were like just things. And they were stupid. (I think this speaker means that the children were treated as though they could not or should not have a say in what affected them.)

Jerry: And they didn't have--

Karl: Their (the adults) object was to get rid of them.

Marge: Well, I mean, I think maybe they looked at it like this kid comes from a no-good family because of his parents were sick and they didn't have enough money to feed themselves and they died or they don't have enough money to feed those kids so they sent them away. So they are probably looking at these kids as, you know, deadbeats because they're thinking of their parents.

Karl: They look up to a parent—people look up to their parents—and their parents are deadbeats themselves as Marge put it. I looked real close at the picture, and it's only the adults who are smiling. (I think Karl is talking about the children's self-perception.)

Marge: You know what. Also a lot of these parents did this because they thought it was for their (the children) own good, not because they didn't want their kids, maybe it was for their good.

?: A lot of the parents really loved them.

Karl: Some of them (the children) actually got better homes.

?: Some got worse.
Marge: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, they wanted more for their kids. So maybe that's why they put them on there or something, 'cause it's kind of like they treated them like they were generic. (Marge seems to mean that there wasn't attention to individual situations.)

Sue: One thing that they (the narrator in the text) were saying, they were kind of outcasts back then. They like, they were prejudiced against everybody . . . not only were they prejudiced against like Blacks, they were also prejudiced against Jews, different religions, different other skin colors. Anyone who was like a little teeny bit different, they didn't like. And like a lot of times, nobody liked orphans. Like if you were an orphan, they'd shun you your whole life.

The participants seem to extend the text and the information they take from the photographs to include what they know about the effects of ill-informed opinions about groups outside the mainstream of power. They join the author in explaining how orphans were treated. Karl continues the explanation.

Karl: It's like these kids are the bad people in the story. It's like they're the villains is the message that the adults are giving. Like, these guys, you know, how good can they be because they came from parents who were just, you know, really losers, but, some of these kids he says here, some of them actually had potential to do really good things and some of them he said, they could have become scientists or something like that . . . (I think Karl is mistakenly referring to the author as he. The author is Andrea Warren.)

Sue picks up on Karl's assessment.

Sue: The reason they probably wanted to do that is those kids had just stayed in the city, they would have never went to school, and never
gotten a good job or anything, and when they went out to the West, they had a chance to be something . . .

Sue and Karl believe that the conditions for the children sent west on the orphan train would have improved if some things were changed:

Sue: I mean I think that it really could have been better if they would've done it differently, like told the kids where they were going, what was going to happen. And then like did background checks on the (adoptive) parents to make sure that they were going to be good parents and treat them like their own . . .

Karl: I don't agree with telling the kids where they were going because some of the kids were really reluctant . . . they didn't want to go anywhere . . . I agree with the background check with the (adoptive) parents . . .

Sue adds to the group's idea that children on the orphan train were deprived of rights.

Sue: Another thing that they could have done better is like they would have them, just kind of like when they would sell slaves. They'd have them stand there and everybody would come and look at them and pick over them . . . they treated them like they weren't a person when choosing them. They didn't care about brothers and sisters being together . . .

The group pursues that comparison of selling slaves with sending children from the large eastern cities west to be adopted. Karl recalls something he's heard.

Karl: . . . there's this little saying, "He who ignores history is destined to repeat it." I think that's happening right here, because they're
treating these kids kind of like slaves. They're pushing them around and giving them stuff that they don't want. I mean, a parent is like a really, the first kind of role model a kid looks up to, and they're giving these guys bad parents . . . So, it's kind of like a comparison. We look at ourselves today and we have it a whole lot better off. I mean, even the poorest kids, some of them are better than these people were treated. They had a few adults on the train of about 100 kids, and they got to push them around. So really I don't think the kids' feelings and emotions were considered when they did this . . .

When Guy was discussing Growing Up in Coal Country (October 21) he cited things that he believed showed that the miners "... were treated completely unfair." He compared workers' pay then and now. He said, "... the (coal) companies held all the money and they were treating the miners and their families completely unfair . . . say a person earned 45 dollars in one work period. They might end up coming back with no money because of the amount of money they owed for the rent of the houses, or shacks I guess, and the company store."

The reader understands what the character is experiencing. The participants seemed to appreciate what characters in the books they read were feeling. The participants could identify the emotions, and they could relate what they thought the characters were feeling to their own feelings in similar life experiences.

Lily, Marge, and Jake talk about Susan Campbell Bartoletti's account of boys who worked in the coal mines of eastern Pennsylvania in this excerpt from a small group discussion on October 9, 1997.
researcher: Lily . . . what (was it) you found disturbing about Growing Up in Coal Country?

Lily: Ok. Well, in this book, it makes a little rhyme about a kid who died. It says,

Mickey Pick-Slate, early and late,
That was this poor little breaker boy's fate;
A poor simple woman at the breaker sill waits,
To take home her Mickey Pick-Slate. (p. 22)

Because she went crazy after he died, she just kept waiting. She'd come every day after closing time and look for her little boy.

These three continue talking about how often death and injury were a part of the lives of these boy coal miners.

Lily: An investigator who investigated this other kid's death, (the kid) tried to oil the machinery when he like got tangled and stuff, . . . says, "Boys will be boys and must play unless they are held under by strict discipline." That's what an investigator said! Oh, that just sort of freaked me out!

Marge: You have to kind of wonder about the people that lived with it. Did they really think, it's as "Oh well," as it seems or do they go home and dwell about it . . . if they went home if they got upset about it or if they just didn't tell?

Guy and Bob react to the assassination of the Romanov family. Guy seems to appreciate the useless loss of lives and Bob points out that the monarchy and the rule of the people could not coexist.

Guy: I thought it was sad that the whole family was killed. I know, maybe the Czar may have done some bad things but even he
didn't deserve to die, but they killed the whole family, all the innocent—. I mean, her brother wasn't that old. I mean, he was barely a teenager when he was killed.

Bob: Yeah, but if he hadn't been killed, then he would have lived on and been the next Czar.

Guy: I think it was kind of sad that they had to kill the innocents.

researcher: Why, Bob, do you think he would not have become the next Czar?

Bob: Well, I don't know if all those people would let him live. If they won the war and got this democracy, one teenage kid isn't going to stop them—"Oh, I'm going to become the Czar, you can't have this democracy."

researcher: So you think it was unlikely, give the attitude of the Russian people, that the monarchy would have continued?

Guy: I think it was pretty much almost impossible that it would've because, I mean, there was revolution and they were, the family was being pretty much put in sort of prison in all these different houses, so I think there was enough people against them to prevent, you know— (October 21)

During a small group discussion on September 25, 1997, Bob talks about what he inferred about the feelings of Anastasia's parents.

Bob: I felt that the Czar and the Czar's wife, they never seemed happy or anything. They were always kind of really serious, none of them smiled in any of the pictures.

researcher: How do you account for that . . . Why do you think they look so serious? Do you think it's something goin' on in their lives?

Bob: Well, I though they were just afraid to express themselves.
In the small-group discussion on October 21, 1997, four of the boys talked about *Over the Top*. Guy says that he can imagine what the explorers were feeling.

Guy: I thought, I kind of think it would be kind of scary to be them . . . it talked a lot about that you're over pieces of ice, floating in a big ocean, that's all the Arctic is. So you're floating on big pieces of ice and . . . it would be kind of scary to think, what if the ice broke up overnight and your tent went down in the water. What if the ice around you broke, and you were floating on an iceberg like miles from land. I mean that would have to be kind of spooky.

The reader seeks more information about the character's emotion. Participants in the small group discussion on October 13, 1997 were all young women. I told the four students, "I purposefully put all of the women together because I was interested to see if the discussion was in any way different." I asked the participants to "talk about things that are alike in the books you've read (and) something that is unique or sets a book apart . . ."

Lily wanted more information about the feelings of the people about whom she was reading.

Lily: . . . in (Anastasia's Album) it would like say . . . they were nurses like nurse prac-, they were nurses and they will like treat people who were sick, but they (the author) didn't like say any, like special relationships they had with any of the patients, or anything like that.

Marge is also interested in the relationship between characters and others around the characters.
Marge: I noticed in *Anastasia's Album* they told a lot more about like their relationships, like they said that the French teacher was this person's favorite and that, you know, the language arts teacher was one person's favorite, but in *Coal Country* . . . it seems like they just kind of state the facts and move on, they don't get into that like they were friends with the person that was the boss of anything. They go really into it, and I like that in *Anastasia's Album*. (October 13)

What concepts of nonfiction do these middle school readers hold?

Nonfiction/informational books contain facts. The participants have certain understandings or expectations of nonfiction/informational literature. This was expressed in their oral discussions and shown in the books they wrote.

John expects authors of nonfiction to provide information, and he expects the information to grab his attention.

John: I expect information, maybe it's not information in a boring way, like social studies books or something like that, but maybe in a more interesting way—like *The Great Fire*, for example. (November 25)

Lily recognizes that nonfiction books present facts, but she'd like more information in some of the books she read for this research.

Lily: Well, the books I've read, they've just stated a fact, but they don't follow it up very much. Like in *I Am An American* (Stanley, 1994), they say that they had five kids, but they don't tell who they were, like how old they were when they had the kids or anything . . . (October 13)

Lily: In this one, *Growing Up in Coal Country* (Bartoletti, 1996), . . . is just like says the, like that they died and their arms were cut off, but
it doesn't tell like why. It tells why, but not exactly how it happened for each one. Because I think there, 'cause there were a lot of things that happened like that so (it would) probably be hard, but it (would) still be good if they made more cases, cases of it.

(October 13)

Lily and Marge are talking about the miners and their families being dependent on the mining companies for housing and on the company store for other things they needed (Growing Up in Coal Country).

Lily: It says they live, they worked in the mine and the people would, they have to pay to work there, to pay to work in the mine, to get money, then they'd buy it from the store, who would, like, pay it back to the owner. So, they got to live on this land for free, but they would take in boarders, and it doesn't say who this, who the boss was, but this guy, his name is Edward Monahan, he returned from his shift at the mine, he discovered his house had been torn down because the coal operator had decided he needed more space for a culm bank.

researcher: I think in those towns that the company, the mining company owned the houses, and the people rented them.

Lily: And like

Marge: (starting before Lily finishes) That's something they should tell in the book, though.

Lily: Oh, you don't think that it's that clear?

Marge: I think they should explain it, like if not in the whole book, in this section at least.
Nonfiction/informational books leave out the emotion.

Bob: I think in nonfiction books they're just trying to give you just the facts, the things that went on... if they went into detail of how the people felt and what they were doing, they would get off the subject and maybe sound too much like a fiction or a story. I think they are just trying to get across information... Mainly because they're not really trying to tell a story. They might be. They might just be trying to state the facts... (October 9)

Lily shares Bob's perception that the author of *Growing Up in Coal Country* seems detached from the emotional response to the lives of the children she writes about.

researcher: And you were saying that the person, that the author of this book, the emotion doesn't come through.

Lily: Yeah. It's just like he's stating facts and he just goes on with his life after that. (October 9) [The author of the book is a woman, but Lily refers to the author as he in this discussion.]

Authors of nonfiction/informational books have a purpose in mind. The participants seemed to know that authors have a purpose or intent as they write nonfiction books. Readers in my study understood this purpose as the reader making a comparison between her life and the lives and experiences of the people in the books.

Lily: You know how, when kids, they say their parents are mean just 'cause they ground them? Well, just think about how those kids were treated. They were treated bad. When you think that we're treated bad, they were treated much worse. And I think the author
wanted us to know that there were much worse situations.
(November 5)

Marge: I think it's because these kids are our age, and I think maybe it's for us to put a perspective on things, because we're a spoiled generation, and I think that they were what I think every family—it kind of sounds strange—but I think these kids, the way they were treated should be, you know there should be a little bit of that in every house and right now, hardly anyone ever gets treated like this. I think it's just to put it in perspective. (November 5)

Jerry: Well, just to let people know what happened. You know, to let us know that we have a lot better like, you know, a lot, lot better life than these little kids. (November 5)

Sue: One thing, it just kind of like show us about kind of what happened back then to orphans and stuff . . . (November 5)

Karl: Well, it was going back to the whole thing I said a few minutes ago with the thing about history and you're going to repeat it if you ignore it. I think it's like trying to show us . . . what happened and how bad it was so that we don't do it all over again, we can live in a better world. So, it's kind of like a comparison. We look at ourselves today, and we have it a whole lot better off.
(November 5)

Jeanne: Well, I agree with most of the things that have been mentioned, and also, it's just part of history. It has to be recorded somewhere.
(November 5)

Guy: . . . I was reading Coal Country. I find it kind of interesting to compare . . . what happens today versus what happened back then
. . . I mean, back then, that would be like the oil industry of today. I mean, the main source of power . . . the (coal) companies held all the money, and they were treating the miners and their families completely unfair. (October 21)

Nonfiction shares some characteristics of fiction. Three boys who read The Great Fire made similar observations about this book in separate small-group discussions. Each of these readers talked about how The Great Fire is like fiction. They tell what they think nonfiction is, registering their surprise that this particular book has characteristics of fiction they've read.

Jake: (It) was like kind of a fiction story, because it tells what . . . happens and stuff. It's very detailed. (September 18)

Alan: . . . at first I thought it was a fiction book. I didn't know there was even a big fire. I thought this would be something everybody's heard of and I hadn't heard of it . . . Because The Great Fire, you know The Great, when you hear the word "great" you think of, well, I thought of forests, like a big forest fire. But this, it's like somebody, you would have heard about it a long time ago, or you would have heard about it some other time, if it was something this big in Chicago, one of the largest cities in the world. And, it just seemed like it was not true. It just seemed so fictional.

researcher: Fictional, because you weren't aware of the event before you started reading the book?

Alan: Yeah, because this would normally be something everybody's heard of. (October 23)

Guy: I thought the book was kind of fast-paced. It's not, the facts aren't saying such and such happened . . . it's more like a fiction. Instead
of saying blah, blah, blah, blah, blah you know. I mean, you think it's fiction, but it's not. The facts are presented in a good way, and that makes it more enjoyable. (September 22)

In the small-group discussion on October 13, Sue elaborates on what Jeanne is saying about appreciating the inclusion of quotes from primary sources in Orphan Train Rider.

Sue: One thing I think about, it's good when they do that with these kind of books, because I really think it makes them like a fiction book. I mean not really. I mean it's not fiction, but you get to hear of the people, that's kind of how fiction books are, and then when you have like . . . informational books, they're just like information, and fictional books are about people and stuff . . . a lot of these books have, at least all the ones I've read, have done that (I think she's referring to the books for this research that include personal accounts in the text.) Because it makes them like a fiction book only it's real, so it makes it even better.

Sue continues:

You hear about people (in a fiction book) . . . when I read a book it . . . has a main character, and they talk about it (what happens to that character) and usually in an informational book there's just like information, and when they put like the people in these books, I think it just makes them like . . . a fiction book, which makes it a lot funner to read . . .

A nonfiction/informational book has particular parts. For the last (November 25) small group discussion I had with seven of the participants, I asked them to work with a partner. (They chose their partner and met with me)
to talk about the rough drafts of the books they were writing. Before they started
with their partner, I asked them to tell me what questions they were going to ask
about each other's text. The questions they posed are indicators of what they
know about nonfiction/informational books.

Alan: What's your topic?

[Nonfiction/informational books have a designated subject or focus.]

John: What's the idea behind it?

[Authors have purposes for their text.]

Extensions of this question were added by John, Alan, and Sue.

John: How did you get the idea of your topic?

Alan: Why did you get that? Why did you choose that?

Sue: How do you want the people who read it to interpret it? What it's
supposed to be for them, the person who reads it?

Kristi: What are the parts?

[Nonfiction/informational books are divided into sections different from
those usually found in fiction books.]

This question is expanded by Guy and John.

Guy: Like what kind of facts were presented in the thing?

John: Like is there going to be an introduction of any type . . . You know
just to get an idea of the book . . . the basic ideas in the book.

The participants in this group continue to talk about both nonfiction and
fiction having chapters.

John: You know, you don't go through the contents page, table of
contents, and find out, well, there's this part of the chapter . . .

(November 25)

To clarify what John is saying, I ask:
researcher: Is that because in a fictional piece, you usually can't pick and choose to read parts, but you might be able to in a . . .

John: Yeah, like in Jeanne's book. If we want to find out about how her hedgehog eats . . . we can look in the table of contents and find that out, but if you were reading *Who is that Masked Man, Anyway* (Avi, 1992) you can't just look at Chapter 5 and start in. You have no idea about anything or anybody.

Guy suggests that they should question their partner about where illustrations and photographs will be placed in their book. Alan adds that they should talk about what captions they will put with their photographs.

How do the participants describe what they see in photographs in the nonfiction books they read?

In the small-group discussions and in the reading logs, the participants reflected on: features of the photographs, i.e. color and black and white; what they knew about how cameras worked and how photographs were taken; and what knew or wanted to know about the people in the photographs. I have organized my analysis of data pertaining to photographs by grouping the data by the books referred to by the participants—what do the participants have to say about the photographs in each of the six books. A summary of the findings from these participants is given at the end of this section.

*Anastasia's Album.*

researcher: . . . Why are there black and white photographs, and why are there color photographs?

Bob: Those (the color photographs) are professionally done, just to show where they lived a long time ago. And, the black and white,
they might, they’re probably just the photos of her (Anastasia) family that they took with their old camera. (SG-September 18)

Bob: In all the pictures, a lot of them, I felt they were all kind of a little too staged or planned. None of them really showed the family when they were just relaxed or anything. The girls were always dressed up and standing in front of the camera or posing for different things. There were no pictures of what they were actually doing during their day. (SG-September 25)

Marge: Well, I think the color photographs are things today that they actually had. (SG-September 25)

Marge: The thing with it is that when you think back on these kind of things (she means events in the past) you think it’s going to be blurry, like you just get when they show you things in the fifties. Everything’s got block lettering and it’s all fuzzy and the clothes aren’t very bright. So you kind of think that that’s how they saw things, but they really saw it in full color . . . (September 25)

Lily: I’ve always thought that the past was like black and white.

Marge: Yeah.

Bob: That’s because they don’t have photos that can let you visualize what they actually looked like.

Lily: Like on Andy Griffith. I always thought that they were just black and white people.

Bob seems to think that old photographs don’t present as realistic a view of circumstances and events as he’d like. The girls, Marge and Lily, seem to have more confidence in the photographs in Anastasia’s Album showing what life was for the Romanovs.
Guy and Sue talk about the influence of color on their perception of what objects in the photographs are truly like.

researcher: How is the object, as it is today . . . different from the illustration (as it appears in the photograph)?

Guy: . . . it shows that the boy of the Czar, Alexi, . . . it shows him with his toy drum. I just kind of like the way it's angled (in the black and white photograph of Alexi on the royal yacht). It looks like it's more flat than the way of the picture of today does. (The color photograph on page 15 of the book shows a snare drum that appears taller than the one Alexi is holding.) (October 7)

Sue: I think like the biggest difference really is the new ones are in color, so you get to see more detail 'cause in the old pictures you can't tell what color things are. (October 7)

Guy: It shows the mother and the older sisters . . . Tatiana and Olga, in their Red Cross uniforms (p. 44) . . . based on the coloring in the color photograph . . . it looks so very different. I mean, from what it looks like here (the black and white photograph of the three women) I'd say it (the uniform) looks all gray. Yet it's real mostly green . . . it appears to me that it's green and the coloring is not what you'd expect from the black and white photograph. (The color photograph in the book does give a greenish cast to the uniform that the caption says "has been preserved.") (October 7)

Guy seems to be commenting on the quality of the color photographs taken by Peter Christopher for this book in the following excerpts from this same audio tape.
Guy: Page sixteen (in the book)—of the palace and it's really grand. It looks like it's extremely expensive, because, I mean, you can tell they're really royalty and another thing I found that was kind of interesting was this picture here. It's really a photo, but when you first look at it, it looks like a painting. (October 7)

researcher: Why do you think that is?

Guy: I believe the coloring of it, the shadowing and everything—because when I first looked at this, I (thought) this is a painting that someone painted. I guess it's kind of interesting because often times it's more like, "It looks like a photo instead of a painting," but very seldom do you have a photo that looks like a painting. (October 7)

Sue, who loves art and creating her own art, discusses with Guy the family photographs that Anastasia took and colored. Both Sue and Guy make inferences about what Anastasia's life was like from what they saw in the photographs that illustrate the book in a small group discussion on October 7.

Guy: I also found it interesting the way Anastasia colored a lot of the pictures. I mean you don't see this happening very often, but I guess it talked about her as a being a painter, as having an interest in painting pictures. Like here it shows the pictures of flowers she painted. I thought it was kind of nifty she went on and did some coloring, adding to some of the pictures in her album.

Sue: One thing, I kind of thought the same thing that Andy did when I read it. I really like doing art and that kind of thing, and I'm just kind of wondering like how in the world that she did color the photographs. I mean, it doesn't look like she had regular paint or
something 'cause it kind of looks like—Do you know what I mean? I'm just dying to know what in the world she used to do that.

Sue: There's this one where she colored this pink hat, and it shows like she really must like her hat, because that's the one thing she colored in the picture (p. 43).

Sue: One thing I was guessing was, I bet she either probably had special paints or she probably used water colors 'cause it kind of looks like water color, but it just doesn't seem like water colors would stick to an old photo, but you have a different consistency than the new ones . . .

Sue: I noticed how they're always doing like painting pictures and stuff and that really shows how rich they were—like this looks like it was done in colored pencils (p. 21) maybe—because it was really hard to find art supplies like that a lot back then, I mean they aren't like now you can get them everywhere. So that kinda shows how rich they were that they had all those different supplies and stuff. That kind of stuff really interests me.

During a group discussion on October 23, 1997, Karl and Eddie talk about the photographs in Anastasia's Album. Their observations show how the photographs contributed to the information they took directly from the book and the inferences these readers made.

Karl: I think that Anastasia's Album is like a good book because it's got a lot of photographs, and I think there's more photographs in it than text, and I think it makes it a lot easier to just to look at and enjoy than if you just had to read a whole bunch of stuff.
Edie: I think some of the strengths of Anastasia’s Album are mainly the pictures, because they help with the text, and they help you understand what's going on. They give you more of a description, and I'm a visual learner, so it helps me a lot.

Karl: I think the photograph—it's not a photograph, it looks like a painting or something, but it's of the Imperial Family being assassinated and these guys, they just came downstairs and said that they had orders to kill them, and they shot them all. But I thought it was neat—it says in the text that the women that were in the family, they had sewn diamonds and other jewels and stuff into their garments and clothes and stuff, so the clothes acted like bullet-proof vests. But they killed them all and I didn't understand why. So, I'm probably going to learn something more about that, that's out of this book.

Researcher: What about the photograph that's right next to the painting? How do those two work together?

Karl: Next to the painting there’s a photograph. It looks like the room that they were in, and there's blood on the walls, and they tore the wall apart and stuff.

Researcher: So really in this one you have an artist's interpretation of what the room looked like and then the photograph—does it add information?

Karl: Yeah. I guess it gives like photographic representation of the painting right here (p. 59), and it's kind of like, you know, this guy painted it and this is the photograph of the room. And it's kind of like, it looks like it's a before and after kind of thing.
Edie: . . . on page 31, it's a picture of Anastasia, an officer, and her father doing a human pyramid, and it's just a little bit before they are taken prisoner—the Imperial Family is taken prisoner—and it just shows that they had happy times along with sad times, and it shows that even though they were dignified, and they were supposed to be that way, it just shows that they were able to let off a little bit and just kind of take off their cover and have fun.

Both of these readers seem to have come to some understanding of the Romanov family as real people, as more than historic figures.

Kristi and Linda talk about the effect the photographs in Anastasia's Album had on their involvement with the characters:

Kristi: I think that in Anastasia's Album the pictures are really the strengths, because it shows, you can see what her life was like instead of just hearing it . . . (October 28)

Linda: I think that it's text isn't real great, and I think the pictures really make up for that because the text doesn't really describe really well what is happening in the family life. (October 28)

The Great Fire. Many of the illustrations for this book are engravings. Murphy lists sources for the engravings and the photographs with the captions that accompany each of the illustrations. Some sources of the engravings are: Harper's Weekly, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, and The Illustrated London News. The students who participated in my study didn't seem to know how events reported in 19th century newspapers were illustrated. Our discussions of how the engravings included in The Great Fire were created and what they told about the Chicago Fire reflect on the participants' understanding of information from photographs used in books as illustrations.

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researcher: You know the pictures—there aren't a lot of photographs in this one, are there.

Jake: They're mostly at the end because I don't think anybody took pictures while they were running for their lives—even though those would have been worth like fifty bucks and stuff.

researcher: Now this is on page 59. This isn't a photograph is it?

Jake: Yeah. It's a drawing, but—I'm thinking why is it they didn't use a camera, but they took all the time to make a drawing of it, very detailed.

researcher: Do you know anything about cameras—

Jake: I have no idea. But I think it might have been like the flash was a tray with gunpowder-type stuff on it, and they ignited it when they clicked the shutter button thingy and they couldn't, I think they clicked it for a really long time, because they didn't have very fast shutter speed. (September 25)

Marge and Sue talked about the engravings in *The Great Fire* during a small group discussion on October 13, 1997.

Marge: Something I found in this one was they had these two pictures, there was one of when they were hanging arsonists, and it's just this mass of people, and there's a couple people here ready to get hung, and it's just like if you were standing back—it's probably what, exactly what it would look like just these people waiting to die.

researcher: Read the caption underneath that engraving.

Marge: "Many stories circulated of vigilante justice dispensing during the fire such as the hanging of arsonists."

researcher: Now did that actually happen or is this kind of like hype or—
Marge: It's hype 'cause it just said about stories. It could have happened, but I don't know.

researcher: It's interesting to me because the two pictures that you're talking about on page 66 and on page 77, are they photographs?

Marge: They're engravings.

researcher: They're engravings, tell me how, how an engraving is different from a photograph.

Marge: It's black and white pretty much.

researcher: Ok, the color, but what else about how it's created, how is an engraving created that's different from the way a photograph is created?

Marge: A photograph, you just take the picture, but the engraving you have to carve out the picture, I think, don't you.

researcher: Which picture do you think requires more imagination?

Marge: The engraving.

researcher: The engraving, and when an artist uses his or her imagination, what about the content, how does their imagination influence the content is what I'm asking.

Sue: A lot of it is fictional instead of like real. I mean like unless they were sitting out there just looking at the people doing it, and it won't be exactly right either because if they actually saw the scene and they decided to make it later, it would be like they wouldn't re—, they'd probably in their mind remember things differently than they really were kind of like. A photograph is more exact than an engraving would be because an engraving is really like a drawing.
Marge: This one, the women and the men, mostly they all seem to have mostly, basically the same expression on their faces like, "Oh my god!" but in the pictures you might see a little bit of different reactions. So I think I'd probably rather have pictures than this because this one you just see what an author's imagination is, but the photograph would really show you what's going on.

In a later discussion, October 23, 1997, Alan expresses the same of idea that engravings are generally more interpretive than photographs. He seems to have faith in the intention of the artist to accurately portray an event as it is happening. At the same time he seems to acknowledge that the eye of the camera is more inclusive and more impartial.

researcher: Is that a photograph (p. 35—people jumping from a burning building)?
Alan: Not really.
researcher: How would you describe it?
Alan: I would describe it as an imagination of what was going on at that time, or somebody who was looking up on the building. They could see what was going on and they've got a photographic memory and can remember it to the tee, what happened or what everybody looked like.

researcher: This kind of art is called an engraving, and they used this in a lot of newspapers at the time of the fire because reproducing photographs in newspapers, I don't know if they didn't have the technology or if it just wasn't commonly done. More often you would find these.
Alan: Yeah. It might have been really expensive too, since like cameras weren't very common. A lot of people didn't have them, only like just rich people had them.

researcher: And you say that you think that this is probably a pretty factual representation of what was going on?

Alan: Yeah. Because it says, it has a lot of people that look really, they have their face expressions that are really neat. It shows one guy who is falling and he's got his eyes closed and it looks like he's screaming. If you could jump into this picture, you would hear screaming, you'd actually understand what's going on, their face expressions would be so exact, so normal of what was going on. It looks like they don't even know they're in the picture.

researcher: How are photographs and engravings like this different? I don't mean just the technology, but maybe when they happen, when the artist or the photographer catches the scene?

Alan: Well, in a camera, it's just like the press of a button and it's over. But in this, it takes a lot of time. You've got to keep remembering that picture in your head and you've got to keep engraving it and it just looks like a really hard thing to do. Whereas a camera, if you just click, it's over and it just looks like it's a really hard type thing to do and takes a lot of time.

researcher: And which do you think catches the scene or the action most closely, the photograph or the artist making a drawing for an engraving?

Alan: I really think that the photograph would because it can catch things that a human eye cannot catch. The camera has everything in the
viewfinder, things that like the human eye might miss, like a little speck somewhere, or something that could be like important. Like, or it could have a little dot on a guy’s arm and the camera would catch that but the human eye would not.

During a small group discussion on October 28, 1997, I asked Ed about weaknesses he noticed in a book he’d read. His comments on The Great Fire demonstrate how these participants could reflect on what they brought to the book, using prior experiences to make meaning. It seems as though Ed is saying that he would have more information about the fire from photographs than from the engravings.

Ed: The weakness probably is ours. [I believe he’s talking about the sparse information he has about the Chicago Fire before he starts the book.] I mean, they are probably not going to make up for that, because it probably wasn’t their fault. But, I wish there was more like photographs instead of like drawings in it. It was like the majority of them are animated or drawings to show what happened.

researcher: I noticed those, too, and that’s called an engraving. Do you have any idea why there would be more engravings than photographs of this event?

Ed: Probably because it happened in the 1800’s and then there wasn’t that many cameras. More like artists to draw and engrave.

researcher: What do you know about early cameras? Have you ever seen pictures of them?

Ed: They (the pictures, not the cameras) don’t turn out that great, and they’re mainly black and white.

researcher: How do they work? (I’m asking about the cameras.)
Ed: I've never seen anything on that.

researcher: Helen, tell us what you know about early cameras.

Helen: It has to take a long time because you have to set up the camera, and you have to like put that thing over your head so that it covers up all the light around you, and it would take too long to set up, and like take the picture and then pack everything up and leave.

researcher: And what kind of an event was the great fire?

Ed: A horrible one.

researcher: A horrible one, yes. How else would you describe it? "Starts with a "d."

Ed: Disastrous.

researcher: It was a disaster, wasn't it? So if Helen's description of early cameras is accurate—

Ed: They couldn't have really used one.

In a part of his reaction to The Great Fire Guy says he'd like more information that could come from photographs taken after the fire.

Guy: One of the only weaknesses I found in The Great Fire was the fact that they show pictures of all the lavish looking buildings, you know real nice buildings, they show them as maybe the fire was just getting to them, but never show what happened to them, they never showed what happened after the fire, what the buildings looked like. I think it would be kind of interesting to say, "Here's what it looked like before the fire, and here's what it looked like after the fire." They did that like for one of the buildings.
Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story

On the dust jacket of this book is photo of a young boy, neatly groomed, in a suit with a white shirt and tie. On the front flap of the dust jacket where the contents of the book are summarized, it says that the author, "Andrea Warren alternates chapters about the history of the orphan trains with the story of Lee Nailling . . ." One might assume that the boy on the jacket is Lee. Some of the participants who read this book, realized that instead of Lee, it is Leo Lee's younger brother. The first excerpt from the audio taped discussion is from October 7, 1997. The second excerpt is from November 5, 1997.

researcher: Who is this on the cover?
Jeanne: I think it's Leo.
researcher: And did you notice that that photograph is inside the book?
Jeanne: Yes.
researcher: But how is it different from the one on the cover?
Jeanne: The one on the cover is just part of it, it just shows Leo, but in the book it show his adoptive parents.
researcher: So that's the shoulder that you see on the cover?
Jeanne: The dark parts are shoulders of his mother and father. (October 7)

In another group discussion on November 5, 1997 the participants (There were seven in this group.) talk about the cover photograph for Orphan Train Rider. Jeanne who recognized that the cover photograph is of Leo, not Lee, is part of this later discussion. Sue, also a part of the October 7 discussion, is in this November 5, group. The November 5, participants talk about what the photographic image could convey to one who has not read the book. In this discussion, the participants seem to not question the integrity of the text, but
reveal their concerns about how the choice of cover photograph conveys misinformation.

researcher: . . . What comes to your mind when you look at the boy on the front cover?

Mary: He looks like he's healthy, and he has a good family, and he's happy in that picture.

Sue: Yeah, that's what it looks like.

?: 'Cause he's all well-dressed and everything.

Karl: Happy boy.

Mary: Happy boy.

Karl: On the front it makes him look like he's got a nice life and stuff, but then you read the book and it's like something different.

Jerry: It doesn't look like he's an orphan.

Karl: He looks like a regular boy.

Jerry: Yeah, a boy with a normal life.

Participants discuss what they see in the photographs and couple their interpretations of expressions with information they gleaned from the text. Participants believe that the photograph doesn't convey Leo's actual or real situation. They continue to offer explanations for the differences between what they know and what they believe the photograph shows.

researcher: Some of the features that I noticed, and maybe this will prompt some other ideas of yours, he's a handsome child and maybe that kind of goes in with what you said about him looking handsome. Ah, reminds you of yourself, I see. I thought he had a nice haircut.

Karl: Yeah. But he says he doesn't get haircuts in here.
Sue: It could be a picture of whenever he was adopted. I can't remember how old he was when he was adopted.

Karl: Yeah, it says he got adopted by a couple of people and some people went out and got him a haircut.

Sue: And they treated him really nice, and they were like really wonderful. Either that or it was before all the bad things happened. It could be that, too, or I don't know.

Jeanne: I think that's Leo with his new parents. I think that's the picture.

researcher: Oh, so this is Leo, not Lee.

Jeanne: Okay.

?: How do you know?

Karl: That guy looks like, "Why am I paying to have this kid to have his picture . . . He looks almost reluctant. (The participants are now looking at the photograph on page 44 from which the cover photograph of the boy is taken.)

Sue: It seems like they wouldn't have Leo on the front, they'd have Lee because it's like mainly about him, but they have Leo, and it's kind of weird.

Jeanne: Yeah, that's what I thought when I first saw it. It's like okay, that's Lee, but it's not. It's Leo.

Karl: It's an iffy kind of thing.

Mary: 'Cause it also says Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story and that's Lee's. It's not Leo's (story).

Participants raise a new issue, their understanding of the publisher's responsibility to accuracy in the books they publish.

researcher: Are there any pictures of Lee at this age?
Sue: They might not have any available maybe.
Jeanne: Or they might not be very good pictures.
Karl: It was that bad.
Mary: Or the people might just be weird.
researcher: You mean the—
Sue: The person who put the cover together
researcher: Oh

[Participants are talking over each other and looking through the book.]
Karl: Yeah, evil publishers.
Mary: There's Lee's little brother and that's Gerald.
Jeanne: There's a full picture of it, and the caption says that it's Leo.
?: What page?
Jeanne: I don't know, I can find it.
Jerry: It's him with two old people that adopted him.
researcher: What page is that?
?: It's page 44.
?: Yeah, it is Leo.

In spite of participants saying that a characteristic of nonfiction is a lack of emotion, they comment on the feelings shown by the demeanor of the people in the photographs.
Karl: God, look at his moustache.
Mary: Yeah, I know. It's down to here.
Karl: Leo, think that's like—
Jerry: These people look like they're really mean, but they're not. They're really nice.
Mary: She looks nice. He looks mean.
researcher: An that's interesting because somebody else, it must not have
been you guys, that was talking about Orphan Train... and said
how, I don't think they said expressionless, but they commented on
these people looking so serious.

Marge: He looks like he's in trouble.

Karl: No, that lady looks like she's trying to smile, but that old man, he
just looks (grimacing sound).

Sue: This is kind of off the subject, but she looks like the lady in Anne of
Green Gables.

Jerry: The old guy looks like, "This kid's out of here as soon as this
picture is over." That's what he looks like.

Sue: Well, I can see why they wouldn't want this on the front, it's a really
bad picture...

[There are other comments, then Sue says,]

Sue: I'd rather put like nobody on the front than Leo.

Karl: Me too.

[other comments]

researcher: You know, I hadn't thought about that, but that's really a good point
about what, you know that we don't know how the decision was
made to put Leo on the front, but we've certainly said, you know,
he's pleasant child. He's a handsome child. He looks happy.

Sue: They want to make the book look interesting. It just seems weird
that it's all about Lee, but Lee isn't on the cover.

Participants identify what they believe is the theme or purpose of the book
and question a book design decision—"showing like a happy boy on the cover."
Karl: The whole message of the book was that, I think orphan trains were a bad idea overall. But why, if that's true, why are they showing like a little happy boy on the cover?

Jerry: Yeah, he should be, sad face.

Karl: Yeah, it should be something dark and gray and mysterious.

Marge: Like that picture.

Jerry: It shows him like taking a part.

Karl: Well, a cover is like a little short summary, if you think about it. It's like a little short summary of the book. So why are they making him look happy?

Sue: Actually, in my opinion, it didn't seem like, it didn't seem like that they were saying orphan trains were that bad. They were saying they were bad, but they didn't say they were awful, because like Lee found a good family.

Karl: Not all the time, though.

Later in this discussion on November 5, Karl comes back to the second photograph on the front of the dust jacket. It shows a train engine and four cars behind it. Children and some adults are standing beside the train and on top of the cars.

Karl: Another thing I don't like about the cover, the kids are so small you can't see the expression on their faces.

Marge: Maybe they did that purposely.

Karl: Probably, but, 'cause I bet the majority of the kids would be frowning.

Sue: Well, one thing about it, they probably didn't have very many pictures of the orphan train available. I mean, that's not the
popular thing to photograph, and that might be the best one they
could find.

After several other participants have spoken, Karl raises the issue of this
photograph not giving him enough information about what the children are
feeling.

Karl: ... and I looked real close at the picture and it's only the adults
who are smiling.

This idea that some photographs don't portray what the subjects were
really feeling at the time the photograph is taken was also voiced in a small
group discussion on October 28, 1997.

researcher: ... what do you see a weaknesses in the books?

Linda: In Orphan Train, the pictures, 'cause they don't really explain that
much.

researcher: Do you want to give us an example?

Linda: They like have no expressions on their faces (she's looking at the
picture of a group of boys, dressed up and waiting to leave on an
orphan train, p. 8). You don't know if they're happy or upset that
they're leaving, and then there's, I think a family picture, the orphan
train riders and their sponsors, they don't have any expressions on
their faces either.

researcher: So are you used to seeing more expression then in photographs?

Linda: Smile

researcher: So we're supposed, how are we supposed to look in photographs,
do you think? Or are we supposed to look any way?
Linda: Usually people look happy, you don't usually see many people looking sad or upset.

researcher: In what kind of photographs?

Linda: Happy in family photographs.

We talk about the captions under the photographs in *Orphan Train Rider*, and I ask Linda what other information she'd like.

Linda: Like they were unwilling to travel, that would show that they didn't want to leave, or if they were happy to go, they were happy to travel to Texas.

We talk about what are the sources for the photographs for the book.

Linda tells me she thinks they came from "history books." She knows where to look in the book for this information, but recognizes that the credits given in the book don't list the source of each individual photograph. This seems to help her reconcile with the sparcity of information about specific individuals and their feelings.

*I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment*. Mary talked about the photographs in *I Am an American* in a small group discussion on October 23, 1997 and in the reading log she kept. Lily and an unidentified participant mentioned the photographs from this book in their reading logs.

Mary: I think the strengths of *I Am an American* are the photographs, because they show what the emotions are and you—if you don't quite understand what the text is saying—you can look at the photographs and understand it better.

Mary: . . . on page 36. It shows a little three-year-old girl waiting at a Los Angeles railroad station to be, the families are being taken to relocation centers and she looks—you can tell that, even though
she's real little—you can tell that she kind of knows what's going on because she know that her parents are really sad and stuff and so she kind of, you can tell that she, that all of them are sad, it's a really sad time for everybody, all the Japanese people.

researcher: What does the caption say with this photograph?
Mary: "Three year old Yukiko Okinaga at the Los Angeles railroad station before being evacuated with her family to Manzanar."

researcher: That's kind of interesting, the word evacuate. What do you think about if you heard "evacuate," other than reading this caption.
Mary: Like if there's a fire in a building, you just evacuate the building and then you just come back when it's all over.

researcher: And so what kind of a sense does that word "evacuate" mean? If I'm telling you that I'm going to evacuate someone, what am I doing for those people? I mean like, is that helpful or am I harming them, or, if you're evacuating somebody?
Mary: Well, in this sense, it's harming them but, they're taking them from their farms and their homes and other places just because they're Japanese.

In another small group discussion on September 30, 1997 Marge and Lily are talking about the cover photograph for I Am an American. The focus of this discussion was on design elements of the books they were reading. What these young women are talking as they look at the cover of the book. They seem to be interpreting the information from the photograph through their own experiences. At this time we did not look for text information in the book that would confirm or alter what they saw in this photograph.
Marge: I see a whole bunch of, it looks like Korean kids and one, and a
couple of black kids, and one American-looking kid. Yeah, two
white kids, and there's an American flag behind them.

Lily: They're kindergarteners.

Marge: Yeah.

researcher: You think they're young kids. What else do you see? What are
the kids in the picture doing?

Marge: It looks like they're saying "The Pledge of Allegiance" because they
all have their hands on their hearts.

researcher: And what's one boy holding?

Marge: It looks like he's Japanese or Korean or something and he has a
flag.

Mary, Lily, and a participant who did not identified him/herself talked
about the photographs in *I Am an American* in their reading logs. Mary says she
tries to read the people's faces. Lily lists questions that the photographs raise
for her. The unidentified reading log author says he/she uses the captions to
answers to his/her questions about the photographs.

Mary: I believe the strengths are again the photographs of the book . . . I
wish that they told me more in the captions.

Lily: How old were Shi in some of the pictures? How did the Japanese
American develop pictures in the internment camps?

Lily: In the illustrations I try to find the answer by closely examining the
picture for a clue, or I read the captions and hinted parts in the text.

unidentified: To find answers in the illustrations, I carefully read the captions
and match them up with the photos. I go back and examine the
information slowly and carefully to find answers to questions I don't
know. If I can't find the answer I guess educatedly to fill in any
blanks I have, for I find it hard to go on if part of my image of what's
going on is incomplete.

unidentified: A weakness was I felt that the photographs were dull and kind of
boring. Just like it was strength, in some parts I felt they were
putting in too much facts, not catching my attention as much as
other sections.

I'm uncertain if "unidentified" is only referring to the photographs in these
excerpts, or if the participant is commenting on what he/she reads in both the
photographs and the text. All three of these participants seem to expect that the
captions which accompany photographs with either clarify or explain what they
see.

Growing Up in Coal Country. During the October 28, discussion Gene
said that he thought the photographs were a strength of Growing Up in Coal
Country. I asked him how they were different from pictures in other books he'd
read. I think his response was to "books" in general, not other books he had
read from my set of books for this research.

Gene: They were real, not cartoons, they were really, they showed
everything, they were really descriptive, and they showed
everything that went on by itself. They didn't show all the things
happening at the same time, they showed each one by itself, and
then more pictures.

researcher: So then there were separate events that were illustrated.

Gene: Yeah.

Gene seems to be saying that the photographs helped him visualize
events or the setting in which the events occurred. He wasn't troubled by any
detail of the photograph that did or didn't convey the emotions of the subjects in the photograph.

*Over the Top of the World: Explorer Will Steger's Trek Across the Arctic.*

For the small-group discussion on October 21, 1997 I pulled four male participants. Three of the four had read *Over the Top of the World.* I began the discussion by asking these participants to comment on how the books they read were alike, how they were different, if there were any personal connections they made with the books.

researcher: ... as you think about the books you've read, think about how the books looked. Is there one or the other that you thought the photography was more interesting ...?

Guy: ... Maybe it's just the fact that it's in color, but I thought *Over the Top of the World* had pretty stunning photography ... in some of the pictures, the angles are, I mean you'd feel like there would have to be another person to take the pictures ... 

Jake: There was.

Guy: Well, the person on the team that probably took it, but still there were some pretty--

Jake: I was looking in the back and I saw that the photographs weren't taken by one of the people that was on the team, so I wondered who took the pictures, because if no one on the team did it, they didn't mention anybody else coming with them, and it wasn't the name of one of the team members, so--

Guy: Maybe it was like someone that traveled a lot. It talked a lot about helicopters being used.

Jake: Once a month, but--
Guy: Maybe it was someone who was following them in a helicopter or some vehicle.

The conversation continues to focus on this book, but the boys talk about the explorers' experiences going back to the text and in John's case personal experience, to verify the information these readers had collected. They make other references specifically to the photographs.

Jake's comments about who photographed the expedition are interesting to me, because the photographs seem to have prompted him to search for the citation which listed sources of the photographs in the book. He knew where to look, on the copyright page. I had talked with the whole class about what they might find on this page, which is sometimes located at the end rather than at the beginning, in an nonfiction/informational book when I shared *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse* (Freedman, 1996). I believe that Jake recalled this. The photographs seemed to first pique his interest in how they were taken, and then this interest reminded him that he could locate the answer to his question.

**How do the participants use what they know about nonfiction as they write their own books?**

In this section I will describe the 11 books written by 12 participants in this study. I will discuss the participants' books in terms of: (a) what they know about nonfiction books; (b) how they use photographs as illustration; (c) design elements of their books; and (d) expressions of emotion that connect the participants with the content of their books.

Ten books were finished and published by the students. Nine books were written by individual authors, and two students collaborated on one of the books. One book was not finished. I gave the authors two broad guidelines that were
non-negotiable: (a) the book must be nonfiction; and (b) the book must be illustrated with photographs.

Part of my explanation for the students when I introduced myself and what I would be doing was to tell them that I would be asking them to write their own nonfiction books. I asked them what were the characteristics of nonfiction books that distinguished them from fiction books. The most general contrast they offered was that nonfiction books are true and that fictional books were made up or came from the author's imagination. They talked about nonfiction books giving the reader facts. They said that nonfiction books are read in order to find out things. The students noted that one finds nonfiction books in a different part of the library than fiction books/novels. They know that nonfiction books are located by using the Dewey Decimal System numbers. They demonstrated an awareness of physical features of nonfiction books such as tables of contents, indexes, and glossaries. We briefly touched on kinds of information books such as: how-to books, science and history topic books, and biographies. While I was satisfied that these students could verbalize characteristics of informational books, I reinforced or extended what they knew by using The Life and Death of Crazy Horse (Freedman, 1996) to discuss design features of a piece of nonfiction literature with the whole class.

By the second full week in October, October 13 - 17, I knew that 12 students were interested in writing their own books. I brought them each a disposable camera which had a flash attached. After they took photographs for their books, I had the photographs processed.

Topics that the students chose were topics that reflected students' interests. They all chose to write about something about which they already had some knowledge.
I met twice with the all of the student authors as a group to talk about how their books were progressing. I made myself available for questions, and I gave them the opportunity to conference with each other about their writing. Peer editing is a strategy with which most of the students were familiar. Also, I was
available to answer questions whenever I was in their classroom. I did not portray myself as their editor, but rather as a consultant.

The first time I met with the whole group of author/illustrators was at their school in the art room. (It was the art teacher’s lunchtime.) This second meeting lasted only during their regular language arts class period, about one hour. The second time was after the winter vacation break and was away from their school, at the building where my office is. This meeting lasted most of the school day. I made the appropriate arrangements with the students' teachers to take them away from classes, and I received permission from the students' parents for them to leave their school. (See Appendix G) I had two computers available for students who didn't have access to a computer at home or at their school building. I had art materials in the room where we met for the author/illustrators to use. The focus of the second whole group meeting was to work on the design plans for their books.

Design plans included making decisions about dividing their text into pages in their books; matching illustrations with text; how text and photographs were to be arranged on the pages; where captions were needed; how or if photographs should be mounted; and if text was to be on back to back pages or would they use only one side.

Two design features were dictated by the way I chose to have the participants' books bound—the size and the shape. Each of the books is 10”/12” and rectangular. The variations are that the book could be hinged on either edge and the writer/illustrator could choose to position the text and art following the 12-inch side or the 10-inch side. Deborah Zeisloft has developed a book publishing process that she uses with young writers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She is experienced with working with writers in school classrooms and in library
and recreation center programs. To bind books with a hard cover Ms. Zeisloft uses cardboard cut to 9"/12" pieces. The paper pages of the book (8.5" / 11") are fastened with heavy-duty staples and cardboard hinges. Before attaching the cover boards, the book's author/illustrator designs the cover art, and the covers are laminated to protect the art. The cover boards are attached and the spine is created with tape. Ms. Zeisloft came from Pittsburgh to work with the participants on February. The participants came to my office (their third time together a whole group), worked with Ms. Zeisloft, and all of the books except Marge's were bound that day. I sent Marge's book to Ms. Zeisloft, and she bound it and returned it to me.

I gave the students the option of using the book pages they assembled with text, photographs, diagrams or other graphics, and any materials for mounting or decorating the pages or they could use color photo copies I made of the finished pages of their books. I made copies of the pages so that I would have them, because the bound books are the property of the authors. All of the participants wanted to use the color copies to publish their books. They told me that the copies looked like the pages of "real" books.

Looking Closely at the Participants' Books

I will describe the participants' books and connect other information from my several data sources to the description. I am attempting to show how the book reflects the image of its author and how the information from different data sources mirrors the participant's experiences—both their interests and their experiences with nonfiction literature.

Four students with whom I had lengthy discussions or extended input were: Sue writing about the school district; Guy who wrote about the history of Columbus, Ohio; Marge, writing the book about the human voice; and John, who
did not finish writing his book, a collection of prayers. I will discuss my time with these students and their books.

Sue's and Guy's books are distinctive because of their length, artistic features, and topics. John's book was not finished, and I believe that asking him to use photographs as illustration was the obstacle that he couldn't get past. Marge seemed to need more discussions with me than other participants in order to move her book from concept to completion. An additional book that I will consider at greater length, is the one written by Lily and Jake. The photographs in Lily's and Jake's book show a creative approach to making photographs to illustrate a nonfiction text.

Sue. Sue's book is North-Eastern City Schools: A District in TROUBLE!. This topic was not surprising when one considers the author. Sue has lived in the same community all her life. Her mother is an elementary school teacher in the school district. Her father is an attorney in the community and has been active in promoting passage of local ballot issues that support school funding. Sue is personally aware of overcrowding in the schools and the need for building improvements. Sue attends Summit Park Middle School by special permission because the middle school in her attendance area is the oldest of the five middle schools, and environmental factors at the old building have the potential of aggravating her asthma.

Sue contributed to each of my data sources. She read three of the books I brought: Anastasia's Album, The Great Fire, and Orphan Train Rider. She kept a reading log in which she responded to my questions, different entries for each of these books. She was part of five audio taped group discussions of the books. She completed the classroom teacher's "Interest Inventory" and an exit interview with me. Her standardized test scores show that her language arts
achievement is very high; in the reading portion of the test she scored in the 99th percentile and in the language portion she scored in the 97th percentile.

Sue began collecting information for her book on her own. She talked with me briefly to tell me that she needed information that she hadn't located and which was necessary to complete her book. I suggested that I could make arrangements for her to interview the person responsible for public relations in the district. Sue agreed, and I set up the appointment.

I called Sue's mother and received permission to take her from school to the district's administrative offices. The man she was meeting with greeted us cordially. She and I had not discussed the specific questions she would ask or how she had prepared for this interview. I felt that I knew her well enough to know that she would be prepared and that she would be courteous. Sue brought a typed copy of the text of her book. She had left blank spaces where she needed information. Since her text was organized as she wanted it in her book, she went from the beginning to the end of the pages she'd brought, asking her questions.

As an observer of this interview, I could tell that Mr. Williams, Communications and Public Relations Manager, was relaxed and prepared to talk with a middle school student. As Sue progressed through her questions, I recognized that she was not what Mr. Williams expected. Her questions concerned the district's history, demographics of the district, and issues relating to the current levy campaign. She also was prepared with questions about the alternatives if the levy did not pass. Sue asked her questions and followed Mr. Williams's responses with other questions to clarify what she'd heard. I was greatly impressed with the maturity with which she was conducting this interview and with her verbal communications skills. As Sue went on, it was also obvious
to me that Mr. Williams was very impressed with the quality of this young woman's questions and her composure. His manner shifted from courteous accommodation to an engaged conversational exchange. When they were finished talking, Mr. Williams gave Sue photocopies of an archival photograph of one of the district's first school buildings, graphs showing student enrollment, and several maps of the district for use in her book.

There were several worthwhile outcomes of this interview:

1. Sue got the information she needed for an independent project based in her own interests.
2. Sue gained experience collecting information from a primary source.
3. School personnel not usually in a classroom had an experience with the exceptional abilities of a student identified for gifted and talented services.
4. Sue's confidence in her interpersonal skills was strengthened.

The front and back covers of Sue's book are completely decorated (see Appendix K). She used three color photographs that she had taken and a reduced-in-size copy of a piece of levy campaign literature. She hand lettered the title and her name. There is a narrow border on the top and the bottom. It is interesting that she uses a semicolon to separate North-Eastern City Schools from A District in TROUBLE! The title of one of the books she read, *Orphan Train Rider: One Boy's True Story* is punctuated in the same way. Sue's use of capital letters in her title and the exclamation point seem to emphasize the message of her book. Sue also draws a line from the word "TROUBLE" to a place in one of the cover photos and then circles the area of the photo that shows a crack in the school room wall. The second cover photo shows children moving through a school hallway. The third cover photo shows an outdoor sign.
advertising a new housing development. The audience for Sue's book sees immediately what this book is about.

The predominant color on the cover is hot pink or fuchsia. Sue chose the same color for the endpapers of her book.

On the back cover of her book is centered an editorial cartoon created for the levy campaign. A woman with a weeping child is standing in front of closed double doors. A sign standing on the sidewalk says, "This building full try next building." School supplies are lying at the child's feet. Sue has put swathes of teal and mauve watercolor paint around the edges of the cartoon. She uses this same cartoon in two places inside the book (see Appendix K).

Her Table of Contents has these entries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>page 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: North-Eastern City Schools at a Glance</td>
<td>page 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Deteriorating School</td>
<td>page 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Overcrowding</td>
<td>page 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: The Bond Issue of &quot;97&quot;</td>
<td>page 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bond Issue of &quot;97&quot; Literature</td>
<td>page 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>page 38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Her introduction sets the stage. Sue speaks to her reader:

"Sue! Time to wake up!" my mom called at 7:00 a.m. on a Monday morning. I rolled out of bed to start another day at an average middle school, with average classes, in an average seventh grade. . . Hang on! Back up! I go to North-Eastern City Schools. There is nothing average about going to school in a district that's in the middle of a huge money crisis."

Another example of Sue's engaging conversation with the reader is also in her introduction on page 4. She seems to make an intertextual connection with Shel Silverstein's poem "Sick" (Silverstein, 1974). Sue's text begins:
"What? What's that you say? You don't know about North-Eastern City Schools? Oh. I'm sorry."

Silverstein's poem from *Where the Sidewalk Ends* is a list of complaints that Peggy Ann McKay gives as reasons for not going to school. The rhyme ends with:

"What's that? What's that you say?  
You say today is . . . Saturday?  
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"

I think that Sue has incorporated this book language, because she is a voracious reader and would know this often read poem and because the tone of amazement in Peggy Ann McKay's voice is the same tone that Sue uses as she tells her reader about the plight of her school district.

In the first chapter Sue uses the copy of the black and white photograph that she received at her interview and one of the maps. On the first page of Chapter Two Sue hand lettered the title, "Deteriorating Schools," and incorporated into the letters such things as watering dripping from the lower case "r" as though it were a dripping faucet. Also on this page is a 4" / 6" color photograph Sue took of a school restroom stall with the toilet fixture missing (see Appendix K).

Sue uses borders to frame her text. She decorated the pages between the text and the edges using colorful abstract shapes and lines and she hand numbered each of the pages. Her placement of text and illustrations on the pages of her books appears to be carefully planned for balance of the composition. She uses captions that identify the subject of her photographs and identify the charts and graphs she's included. She insisted that the campaign literature be copied on "goldenrod" paper "because this is the was it was given to the voters."
Sue's attention to the design for her book matches interests she expressed in her replies on the "Interest Inventory" and what she told me in the exit interview:

3. What is your favorite subject or activity in school?
   My favorite is art. It's my favorite because I'm creative and love expressing myself.

4. If you were given $1,000, how would you spend it?
   Probably on books, art supplies and clothes. I would also donate some to my church.

5. What kinds of things do you like to do on a rainy day?
   Read, play games, talk on the phone, and do art projects.

6. What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?
   I plan to go to college and be an author and illustrator, or an art teacher.

8. Tell me something about yourself that you think I should know.
   I love all kinds of art...

I asked Sue in the exit interview, "What do you know about nonfiction literature now that you've done your own book that you didn't know before?" She said, "I really didn't know how much time it took to go into making a book about nonfiction... the most time consuming for me was when I decorated the pages because it took me like a half an hour to an hour on each one."

During the process of the participants' writing and illustrating their books, I stayed in contact with each author, but I wanted them to not feel pressured by a deadline. When I talked with Sue as she was working on her book, she told me that each page was taking a lot of time. Her book was an avenue of expression for her writing ability and her artistic talent.
In the exit interview with Sue I asked who is the audience for her book. She felt that it would appeal to a general audience, but added that the reader would likely be somebody involved in a situation similar to the one she wrote about. "I think it depends on what their interests are." She said that her readers, "... would be surprised about that kind of stuff (the problems she describes)" and that "... younger kids ... would like how I decorated the pages." Sue's reason for choosing this topic—the school district's overcrowded buildings—was "I wanted to find something I didn't think anyone else would do, so I did this."

Sue recognizes that books need readers. Her experience is that a reader will stick with a book if the reader can relate her own interests to topics in the book. Sue seems to know that a reader can be engaged with visual art in the book. She also knows that a novel topic will attract a reader's attention.

Because Sue wrote about a narrow topic, the conditions within her school district, and because I found her position on the issues clear, I suggested that she had, "... set forth the problem ... (and) let folks come to their own conclusion." She said, "I was trying not to make it biased, but I might have in places."

I continued. "Why is it important for ... a nonfiction author not to express a particular bias?" Sue replied, "Well, it just will only tell half the story, and you really need to know the whole story about that kind of stuff." Sue's expectations for nonfiction literature seem to be that it presents a balanced picture of the subject.

Guy. Guy wrote about the history of Columbus, Ohio. On the cover of his book are two photographs of downtown Columbus; a black and white photo shows a turn of the century view looking south on High Street from Union
Station, and the other is a color photo of the present-day skyline, looking east and along Civic Center Drive. The first part of the title Tales of the Past is in capital letters. The second part, The History of Columbus is in upper and lower case letters. The title page has the same font size and use of capital and lower case letters, but a colon has been inserted between the two parts of the title.

The are no photographs on the title page.

Guy is one of the three participant author/illustrators who included a copyright page in his book. He uses the same "rights reserved" declaration that appears in books he read. He lists himself as the publisher and says "Manufactured in the United States of America." This reflects parts of my discussions with participants about information that can be found on copyright pages.

The table of contents page lists an introduction, 17 chapters and the page on which each begins, a conclusion, and sources. "Dedications" follows the "Table of Contents." Guy dedicates his book to: (a) his mom, "who put in so much time to help make this book become a reality"; (b) "My teachers . . . for without them, I would not have the skills to write this"; (c) to "God for giving me the talents that I have"; and (d) " . . . the people who lived in the past, for without them, the subject of this books would be non-existent." Each part of his dedication fits with what I know about Guy.

Two sources of information that Guy used: (a) "Columbus, Ohio: The Columbus Railway Co." (1901); and (b) "Flood From Photographs: Columbus, Ohio March 25, 1913"; were soft cover booklets that Guy's mother had received after the death of an attorney for whom she worked. She was also the typist for Guy's book. Acknowledging his teachers is characteristic of Guy. He is genuinely polite, appreciative, and sensitive to the feelings of others. The
replies to his language arts teacher's "Interest Inventory" speak to reading and writing:

3. What is your favorite subject or activity at school?
   LA because of my interest in reading and writing.

4. If you were given $1,000, how would you spend it?
   I'd probably give 1/2 to charity and use the rest on books, CDs, games, etc.

6. What kinds of things do you like to do on a rainy day?
   I like to read, watch TV, write or play games.

7. What kind(s) of writing do you like to do?
   I like to write fiction and poetry.

9. Tell me something about yourself that you think I should know.
   I think you should know that I have interests in reading and writing.

The last part of Guy's dedication seems to address his choice of the history of Columbus, Ohio for the topic of his book.

The length of Guy's book, 48 pages, makes it the longest of the books the participants wrote. He alluded to the length of his book in the exit interview. I asked him about things that he might have learned in the process of writing TALES OF THE PAST: The History of Columbus that he might be able to use again. Guy related that he had done a 40 page report for his elementary enrichment class, but had to "narrow it down to four pages" for a ten-minute oral presentation. For this book, he laughed and said, "...I didn't have to narrow it down quite so much..." I think he valued the opportunity and the time to explore an interest in depth.

I asked Guy about the audience for his book. He told me that it would "...probably (be) someone who's kind of interested in the history of Columbus,
because like large cities like New York and Washington D.C. they get lots of like publicity over their history, but like smaller cities like Columbus really don't."

He went on to say, "So like someone who is interested about what happened to those cities at the (same) time (in) the city we live in. The city that we live next to." Guy community is a suburb of Columbus. He seems to understand that the audience for his books could be the reader who is interested in making connections in an historical context. He says that this reader is "Probably the older, probably adults and like middle schoolers to adults . . . I was trying, I was writing it for the you know like the older person. I mean I could have easily wrote it for younger kids, made it a little easier to understand. This exchange tells me that Guy knows that a book's author has an intended audience in mind when he writes. Guy also expresses confidence in his own skills as a writer to focus his text for a particular audience.

Guy combines text and illustration on some pages and has pages with only text. Photographs that accompany a page of text follow on the next page in the book. His careful placement of photographs indicates that he understands that the illustrations extend or compliment the information in his text. The placement of photographs on a page with text and the arrangements of photographs on a page without text show consideration of order and balance.

Guy took photographs himself and used photographs that he copied from other sources. He and I discussed this. I told him that he could use someone else's photographs if he acknowledged the sources. He includes his sources of information and photographs in the final section of his book, "Sources" page 41. Guy identifies the places in his photographs and the ones he copied in captions beside or underneath the photos.

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The following is an excerpt from the transcript of an audio taped conversation between Guy, John, Jeanne, and Alan in which they discuss Guy’s book. I was not part of this taped discussion. This conversation among the four participants took place in the art room of their school on February 28, 1997. I had brought all of the participants who were writing books together to talk with each other about their books and to talk with me about how I might be of help in finishing up their books.

Guy: The title is *Tales of the Past: The History of Columbus*.

John: As in Columbus as Christopher Columbus or . . .

Guy: City, the city of Columbus.


Guy: Yes, Columbus, Ohio. In the beginning I have a little introduction.

John: Will that be on a separate page?

Guy: Yes. That will be on a separate page. This introduction here has some pictures.

John: Uh huh.

Guy: Have a, I have a river road which is a nice old picture that I have, plus there’s a picture of COSI.

John: I see you’ve got some . . .

Guy: So I have like a real old picture compared to the real new picture.

John seems to be asking the question that might occur to a reader when he reads the title of a book with which he is not familiar. This title contains a word that has multiple referents. John seeks clarification. The boys go on discussing a design decision for Guy’s book. Guy explains that he has deliberately chosen pictures that represent the past and the present of
Columbus. The "river road" that Guy's referring to is Civic Center Drive which parallels the Scioto River between Gay Street and Main Street in Columbus's downtown. The other past and present comparison that Guy makes is between a black and white copied photograph of Union Station, a train station in Columbus that was demolished and a group of students in the planetarium of the Center of Science and Industry (COSI) in Columbus.

Guy: And then the next page is about the Indians. I talk about the history of Ohio and how there were Mound Builders around in Ohio and, and what happened after they came out.

John: Ok.

Guy: And for that, somewhere here, this is something I found in my grandparents' house and there's no copyright on it, so I'm going to use these pictures, but like I have a picture of an Indian pipe.

I believe that this reference to copyright is because of my telling the participants that copyright protected the person holding the copyright from someone else using the work and claiming it as their own. The boys continue discussing Guy's section titled "The Age of the Indian."

John: Then I have another question, also.

Guy: Yes?

John: How is this going to be, your very first page, the introduction . . .

Guy: Yes.

John: Then you'll have your pictures?

Guy: Yeah, on the bottom.

John: Filling the bottom?

Guy: Yes.

John: Ok.
Guy: Over here . . .
John: And then there's, what's on the . . .
Guy: Nothing. These are just old pages.
John: These are just back to back.
Guy: And over here we have the Indians and depending on how long the text is. If the text is, I can get, if I can get it on half a page and the page at the bottom . . .
John: How much, how much is it on this? Do you . . .
Guy: It's this big on this.
John: What you might do, but are you going, I mean, are you going to change the font and things?
Guy: Yes, I am.
John: Are you going to make them bigger?
Guy: It is, the typing is bigger on the, I have a disk. It's bigger plus a one half space, and it'll have two inches from the side. This is even more in.
John: Um, well, how big is your book going to be? I mean, what's the, is it going to be a regular sheet . . .
Guy: Yeah. It's a long . . .
John: Because I remember, it's an inch in . . .
Guy: Yeah, I know. Ah, two inches in.
John: Two?
Guy: Yeah.

The boys have been discussing more design features of Guy's book. I had told all of the author/illustrators to leave two-inch margins in order to bind
their books. They continue discussing how the photograph, "pictures," will be put with the text. John has an idea:

John: Or what you might do is have some like columns of text. A column here, a column here, a column here, and a column there, and then put pictures around the columns or something, sort of like they do in the Anastasia' Album.

John is suggesting using one of the books from the set of books I brought as a model for Guy to follow. Guy replies, "Yeah, something like that."

Guy seems to know that book language is different from conversational language, and is working on how to make his text reveal that difference. Three examples of Guy's choice of words for his text that demonstrate this occur in his first chapter, "The Age of Indians." The first sentence in the first paragraph is, "Ohio has been home to humans since 10,000 B.C." In the third paragraph are two more choices that seem awkward when read, "After the Mound Builders, Ohio housed other tribes." and "When explorers reached Ohio, they received generosity form the Indians." His meaning is clear, but he seems to be forcing his language into an uncomfortable fit. Guy seems to have a perception that book language must be different than oral narrative language. I think he's trying to mimic the author's voice that he's experienced from other books he's read.

Guy discusses his word choices with John in another excerpt from the same transcript.

Guy: There'd be chapter titles. Like I have this one, "The Overture to a City." 'Cause the overture is the beginning of a piece of music, I figured that would work here.

Guy's text must make sense, and he seems to want to add the zest that rich language brings to the blend of ideas and words.
Three of the group members (Alan hasn't joined them at this point in the discussion) talk about Guy's organization of his text and he tells one source of his information for his paper.

Jeanne: Are you doing to mention things like the canals?

Guy: Yes. Ah, that is later; 1811 number one, 1811 number two. Two text pages and that would take me basically (to) 1821, and we have text from 1821 and then I go to 1831, right, yeah. Then 1831, this is talking about the canals, mainly talking about the canals. I have a picture like a river scene.

Jeanne: Um, my dad, for one of the Civil War things, he has a badge, it goes right over his heart and it has one of the original Ohio state seals.

[Jeanne's family participates in Civil War reenactments.]

Guy: Oh.

Jeanne: Have you ever got one of those?

Guy: No.

Jeanne: Um, it has a canal boat on the center. Ohioans were extremely proud of the canal.

Guy: Oh yeah, yeah, because it, the canals opened up Ohio to transportation, to trade. Because in the past, you could not get from one part of Ohio to another. But now with these canals, you can go from Ohio Erie clear down to . . .

A nice river scene there and then I have this one paragraph talking about the state capital, the very beginnings of it, I'm going to take this picture of this (the next word he says is not clear) and put it on the bottom of the page because kind of old fashioned.
John: Where did you get that?

Guy: Um basically I went to the City Center (a shopping mall) and in it is a place where people like that are visiting Ohio can pick up brochures and I just got tons and tons of brochures.

As I observed this group of middle school students from another table in the room, I noticed the boys had drafts of their books. Jeanne's had her book in finished form. She was satisfied that it was done, ready to be bound. They were listening to each other, asking questions, looking at pages of each of their books. These students were accustomed to working with a partner or in a small group for peer editing. This was an experience that they were bringing from elementary school and from their sixth grade language arts classroom experiences. They had practiced asking questions of each other in order to clarify a point. They were open to suggestions for improving and/or adding to their text from a peer editor.

The group--Guy, John, and Jeanne--continue discussing Guy's book. They talk about German Village, a restored residential area of the city. Guy tells them that he's used "sticky notes" to mark places in his text where pictures will go. Jeanne comments, "That's a good idea." John says that he's noticed that Guy has used sticky notes in other places in his text.

The next part of the transcript shows Guy telling the others about taking his own photographs.

Guy: Yes. Plus I have my own pictures I took of German Village.

John: Oh, so you actually went and took . . .

Guy: Yeah.

John: Can you show us some of those?

Guy: Yes.
Jeanne: Yeah, because I thought this would be a very difficult book to do. You can't exactly go back to 1800.

Guy: No, but I can, it might be ahead of time, but I can go back to 1901. The Ohio penitentiary is gone now. I have a picture of it.

The conversation continues with John telling about having talked with someone who remembers the penitentiary buildings and Guy tells them what he know about the penitentiary. Alan has joined the group at this point and contributes what he knows about the penitentiary. The group expands their discussion of buildings that have been torn down and their concern about destroying part of their city's architectural history. Alan has joined the group now.

Guy: There are some very beautiful buildings which are now gone, Institution for the Feeble Minded.

John: And it's kind of scary because people, I mean, we've sat here and we've knocked those structures down, but those structures were up for over . . .

Alan: A part of Ohio history. I mean, people's heard of the state pen and stuff like that and now it's gone.

Jeanne: And also, it's just so weird because, um, things like the, um, place for the insane and the penitentiary, they're such beautiful buildings, and you just really don't think about beautiful buildings for that type of thing.

Guy's book has given these four students an opportunity to discuss a topic that is beyond the scope of their usual curriculum. They have talked about issues in the local news media—the demolition of the century-old state penitentiary building in Columbus was a hotly contested community issue. I
believe that their concerns for old buildings is somewhat unusual for middle school students. Prompted by one of their classmates writing a nonfiction book that makes reference to the older buildings in the community, they are able to bring their experiences and opinions to the discussion.

John. John did not complete his book. He told me his plans for a book of collected prayers. He was asking people from his church to give him copies of prayers that were special to them, and he was including familiar prayers such as mealtime blessings and evening prayers. John's religious beliefs and his church affiliations are very important to him. When he had part of the prayers he expected to include, he shared those with me.

He and I met several times after he showed me the first of colored pencil drawings that he was planning to use to illustrate his book of prayers. He brought a paperback covered book of inspirational reading that was illustrated with pastel colored art and said that he was using this as a model for his book. I reminded John that I had given the participants only two requirements for the books they would write: (a) the books must be nonfiction; and (b) they must be illustrated with photographs. A book of prayers would qualify as nonfiction, but he must also plan to use photographs in his book.

John had first asked me for film for his camera rather than a disposable camera which I had given the other participants. I brought him the film, but his next obstacle was not having his camera available. I then gave him a disposable camera. Next he told me that he and his mother were concerned about me paying to have the film processed. I assured him that I had planned for this.
We talked about how he could take photographs that would illustrate his book. I suggested that he ask church friends to pose for him as though they were praying, in church and outside church. I suggested that his mother and sister might pose for him at their kitchen table as though they were saying a blessing before eating. Even with these suggestions John still had no exposed film for me.

My next attempt to offer John options that would enable him to illustrate his book with photographs was to suggest that he could look through a large collection of photographs that I had taken and select images that would represent the feelings or petitions in the prayers for his book. His concern then was that some prayers in his collection were long, the text would fill the page. I suggested that maybe I could make color copies of photographs he selected and then we could copy the prayers over the color images. Nothing I could think of was the key to getting his book-making engine started.

When it came time for the participants to meet with me away from school, John did not have his text and photographic illustrations ready, so he did not come with the others. He was apologetic; he never sulked, but could not work with the requirement that he use photographs to illustrate his topic. He never suggested that there was another nonfiction topic that he would like to work on as an alternative.

John was an active participant in the small-group discussions. I included data he contributed from this source in other parts of the analysis of my findings.

Marge. Marge is a young woman with an effervescent personality. My experiences with her and my observations of her interactions with her peers show a person who is genuinely interested in the ideas of others. She can ask questions to clarify her understanding and to encourage the person with whom
she's conversing to extend their responses. Her responses to the classroom teacher's "Interest Inventory" mesh with my view of her as a gregarious adolescent.

3. What is your favorite subject or activity in school?
   My favorite subject is Language Arts because you never know where it'll lead to.

4. If you were given $1,000, how would you spend it?
   Some sort of charity or fund.

6. What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?
   I definitely intend to go to college. I'd like to major in teaching, music, or drama.

8. Tell me something about yourself that you think I should know.
   I'm really into volunteering to help. In fact, I plan to help out at the hospital this Christmas, if it's possible.

Marge displays the initiative to complete what she begins. Marge's most recent standardized achievement scores at the time she became a participant in this research were 96th percentile in reading and 99th percentile in language.

Marge participated in six small group discussions; read three of the six books in the research set; responded to two books in her reading log; participated in an exit interview; completed an "Interest Inventory"; was the student interviewer on the video taped school morning TV broadcast; and wrote and illustrated a nonfiction/informational book.

The title of Marge's books is *What's Up in There?* The topic is the human voice. Choosing this seems to be an extension Marge's participation in the school's vocal music program and her involvement with the student-produced morning school TV broadcast. Marge made her topic choice
confidently, but struggled through the process of readying her book for binding. When I met with her after the winter vacation break, I sensed that she had reached an obstacle not uncommon to writers, "writer's block." During a conference with her, I realized that she needed help locating more information resources. I told her to talk with her vocal music teacher and the school nurse. I also offered to photocopy diagrams of the anatomy of the human voice from a book she was using.

Marge compiled her information in the usual school-assignment-multipage-report format and put the pages of photocopied, hand-colored diagrams with the text pages. I talked with her about dividing her text into sections for the pages of her book and deciding which of the diagrams illustrated parts of the information in her text. She also seemed to be having trouble figuring out what she would photograph that would illustrate her book along with the diagrams she'd chosen.

On February 23, 1997, I arranged to take the participants, who were writing books, to a location away from their school to work on putting their text and their photographs together. We needed a space where we could work uninterrupted. Some of the participants needed access to a computer for word processing. I also provided a variety of art materials for these author/illustrators to use as they made and executed design decisions.

When we arrived, we talked about what they would need and what they should be doing. The district gifted coordinator agreed to be available to assist the students. Having the second adult made it possible to give more attention to each middle schooler.

Another advantage to having all the students together was the help they gave each other. I talked with Marge about using other students in the group to
stage or create vignettes that would show correct and incorrect use/care of the voice. Information about actions that might damage one's voice followed Marge's written description of the mechanics of voice production. Marge, Alan, and Helen collaborated, Alan and Helen being the actors and Marge taking the photographs (see Appendix K).

Marge talked about this during her exit interview on May 28, 1998:

researcher: How will your audience (for your book) find your illustrations for your text interesting?

Marge: Maybe because I know Alan and Helen, who is another girl in the study thing. They were my models for this, it was kind of like a sudden thing. I think maybe that might be interesting for people that know them and also that people their age, they can relate to, and the pictures are just kind of interesting. It doesn't look like they're, you know, fake or anything even though they are (she laughs). They (Alan and Helen) got kinda seriously put into the situations.

In this same exit interview Marge talks about the advantages of taking her photographs after she had written her text.

researcher: . . . Marge, what part of the process of creating your book are you most likely to use again?

Marge: I'm kind of glad that I took those pictures after I had, you know, found what was in my book and what I was writing about, because I saw a lot of people scrambling to try and write their book around their pictures, which really doesn't work, because a picture is not something you can base an entire book on. So, I think I'm kind of glad that I did it that way, because I was able to make the book
seem more together, rather than have a picture that I had to write around and get to fit together that way.

researcher: How do the photographs contribute to the information in your book?

Marge: The ones with Helen and Alan, they kind of show you that you do do the things that cause damage to your voice everyday, because I put them in everyday situations doing that stuff (the actions that can cause damage to the voice), and I kind of think that sets that off, and I also had the diagrams and things, and I think it's important for people to see there is a lot in there (in the voice box), and it's just not two little cords that vibrate together.

Another hurdle came after Marge's photographs were developed. Marge was laboring with design decisions. I showed her how she could cut away extraneous parts of her photographs; how she could place the photographs she choose for a page of text in other than a linear formation; how she could use other materials to add an element to her photographs. We talked about borders how were used in Anastasia's Album. Marge decided that creating page borders would add to the visual appeal of her book. The next time we met I brought self-adhering, narrow, colored strips, the kind used to decorate scrapbook pages (see Appendix K).

Marge needed more time with me that other of the participants, not because she was less imaginative or less motivated. I believe that she was not experienced with photography as an art form. She has had little experience taking photographs and little contact with photographs as art objects. While my conclusion is that none of these seventh grade participants had experienced photography as an art form, Marge seemed more constrained by her
inexperience than all but one of the students who began the process of writing and illustrating her/his own nonfiction/informational book. This other individual did not complete his book.

After her book is completed and bound, Marge sees her book as a fact book. In the exit interview with her on May 28, 1997, I ask her which of the books in my set of six book is hers most like.

Marge: Mine's a lot different than most of them. The closest I guess is On the Top of the World, I think that's the title. Because the rest of them are showing, you know, lifetime and people and everything, and mine (is) like a fact book. So that one (she's referring to Over the Top of the World) was more, it didn't really follow people's dreams or anything. It just kind of showed you what happens and stuff. Mine's closest to that, if anything.

Lily and Jake: Lily and Jake decided to work together. They were the only participants to be co author/illustrators. Their book is a special interest to me because of the topic they chose, ghosts, and the photographs they made as well the book being a collaborative undertaking.

Their book begins with the "Introduction" that tells the reader what to expect, "As you read this book you will learn spooky or maybe kooky tales of people just like you and me who have 'seen' or 'heard' ghosts." There are four chapters, and the book ends with the "Conclusion." Chapter One "What is a Ghost" gives the reader a definition. Chapters Two, Three, and Four tell about "Famous Ghost," "Historical Ghosts," and "Things Related to Ghosts." In Lily's and Jake's joint exit interview, the subject of how their books is organized was addressed when I asked, "What part of the process of creating your book are you most likely to use again?" (June 4, 1998)
Lily: Well, how to put it in an order that makes sense, like categorizing things, we did national ghost stories and global ghost stories and Ohio ghost stories... (June 4)

In the photographs that Lily and Jake took they were able to show "ghostliness," not a particularly easy feat. On page one it looks as though the photographer has taken a close-up of a glowing light bulb. The photograph for page two is shades of teal blue with overlapping circles, like spots-before-my-eyes. On page four there are three blurred people standing outside. In the section about "Radiant Boys," pages 5, 6, and 7, the reflection of a camera's flash is on the smooth surface of a closed door. The portion of the text that is directly above this photograph says, "After about a two hour sleep, the viscount was awakened by a beautiful glowing boy who was staring at him intently. Then the boy faded out and completely vanished." (See Appendix K.)

Lily and Jake take flash photographs of the photographer looking into a mirror, of a model airplane, of a person's shadow on a wall, and of a black cat. They vary the location of the photographs/illustration on the pages of their book. I asked them, "What about choosing or deciding on the illustrations to go with your text? Tell me a little bit about that process." (June 4)

Jake: That was kind of hard because we couldn't just look in a dictionary and look for, up a word and it would have a picture. It was really hard to find pictures.

researcher: ... Do you recall how you decided about that, or how you staged your photographs?

Jake: I don't know. I just like took a bunch of pictures of weird things.

Lily: He took weird things, and I tried to remember some stuff that I had from my text, like when you see the white wall with a shadow on it.
That was supposed to be Mary Surratt (page 13) walking through her, I don't know, ghostly path I guess you'd say, so I used my sister to do that, and then the one where the boy was buried in the yard (page 14) I used a tree and leaves. It's just like something that sort of illustrates it . . .

researcher: It seems to me that your illustr—, your photographs that you took, gave me as the reader space to put my own imagination . . . was that your intent . . . when you chose your photographs?

Lily: Well, yeah I think it was, because when you see the shadow, you can just like sort of picture this ghostly imagine walking down . . . a path, or (in) the yard, you could like see body parts. Well, I could in my head, but I didn't know if anyone else could.

Lily and Jake put no captions with their photographs. Lily explains this and at the same time, accounts for the abstractness of the photographs.

Lily: . . . we left ours with no captions, because we thought, well if you (anyone who would read the book) read it, you could just understand what we were doing with the pictures.

The Other Books and Authors:

Jeanne, Helen, Linda, Kristi, Alan, Mary. Jeanne wrote about how to care for a pet hedgehog, *Hedgehog, Shrubswines & Bushpigs And others of that ike: A complete pet owner's manual*. She was the first done. She brought me her book complete, the text and the illustrations placed parallel to the 11 inch side of the paper, and the pages printed back to back. She is the only one of the participants who prepared their book with back to back pages like commercially published books. The verso of her title page explains her title; gives some
biographical information about the hedgehog; provides something about the
author; and credits a source book that Jeanne used.

Jeanne's book is unique to the set of participants' books, because she
included her own poetry about hedgehogs. One of her fellow author/illustrators,
Alan, commented that he remembered having heard these poems in sixth grade.
Jeanne had talked with me about her hedgehog, and our conversation coupled
with Alan recollection made me think that Jeanne had written about her
hedgehog before. Her "complete owner's manual" offered an opportunity to
expand the topic.

Two girls wrote about their cats, Helen and Linda. Linda's book, titled,
Cats, has a dedication page, table of contents, an introduction, and five
chapters. Most of her photographs of her cat Amelia have captions. The author
speaks directly to her reader, addressing the reader with "you" and referring to
"your" cat. Linda used photographs for the front and back covers of her book
when it was bound.

Linda's book is, "about how to take care of your cat." Helen's is titled A
day in the life of . . . CATS. The design of both books is similar. One difference
is Helen has no table of contents, but has divided her text into chapters. Helen's
photographs are captioned. I asked Helen what the photographs in her book
contribute to the information in her book.

Helen: They like let you see the cat's personality better . . . instead of just
trying to imagine it yourself, you can actually see what they're like,
and you can see them better. (May 28)

Helen's last chapter is "In Summary." This chapter is short, one
paragraph, and on the page are two photographs with captions. The text on this
page brings closure to the book by Helen telling the reader that the reader "now
know a little about the day in the life of my cats.” Helen uses colored pencils to
decorate the hard cover of her book. She also decorates the endpapers of her
book by repeatedly printing the word MEOW. All of the participants chose to
use colored paper for endpapers, but only Helen and another participant, Kristi,
made decorated endpapers.

Kristi identifies herself as both the author and as the photographer on the
cover of her book about gymnastics. None of the other participants credited
themselves as the illustrator or as the photographer. On the title page Kristi
included "Copyright 1998 All Rights Reserved." Only Kristi, and two others have
copyright declarations on their books. Most of Kristi's photographs are below
her text. She included captions with five of the twelve photographs she used to
illustrate her text. Kristi talked about the photographs in her book during the exit
interview on June 4, 1998.

researcher: How did you plan for your book? How did you get it to its final form
that you were pleased with?

Kristi: I got to take my own pictures, and I didn't have someone else do it
for me. So then I could know exactly what I wanted.

researcher: How did the photographs in your book contribute to the information
in your book?

Kristi: Well, if there weren't pictures in a book, then it would be kind of
hard to understand, because some people don't know what that
looks, what the equipment looks like.

Kristi concludes her book with "About the Author." She says, "I am an
experienced gymnast, and know how much effort goes into being the best you
can be. I have placed first on floor, second on beam and bars, and third on all
around." Like information given in books she read for this research, Kristi
includes information in her book that establishes her credentials as an authority on her topic.

Alan is not identified gifted, but has strong scores on the standardized tests cognitive ability and academic achievement. His IQ score is 115, above average, and his reading score is in 84th percentile. He was included to fill the roster in the Accelerated Studies Program language arts class because school records show him as a strong, consistent student. After I became aware that some of the students in the class who had not been initially selected to participate were concerned, I decided to include all interested students. Alan was a student who wanted to participate.

Alan's parents are both teachers. His father is an elementary school principal. Alan told me that his book would be about his mom. He begins his book, Susan D——: The Life of a Teacher and Mom with:

"I have chosen to write about my mom because I think it's interesting how someone like a teacher can balance her job and also be a mom. I also chose my mom because I really love her; I always have and always will. She has helped me through the hard times and been there for the happy ones. I know I can always talk to her. My point is my mom is the most important, if not one of the most important person(s) I know."

This introduces the reader to the author as well as to his subject. Alan is an outgoing, optimistic young man. His family—his father, younger brother, and the beagle, Barney—is close-knit and important to him.

Alan has a purpose for his book and recognizes that the audience for his book might not be a large one. In the exit interview (May 28) Alan say that family members will know what's going on and that because of this, they'll find his account interesting. I understand him to say that if his family reads this book, they will see that his mom's interests and personality have remained the same.
from her girlhood to her adulthood. Alan also says that people who don't know
his mom "... could see where she works and what kind of stuff she does and
stuff like that." (May 28)

I asked Alan what his reaction was to being a part of my research.

Alan: I guess I just really liked it because it sort of gave me what a
publisher would go through, what an author would go through, and
how they would publish books, and how they, all the work they
would have to go through to make the rough draft and then take
pictures and then make the dummy and then make another rough
draft and then set, lay it out on a computer and then make sure
everything is ok with the computer and then to all the pictures and
it's just a really, really long process and I guess that sort of was, I
was really awestruck when I thought about all of that.

I think Alan is saying that creating his own book, gave him insight into the
process that authors of books he reads, use from the conception of the idea to
the finished, published book.

Mary wrote The Houston Comets. She is a fan of women's professional
basketball, in particular the Comets and one of the team's star players, Sheryl
Swoops. Mary gave her text the voice of a sports reporter. Her words allow me
to hear her account as though Mary were behind a commentator's desk on
ESPN. Her introduction begins, "The Houston Comets selected as one of the
WNBA's charter team, for the inaugural WNBA season."

In Chapter 1 "The Player" Mary write from personal experience having
met Janeth Arcain at a game.

"Janeth Arcain is just about the most unselfish player I have ever
seen. She represents the term "teamwork." Janeth is a 5'11"
forward, who came to the United States to play in the WNBA from
Brazil. She wears the #9 on her jersey. Janeth is a very versatile player. She will do any job on the court you ask her to.”

Mary writes about player “coming out of” a college. She says that players who facilitate scoring opportunities “open up things for people.” She describes a member of the Houston Comets as "definitely a team player." Another example of Mary’s sportswriter voice is, “Because Houston played so well against the other teams in the WNBA, they earned home-court advantage throughout the playoffs.”

I asked Mary, "How was this kind of writing different than other kinds of writing you've done?"

Mary: Well, I guess in school most of the time, I have to have a prompt, and I have to write about something, but for this I could choose what I wanted to write about, so it was more like open to what I wanted to do.

Mary used photographs she took and newspaper articles to illustrate her book. When she talked with me about using the newspaper articles, I told her as I had Guy, that if she listed the sources for the articles it would be all right. During the exit interview with her (April 30), I asked how the photographs in her book contributed to the information in the book. Her answer was similar to answers from other participants to this question. These seventh graders understand that the photographs and the text are working together.

Mary: I guess that what I say in the text you can see pictures of it or an article or whatever, so if you don't understand something from the text, then you can get it from the picture.

**Summary**

These readers read at least three of the six books I brought for this research. Their discussions of the books focused on specific elements of the
text and specific features of the photographs and of the book's design. These readers demonstrated their ability to read critically; they expected to understand what they read and saw and to expand their information repertoires. They demonstrated that they used information from multiple sources within books, from their fellow readers, and from prior experiences to make sense of these nonfiction/informational books.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: THE RESPONSE OF GIFTED MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS TO NONFICTION/INFORMATIONAL BOOKS ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

Introduction

This study was undertaken to observe and describe the responses of a group of seventh grade students, identified as gifted and talented in the academic area of language arts, to a set of six books classified as nonfiction/informational literature and illustrated with photographs. The questions that guided this research were:

1. In what ways do gifted middle school readers respond to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs?

2. In what ways do photographs, used as illustration in nonfiction/informational books, contribute to the meaning gifted middle school readers make with the text, and in what ways do the photographs elicit emotional or empathetic response from these readers?

3. What concepts about the genre of nonfiction/informational literature are held by these gifted middle school readers?

Participants in my research responded with oral language, written language, and with artistic expression to the books they read. Their attitude and
demeanor toward me, toward each other, and toward their participation in my year-long study also shed light on their response—ways in which these seventh graders demonstrated their engagement with a particular set of nonfiction/informational books.

The findings from my data show that the responses of these readers can be grouped by four large categories:

1. the text and graphic design features
2. feelings of individuals in the books and to their own feelings as they read
3. characteristics of nonfiction/informational books
4. specific and inferred information from photographs used as illustrations

All four categories speak to how these readers responded to the books they read—the first research question. When the data in each category are considered separately, the responses in the second and fourth categories address the second research question, and the responses in the first and third categories address the third research question.

In the first part of this chapter I will discuss ways in which the participants responded: writing in their reading logs; talking about their books; creating their own books; exit interviews; and appearing on the school morning TV broadcast. I will include my observations of the participants and other adults as I discuss what the participants did in each of these data collection situations.

I will present my findings in the second part of this chapter. I will discuss findings from each of the four categories that emerged from my analysis of the data. I will generate implications for using nonfiction/informational literature with
gifted middle school language arts students; implications for preservice teacher education; and implications for inservice educators.

The chapter concludes with suggestions for other research that could follow this study.

Participants' Response

In this section I will discuss ways in which a group of 18 seventh grade students, 15 identified as gifted in the academic area of language arts, responded to a particular set of nonfiction/informational books.

The first responses I saw and heard occurred at the beginning of my study when I brought four sets of the six books used for this research to the language arts classroom. This group of readers chose to participate after hearing about what they would be expected to do and being able to look through the books. Making this choice can be understood as response from these seventh grade students. They recognized that their opinions as critical readers were valued. The visual features of the books, outside and in, caught the attention of these readers sufficiently to interest them in reading more closely.

This initial response, choosing to participate, can be seen in light of the fourth stance Langer (1990a) theorizes that the reader takes as she engages with text, Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience. The middle school readers in my study may have skimmed text inside the covers of the books, but reading at this point involved reading features of the books and making judgments about their understanding of what the books could be about. There was an evaluation of the experience based on their perception of the content and their expectations of nonfiction/informational books.

They were reading efferently as Rosenblatt (1978) describes reading for information, information about what the six books in my set were about, how long
might it take to read any of them, and weighing those considerations against their other obligations and interests. While collecting initial information to make their decision whether or not to participate, the readers were also responding aesthetically, Rosenblatt's term for the reader paying attention to the images, feelings, and attitudes that the reading evoked for her.

**Written response.** If one takes quantity as a measure of kind, or quality, or depth of the responses, the written responses in the reading logs were briefer, fewer, and less revealing than the oral responses from the small-group discussions. The number and length of the written responses can be seen as constrained by the set of specific questions that I gave the participants. Responses in the logs generally addressed only the information for which the questions seemed to be probing. I didn't find extended responses that included the varied connections the participants made as they talked about the books they read.

The exceptions to short written answers came from Guy and Edie. Their written responses were longer and showed a remarkable ability to describe what was going on in their mind as they were considering what they were reading. Metacognition, the ability to reflect on or be aware of one's own thinking, is a characteristic of many gifted learners (Sternberg, 1985). Making meaning from what one reads is a kind of problem solving, and being able to measure and weigh new information against prior experiences facilitates new learning. This enables the reader to pursue new or novel ideas and integrate them in ways that expand or change a former understanding.

Without their reading logs, I would not have glimpsed what these two participants were thinking as they read. For the purpose of this research, having multiple sources of data was the best method for investigating my research
questions. There was wider participation in the small-group discussions. These conversations provided a stereoscopic view of the response of these seventh grade gifted language arts students, by allowing me to observe group interaction and individual response, the same scene from slightly different angles.

Small group discussions. The membership of each small group changed from session to session. I wanted different sets of participants in order to observe how a variety of groupings might affect what these middle school readers would say about the books they read. I varied the number of participants in a group from three to seven. Most often I had four participants together.

I varied the number of times participants were part of a small group discussion based largely on whether or not they were identified as gifted. I included non-identified students who were part of the class with which I worked, because of their strong interest in participating. Three of the participants were not identified as gifted, but had scores on a standardized test of cognitive ability that were above the norm (115, 125, and 114) and scores in the 80th percentile or above on a standardized achievement test in the area of reading or language.

I observed no differences between identified and not-identified students during any of the small-group discussions in the quality of the discussion, the level of interaction by the participants, or the willingness of the participants to leave their language arts class to talk about the books they were reading. I was struck by the respect the participants demonstrated for the opinions of others in their discussion group.

Participation in small-group discussions reinforces the idea that gifted learners benefit from being with their intellectual peers. Tready (1978) says that interaction with intellectual peers provides the opportunity to explore topics in
depth and that this exploration satisfies both cognitive and affective needs through association with others of similar aptitudes and interests.

Applebee (1994) wrote about the importance of developing conversational competencies (written and oral) in the classroom, the importance of teaching students how to talk about topics of interest and concern and to make connections that lead to new understandings. He says that encouraging discussion undergirds instruction guided by "... views (of) learning as constructed by the learner rather than inherited intact ... that emphasizes thoughtfulness and reflection" (p. 46).

Leal's (1993) investigation of collaborative classroom talk showed "... the acquisition of knowledge is not only found in the personal construction of meaning from a text, but also in the context of social interaction with peers" (p. 115).

Scott (1994) worked with 7th grade students as "literature circles" were formed to promote "teacher supported, but student led" (p. 37) discussions of books these middle schoolers were reading. She found that students gained a sense of ownership and empowerment as she incorporated student book choices and student planned literature discussions as parts of the classroom routine. Scott noted seven outcomes using this strategy that she had not observed in teacher-led, whole-class literature discussions:

1. more students participated in literature discussions;
2. literature circles facilitated students talking about books and also asking questions to clarify their understanding;
3. the social nature of young adolescents sparked prolonged engagement with text;
4. small group discussions promoted a sense of safety to explore new ideas that were raised by the book or the comments of others;
5. readers recognized, their growth as critical readers;
6. "active inquiry, problem solving and communication" (p. 38), skills that transfer as strategies for approaching other real life situations were exercised;
7. "students become more proficient in responding to text in different ways" (p. 38).

The results of my study support Scott's findings.

Watson (1990) wrote about readers immersing themselves in the lives of characters when readers can talk about what they're reading with others who are reading the same book. This lived-through experience is the kind of involvement I observed from the participants in this research.

**Participants' own books.** Of the 18 seventh grade students who participated in this research, 12 agreed to write and illustrate their own nonfiction/informational books. Eleven participants completed books, two of the students co-authored a book. Ten books were written and illustrated with photographs.

I told the participants that they could choose their topics and that the only parameters I was establishing were: (a) the text had to be nonfiction; and (b) the book had to be illustrated with photographs. I told the participants that I would supply either a disposable camera or would supply film, if they wanted to use their own camera. I told them I would assume the expense of processing their film, and that we would publish their books with a hard cover.

I did not press the participants for a topic decision early in the research process, but did ask them to give me their topic choice by October, about six
weeks into the study. My plan was to give the participants sufficient time to consider their topic choice and to read several of the books I brought for my research.

I shared the books *Worry Stone* and *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse* with the students. My purpose when sharing *Worry Stone*, illustrated with very fine watercolor paintings, was to demonstrate that the art for books brings its own narrative and at the same time creates an enriched narrative with that of the text. For most of the students, this reminded them of earlier experiences they had with picturebooks in elementary school and in their sixth and seventh grade language arts classes. In the elementary schools that feed into this middle school, many teachers read aloud and encourage discussion of picturebooks and illustrated books that include talking about the art and the text. The Accelerated Studies Program sixth grade language arts teacher, who had these students in her class, included picturebook collections of poetry and folktales as part of her language arts instruction. The language arts teacher of the participants in this research also used picturebooks as part of the memoirs unit that began this school year.

My purpose when sharing *The Life and Death of Crazy Horse*, illustrated with black and white photographs taken in the late 1920's of pictographs drawn by Amos Bad Heart Bull, was to draw the attention of these seventh grade students to kinds of information a reader could find in this book beyond obvious biographical and historical information. Examples of this "other information" are: the information about the publisher—what this tells the reader about the book; the design of the book—that designing the book is a distinct part of the process of producing the book; a summary of the content on the flaps of the book jacket;
information about the author that contributes to the reader's perception of the author as an authority.

These two times when I spoke to the whole class were the extent of any interaction that could be considered direct instruction during this research. My intent was to call attention or to remind these students of features of books with which I felt they had some experience. I also wondered which of these features would appear in the books the participants wrote and illustrated.

The topics that the participants chose were varied and did reflect the participants' interests.

Exit interviews. I included exit interviews as a source of data in order to collect participants' perceptions of the research at the end of the school year. I only had exit interviews with participants who created their own books and who had worked with me since school started in August. I was interested in how they viewed the experience as participants who had contributed to all of the data sources. What would they tell me in exit interviews that I hadn't learned from other data collections?

I began the audio taped exit interviews by asking, "Who is the audience for your book?" Without hesitation, which indicated to me that these seventh graders understood that books have some distinguishable audience of readers, the participants told me that the audience for each of their books would have a particular interest in the book's topic.

Sue: Pretty much anybody could, I think, but like people in England don't understand that kind of stuff . . . maybe somebody that was thinking about running for a levy (she knows it's ballot issue) . . . or a bond issue. (May 4)
Jeanne: Probably somebody who would be interested in hedgehogs. Just interested in learning about them, but more specifically, if they wanted one for a pet. (May 4)

Lily: The stories are like fun, so little kids could scare each other with them, but they are also pretty factual, so like older people could read them. It's like a factual fun book, so I guess it's for all ages. (June 4)

Jake said that he thought the audience for his and Lily's book about ghosts is more limited. Guy can identify his intended audience. Linda sees her audience as limited to first-time cat owners.

Jake: I think more of little kids . . . like 5th and 6th grade. (June 4)

Guy: Probably someone who's kind of interested in the history of Columbus . . . large cities like New York and Washington D.C. get lots of publicity over their history, but smaller cities like Columbus really don't. (June 4)

researcher: Is it more likely to be used by one particular age group than another?

Guy: Probably the older adults and like middle schoolers to adults, I'd say. Young kids like elementary school is, probably wouldn't enjoy it, because it's meant for an older, you know, kind of person. (April 28)

Linda: All the people who are planning to buy a cat, and they need to learn like how to take care of it, and what to get it. (May 28)

Part of critical reading is being aware that authors have readers in mind as they write, that information and the narrative are tailored with hems that can be adjusted. Writing and reading are purposeful, deliberate action.
I wondered what part of the process of creating their own books these participants thought they would use again. Would they see writing and illustrating their own books as part of this research useful and satisfying? I asked, "What parts of the process of creating your book are you most likely to use again? (Question 4) and "What else would you like me to know about working on this research with me? (Question 12, the last exit interview question) Repeatedly the participants said that the planning and deciding how their information would be organized was useful. Mary told me that she now thinks of herself as more of an author. She said this was because she could choose the topic for her book. The importance of choice was noted by other participants also. Marge said that the writing came first and decisions about how to plan photographs that would illustrate her information came afterward. This planning process was a useful experience for Marge.

I interviewed Marge and Alan together on May 28. Marge's book was about the human voice, and Alan's book was about this mother.

Researcher: What else would you like me to know about working on this research with me, the process of being involved in this research group?

Alan: I guess I really liked it because it sort of gave me what publisher would go through and an author would go through and how they would publish books and how they, all the work they would have to go through to make the rough draft and then take the pictures and then make the dummy and then make another rough draft and then set, lay it out on a computer and then make sure everything is ok with the computer and then the pictures and it's just a really long
process and I guess that sort of was, I was really awestruck when I did all of that.

researcher: One of my intents was not to make this research seem like extra work to you, to have it be in some way a part of what you were doing in Mrs. Dash's class. How successful do you think I was?

Alan: Well, sometimes you would like take us out of class and that was, we would sort of miss a few things, but other than that, it was, it just worked out really well. I mean, whenever I had time I would just start working on it a little bit and then I would always do whatever I needed to get done first and that was always, I know it wasn't like it had a set time due and I wasn't getting like a grade for it or something, so I guess I sort of just took a laid back approach to it and it sort of, worked out pretty well I thought.

researcher: What about you, Marge, what would you like me to know?

Marge: I think it's important that you know that this kind of opened a whole new world for all of us. That did this because you (the participants) have had to write books (before), but those were assignments that we were getting graded on and we had certain topics we had to do and it had to be this and it had to be that. But with this one, the only thing we had to do was write it from fact and I think the thing was that it's something we can look back on in our future . . . and it might have even opened careers for a couple people like I know a couple that are, that just set their entire soul into their book . . .

None of the participants said that reading and discussing the nonfiction/informational books used for this research or creating their own books interfered with their usual school work or activities. The components of choice
and extended time were mentioned as valued by this group of gifted seventh grade language arts students. While there were no grades involved, the participants were aware of certain expectations and saw me as available for assistance.

"Good Morning Summit Park!" I approached the Summit Park teacher who supervises the student-produced morning TV broadcast and asked her if some of the participants could appear to talk about the nonfiction/informational books they had written. The format for this school TV show is that of a morning news program, news about what's going on in the building. She agreed and said that she would make arrangements with the participants. Several of the participants were part of the broadcast staff.

I told the participants that they could appear on "Good Morning Summit Park" and that they would have to decide who would appear and what they would say. Some of the participants were interested, others were not. They decided that Mary, Kristi, and Guy would be interviewed by Marge. Alan operated the video camera for the program, so he was recording the program during which the participants appeared. The following transcript is from the program video taped May 29.

Marge: Good morning Summit Park. I'm Marge Evans and I'm here with three special people from Mrs. Dash's Accelerated Language Arts class. This is Mary Poor, Kristi Rader, and Guy Peters.

Kristi: We did a research project for Mrs. Wolfenbarger, the gifted coordinator, to see how middle schoolers reacted to nonfiction books.
Marge: Guy, what activities did you do to prove how these middle schoolers reacted?

Guy: Well, first we read these six nonfiction books that Mrs. Wolfenbarger provided. Then we wrote our responses to these books in our own journal, and then we wrote our own nonfiction book about any topic that we chose and illustrated that book with photographs.

Marge: Mary how did you choose your topic?

Mary: My topic is on the Houston Comets of the WBA and I chose this topic because I'm a big fan of the Houston Comets.

Marge: Kristi, how did you acquire your pictures?

Kristi: I went to gymnastics meets and took pictures of the gymnasts.

Marge: Guy, how did you receive yours?

Guy: Well, basically my book is about the history of Columbus, so I drove around Columbus in a car and took pictures of historical sites that I talked about in my book, out the car window.

Marge: Mary how did you get yours?

Mary: Last summer I was able to go to a Houston Comets game and I took pictures of the players as well as cut articles out of newspapers.

Marge: As the three of you finish up this project, is there anything that sticks out in your mind about it?

Kristi: Well, I liked doing a book about what I was really interested in.

Marge: How about you?

Guy: I think it was neat to get to explore a topic in a book kind of form and illustrate that topic with photographs that I took.
Mary: I was glad I got to do this book and learn more about one of my favorite topics and share the information with others.

Marge: That's great.

Thank you for tuning in with my three special people from Mrs. Dash's class and we hope to see your right back here on Monday.

This video tape of the morning TV broadcast reveals language abilities of some participants in a context different from other situations in which I collected data. It also shows participants' response to reading and writing nonfiction/informational books that is substantively similar to their response during small-group discussions and exit interviews.

Marge, the interviewer, assumes the role and voice of a news reporter. She asks Kristi, "What did you just conclude doing?" She doesn't use finish or complete, which would be more likely for Marge to say in every day conversation. She asks Guy, "... what activities did you do to prove how these middle schoolers reacted?" I think this indicates Marge's understanding that research is finding an empirically verifiable outcome. I am sure I was careful to tell the students that I was going to describe their reactions to reading some nonfiction/informational books. Another example of Marge's reporter voice is heard when she asks Kristi, "How did you acquire your pictures?" She uses receive and get when asking others about their photographs later in the interview. This may just be Marge wanting to vary her questions. It is also of interest to me that Marge used pictures instead of photographs, because I think that these participants did not readily recognize photography as an art form.
Applications to Teaching Gifted Middle School Language Arts Students

What I observed by watching and listening to the participants and other adults who were involved with the participants added to or repeated experiences that I have had with gifted learners. Gifted learners need to be offered choices, to feel they are participating in decisions affecting their education. Students identified as verbally gifted thrive with experiences that provide challenges which strengthen and extend their exceptional facility for language. When classroom experiences are planned to incorporate students' interests and curiosity, instruction can accommodate mandates of the curriculum and provide challenge that encourages intellectual and social growth.

Accepted pedagogical practice in education today involves the classroom teacher implementing an academic course of study using strategies that are reflected in long range and daily instructional plans. In the case of language arts in North-Eastern City Schools, the course of study focuses on specific competencies or skills. When the learner can use these skills fluently, she demonstrates new levels of success as a reader, writer, speaker, and listener. The learning experiences that the teacher provides and the materials she makes available impact how the needs of gifted learners are met.

Strategies for adjusting instruction to address the needs of gifted language art students should be as much a part of preservice education as learning subject content and theory. Some strategies that are effective with gifted language arts students are compacting, tiered assignments, independent/extended studies. When compacting the language arts curriculum, the student's competencies are determined and plans for instructing new skills and introducing new content are made. The teacher uses testing data available, such as nationally normed, standardized achievement tests and state mandated
proficiency tests, as well as teacher-made pretests for specific portions of the course of study. This creates time for the student to investigate other interests, work with content in greater depth, and pursue topics about which she is passionate.

Using tiered assignments to differentiate the curriculum for gifted learners, the teacher plans varied levels of activities and assignments so that the student will build on her prior knowledge and is challenged to apply and extend her learning. Inherent in this strategy is choice, building individual responsibility, and assessment.

Planning extended projects, such as writing nonfiction books illustrated with photographs done by participants in my study, must involve decisions about how the work will be assessed and reported over several grading periods. Having materials, resources, and technology available is necessary as well as sufficient work space, and storage space. Class periods of sufficient length or the flexibility to extend class time facilitates extended projects. Piirto (1994) lists extended student initiated projects, flexible scheduling, and active inquiry as components to include when developing a program for gifted learners.

Gifted readers will talk about what they read. The nonfiction/informational books available for readers, the kinds of questions posed, and the time set aside will encourage or limit the discussion of nonfiction/informational books. Knowing that their opinions are valued and respected will prompt sharing these insights. Talking about a book that others have read is pleasurable. Collaborating with capable peers encourages expanded understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Discussion enables the participants "to consider other perspectives and rethink prior knowledge leading to new interpretations" (Leal, 1993, p. 114).
Major Findings

The major findings for using nonfiction/informational literature with gifted language arts students are derived from my analysis of the data. I will describe findings from each of the four categories of response:

1. to the text and graphic design features
2. to feelings of individuals in the books and to their own feelings as they read
3. to characteristics of nonfiction/informational books
4. to specific and inferred information from photographs used as illustrations

Organization and design features. Research shows that specific classroom instruction about the organizational structures most commonly used by authors of nonfiction/informational books is minimal, and many readers lack experiences in reading nonfiction/informational books (Armbruster, Anderson, Armstrong, Wise, Janisch, and Meyer, 1991).

Data from the participants in my study showed that they could identify how the content of the books they read was organized. The terminology they used was limited in the sense that they did not seem to have a vocabulary specific to nonfiction/informational books like setting, plot, character, etc. used to discuss fictional literature. The one specific term that they used to describe the organization of nonfiction/informational books to describe content was a time sequence. They also recognized and could discuss that Jim Murphy organized his information about the Chicago Fire by the describing experiences of four different individuals. Participants told me that they didn't like Orphan Train Rider being divided into chapters that alternated between the boy's experience and
Participants became aware of differences in the way authors organized their texts. Because the participants did not use specific terminology or make connections to other books organized in similar ways, I wondered how the responses of these readers would differ if they had been instructed about various patterns of organization in nonfiction/informational literature. Billmeyer and Barton (1998) listed these patterns of organization:

1. **Chronological sequence**: organizes events in a time sequence.

2. **Comparison and contrast**: organizes information about two or more topics according to their similarities and differences.

3. **Concept/definition**: organizes information about a word or phrase that represents a generalized idea of a class of persons, places, things, and events. Concept/definition text defines concept by presenting its characteristics or attributes, and sometimes examples of each.

4. **Description**: organizes facts that describe the characteristics of specific persons, places, things and events. These characteristics do not need to be given in any particular order.

5. **Episode**: organizes a large body of information about specific events.

6. **Generalization/principle**: organizes information into general statements with supporting examples.

7. **Process/cause-effect**: organizes information into a series of steps leading to a specific product; or organizes information in a causal sequence that leads to a specific outcome (p. 33-34).

During the exit interviews with the participants who wrote and illustrated their own nonfiction/informational book, I asked each participant which of the
books they read was most like their own book. The similarities they described were organizational patterns not similar topics.

Sue told me that her book was unlike any of the books from the set of books I brought, because the ones she read were told "... from the perspective of people, of individuals... and my book I just kind of told about information, but it really wasn't from a perspective of a person." (audio tape, May 4) Jeanne told me her book is "kind of like a manual or even like a how-to, how to care for a hedgehog." (audio tape, May 4) Kristi told me that her book about gymnastics was most like Over the Top of the World because "... some people don't know what the equipment looks like so they take, so that's why I took the pictures and that's kind of what it does in there." (audio tape, June 4)

Alan, whose book about his mother was the only student book about an individual, told me that his book was most like Anastasia's Album "... because it's sort of about a family member and one side of an entire family and sort of how this person's life... like a chronological book." (audio tape, May 28) Marge said, "Mine's a lot different than most of them (the six books in the research set). The closest I guess is On (Over) the Top of the World... because the rest of them are showing, you know, lifetime and people and everything and mine was like a fact book... it didn't really follow people's dreams or anything, it just kind of showed you what happens and stuff." (audio tape, May 28)

When this research began, participants could describe very broad characteristics of nonfiction/informational books, such as nonfiction being based in fact while fiction was imaginative, and nonfiction books having parts such as an index or glossary, but they made no reference to content organization as being a distinctive feature. The features these participants initially noted
sounded like very general distinctions between fiction and nonfiction that is often used in reading instruction.

Participants in this study were able to make inferences about organizational structure and the need for authors to make an appropriate match between content/topic and organization. It is likely that they were able to do this because of their exceptional abilities as language users and producers. Direct instruction about organizational structures in nonfiction/informational books was not a component of my research. These participants were able to recognize and then apply and transfer certain characteristics of nonfiction/informational books, particularly the books they read as part of this research. They chose an organization structure that was appropriate for their own topic.

Providing students many experiences with nonfiction/information literature such as reading books aloud to them, using nonfiction/informational books for direct reading instruction, having nonfiction in classroom libraries, or using nonfiction literature for book talks will promote the development of critical readers. Abrahamson and Carter (1991) found that nonfiction literature is often neglected or ignored as a means for implementing curriculum in middle schools or promoted as options for reading choices.

The findings of my research demonstrate that middle school gifted language arts students will benefit from direct instruction about organizational patterns used to structure nonfiction/informational text.

**Design features.** Design features are artistic elements such as motifs, borders, placement of illustrations on pages, placement of text in relationship with illustrations and other decorative features. Design features are reflected in decisions the book maker uses to place such parts as table of contents, title page, credit for sources, and captions at various places in the books. Design
features include color and style of typeface. Design features are the visual elements of the book which the reader considers as she makes meaning and responds to the experience of the book.

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Table 5.4: Design Features
Students in this study were aware of many design features of nonfiction/informational books and incorporated these design features in their own books. Table 5.4 shows the types of design features participants used. All of the books contained a title page. Three of the books made reference to copyright. Seven of the books had a table of contents. Eight authors dedicated their book to someone. Eight books had an introduction, titled chapters, and numbered pages. Four books had parts labeled as a conclusion or epilogue. Only two authors listed their sources. Six books had colored and/or decorated endpapers. Three authors included some biographical information and two authors acknowledged help they received. Nine books had captioned illustrations. Four books had supplemental material, e.g. Sue included actual campaign literature used for the school bond issue. None of the author/illustrators named herself as the photographer responsible for the photographs that illustrated their books.

Participants' attention to design features, particularly dividing the text into sections and including a table of contents to show the reader what kinds of information she will find, was used in all of the books. In all but one of the books, the author included captions which provided information about the photograph the caption accompanied. This likely was a result of students noticing captions and how they are used in the books the participants read for this research. However, none of the participants indicated herself as the photographer responsible for photographs used as illustration in their books. More direct instruction about photographs as art, discussion that focuses attention on photography as an art form, and experiences with making photographs is necessary to enlarge readers' understanding of how this art form is used in nonfiction/informational literature.
Perceptions of feelings. Participants indicated perceptions of the feelings of characters in the books they read and awareness of their own feelings as they read.

Piechowski (1991) said, "The outstanding feature of the emotional development of the gifted is their emotional sensitivity and intensity . . . this leads (to) . . . a more accepting and compassionate understanding of others" (p. 303). Gardner (1983) made a strong case for interpersonal intelligence, "the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and, in particular their moods, temperaments, motivations, and interactions" (p. 283). Gardner also identifies intrapersonal intelligence as the ability to access one's own feelings and to use this as a means for understanding and guiding behavior. This empathy for the feelings of characters in the nonfiction/informational books and their awareness of their own feelings as they read were evident as the participants discussed the books they read.

Participants seemed to move themselves into the incidents in the books they read. They explained and accounted for the characters' actions and assumed a kind of experienced authority as they emotionally joined the characters. Langer (1990a) described this as "Being In and Stepping Out," the reader is making connections between her life and the lives of the people about whom she is reading.

Considering Benton's planes of involvement in the Secondary World—his conceptualization of a space where reader and text and author meet and meaning is created—the participants in this study seemed to tilt toward involvement on psychic distance; toward a conscious awareness at psychic level; and seemed to balance the psychic process plane. Participants could be retrospective of their own feelings as they considered what characters were
feeling and anticipatory as they projected what a character should be feeling, if the text and/or the photographs didn't give them sufficient information. They could identify emotions, and relate what they thought characters were feeling to their own feelings in similar life experiences.

Participants could explain how outcomes could have been different. This was apparent in discussions about *Orphan Train Rider*. Sue and Karl thought that conditions for the children on the orphan train would have improved if some things were changed. They said that if the children had been told what to expect, that could have lessened their anxiety. If background checks had been done for families who took the children, more of the children would have had happier lives. Sue's and Karl's assessment fits with Langer's (1990b) "Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience." These readers evaluated the characters' situation in light of what they knew about 1990s social services and family life.

Saul (1994) wrote in the introduction to *Nonfiction for the Classroom*, "What art does, what good writing does, is forge a link, create and make a real connection between what we know and what we feel" (p. 10). Participants in this study made connections between what they learned as they read, what they brought as prior experience, and the feelings they described. The response of these seventh grade students indicate that they can relate their experiences to characters and events in the nonfiction/informational literature they read.

Research has shown that readers make the strongest connections with literary characters with whom they can relate. Readers associate themselves with the personal and social conflicts, peer rivalries, family experiences, coming-of-age quests that are most like their own or which offer models of coping or overcoming adversity. Readers look for affirmation in books, for the best of themselves and find comfort that their experiences, good and bad, are shared.

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Abrahamson and Carter (1991) said that in classrooms fiction is usually the offering made to readers "to experience the insight and identification necessary to stir them to confront both their beliefs and their behaviors" (p. 52).

The findings from the response of the participants in this research are that middle school readers can see themselves in the characters and events of nonfiction/informational literature. An intensity is transmitted through strong narrative, from the text and the illustration that these reader connected to real people in real situations.

McClure and Zitlow (1991) found with young readers that providing an aesthetic perspective of informational text "... allow(ed) readers to confirm, then enlarge their original perception or profoundly change those perceptions" (p. 32). Using nonfiction/informational literature with middle school students can diminish any barrier they may perceive between reading for information and reading for pleasure. Carter and Abrahamson (1993) state that nonfiction can be the catalyst which hastens teenagers' move to lifetime readers. Readers "can explore a discipline, discover information, and identify with issues and individuals" (p. 37).

Cianciolo (1982) argued that a reader's response to a book as a work of art is characterized by the reader being deeply absorbed by the physical features and the content; by all that is the book. She described this as "an intense internal happening . . . an intense involvement" (p. 261) with the book. The "specific qualities of the work (book) which cause it to be the particular work of art it is are perceptible" (p. 261). This aesthetic response can manifest itself in the reader's associating herself with what's happening to the characters about whom she's reading, or generalizing the conflicts depicted to some real-life situation.
Characteristics of nonfiction/informational books. Participants had certain understandings or expectations regarding nonfiction/informational literature. They expected the author to provide information and to present it in a way that would grab the reader's attention. Sometimes books they read didn't give as much information as the participants wanted once they became involved with the narrative. These readers registered annoyance if they felt the author didn't tell them enough about emotions of the people in the book they were reading. They said that the author's purpose was to enable the reader to make comparisons between her life and the lives of characters in the book. These responses seem to demonstrate that participants could freely move in both directions along Rosenblatt's continuum, between reading to carry away information and focusing on the sensations of the experience.

Participants recognized that nonfiction/informational books have parts that are not found in fiction they've read. They said that while both fiction and nonfiction have chapters, fiction must be read from beginning to end. However, a reader could use the table of contents to locate a section of a nonfiction book that could provide the information the reader needed. They knew about glossaries, indexes, and bibliographies. They weren't as familiar with the purposes for including a list of sources the author used.

Participants talked about introductions, prologues, and epilogues. One of the books in this research, *Over the Top of the World: Explorer Will Steger's Trek Across the Arctic*, begins with a prologue which explains the planning for this Arctic adventure. Next comes "The Arctic Ocean," one page about this body of water. This is followed by two pages about the people who made up the team of explorers and by a page of text that tells about the dogs that pulled the sleds, then Chapter One begins. Four chapters follow.
dated entries from the author's journal of the trip. Sidebars give information about the sled dogs. Photographs are all captioned. Eleven dark blue insets with text in white type supply other background information about the region and the trip. The book concludes with an epilogue.

Seven participants said they read Over the Top of the World, six boys and one girl. From discussions about this book, participants were not put off by what might seem to some readers as disconnected or extraneous parts of this book. Only one boy said that he'd skipped over the beginning. I asked Gene why he thought the author put those preliminary pages before Chapter One. He replied, "He's probably expecting you to read it at the end of the book so you know who all the people are and what they do so then you know all the stuff about them" (October 28). He said that he would go back and read these pages.

I asked the one girl who had read Over the Top of the World and was part of this same discussion on October 28, if she'd read the beginning pages.

Kristi: I read it before I started.

researcher: What do you think the advantage is to reading it all before you start?

Kristi: You know, in the pictures you know what their names are, and you kind of, in the prologue, it gives you a sense of what kinds of stuff they're facing.

This book is similar to the design of many new social studies texts for middle school students, which positions text in many places on the pages. How readers sort out and manage to integrate information from insets, side bars, and captions, along with the larger body of text, affects how they select and use the information they need. Many readers require direct instruction to understand how to approach informational text separated like this.
I was interested in what other information sources, like table of contents, index, bibliography and references, and captions, these participants would use in the books they wrote and illustrated. Direct instruction about using sources that supplement information in the main body of the text will aid readers in expanding their ability to locate information. Enlarging the reader's view to focus on details that might be overlooked can bring clarity to an otherwise myopic vision.

**Specific and inferred information from photographs used as illustration.** The participants demonstrated confidence in their ability to discern what photographs in the books were contributing to the information in the text. There were instances when participants said that the expressions on faces of persons in the photographs did not show the true emotions experienced. Still, this perceived discrepancy didn't cause the participants to suggest that the photographer had manipulated the scene as a deliberate deception or that photographers work with some artistic license. The participants' oral responses suggested that they understood the circumstances described in the text and that they could account for what the camera had captured.

Participants said that if the reader suspects that the photograph is misleading, she can match the information she takes from the photograph with information in the text. They also indicated that depending on which photographs are selected as illustrations for a book, the information from the photograph can be misleading. The participants felt that photographs can catch things that a human eye cannot and that the camera is more inclusive and more impartial. They believe that the reader can both glance at a photograph and look closely for details. Photographs support the text and add description.
Participants said that in photographs the reader can see a real or true view of the situation, for instance the family life of the last Russian czar. Photographs are exact and show what's going on. Nodelman (1988) wrote, "... our faith in the accuracy of the photograph depends on our acceptance of its version of reality ..." (p. 50). I find it interesting that these middle school students were not dissuaded by the contradiction of their saying that the feelings of people can be seen in photographs and also saying that the young mine workers in the Lewis Hine photograph on the dust jacket of Growing Up in Coal Country look somewhat complacent; they are showing an almost cavalier attitude toward the work they do.

Lily: ... on the cover of Growing Up in Coal Country all those boys are like standing there and they're posing for the camera and I just think it's like so fake like there's something behind the photo that you don't know about, like there's no way they can just be smiling that they're working in mines and stuff. (October 13,)

Lily and her fellow readers accepted that the boys were workers in the mines and that their work was difficult and dangerous, but when participants put themselves in the life of these boys, the reality was that spending days in the mines wasn't a happy experience.

The opportunity presents itself to extend an observation such as Lily's with other examples of Hine's photographs in books like Kids at Work (Freedman, 1994) and Immigrant Kids (Freedman, 1980) and with an investigation of photographers instigating social reform. Lily might become interested in Mathew Brady's work (Sullivan, 1994) and Dorthea Lange (Partridge, 1998). Lily and her co-author Jake demonstrated their understanding of the potential for photographs to show the unreal as well as the
real when they created the illustrations for their book about ghosts. Teachers can build on interests of gifted students such as this through independent studies.

Participants' perceptions of the influence of color when making meaning with photographs suggests that a teacher must assess what readers understand about photographs when using nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs. The data from small-group discussion of Anastasia's Album suggests that some of these middle school gifted students see a color photograph as a thing of the present, that color is more up to date, and gives more current information. Color influences the perception of what objects are truly like. Some participants commented that black and white photographs lack the realism of color.

Nodelman (1988) discusses anthropological studies in which people in isolated areas, unfamiliar with photographs, could easily identify objects familiar to them in color photographs. In similar studies in which black and white photographs were used, participants identified fewer familiar objects correctly. Nodelman concluded that for the people in these studies using black and white photographs, the photos did not accurately represent the color-full world as they knew it. Further research might investigate how pervasive this response is that black and white photographs lack the realism of color photographs for older elementary and middle school readers. The investigation could consider in what ways this perception can be modified by increasing readers' experiences with nonfiction/informational literature illustrated with black and white photographs.

The appeal of color is easily recognized. Participants responded to the colors used on book jackets. They didn't like the yellow on the jacket of Orphan Train Rider, but they said that the colors used in the painting on the jacket of
The Great Fire and the color of the endpapers and the typeface for this book matched the topic. They thought that the blues used throughout Over the Top of the World were well chosen for that book. Color surrounds these readers in the printed material they read, in the movies they see, in video games, on the Internet.

In Picture This: Perception and Composition, Molly Bang (1991), an accomplished illustrator of books, describes her quest to discover "how pictures work" (p. xi). She said that she needed to understand picture structure in terms of the feelings that color, shape, and place of objects evoke in the viewer in order to enrich the narrative of her art. In this book she used red, lavender, and black triangles and rectangles on a background of white to tell the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Bang demonstrated how, by changing the size of the triangles and rectangles, by selecting colors, and by moving the shapes to different positions on the page, she can manipulate the viewer's perception of the heroine's safety or impending danger. Bang explained basic principles of design, color being one, and demonstrated how the reader uses what she knows with what she sees and feelings that surface to make meaning within a particular context formed by the story and the art.

The response of participants in this research to color in physical features of the books or in the photographs used as illustrations serves as examples of how readers attend to and process multiple aspects of a book and of the experience in order to make meaning.

Sipe (1998) theorized the synergistic relationship of text and art, "... the total effect depends not only on the union of the text and illustrations but also on the perceived interactions or transactions between these two parts...—the combined effect (is) greater than the sum of their separate effects" (pp. 98-99).
Sipe's idea about readers and picturebooks is useful to describe the response of the seventh grade readers in my research.

The courses of the foundation that Sipe (1998) laid are Iser's view of the reader as co-creator with the author of text and Lessing's description of simultaneity of perception (e.g., one sees a painting initially taking in the image at one time) and successivity of perception (e.g., one hears music as one sound pattern following another). Sipe then suggests that books—for his research, picturebooks; in my research illustrated nonfiction/informational books—are art that is "based on both time and space" (p. 99).

Sipe (1998) continued to build his theory as he discussed ideas about what happens as a reader translates and merges the meanings she makes with text and with the art in a book, choosing problem solving strategies appropriate to the sign system, verbal or visual, to which she is attending. The reader adjusts or reconfigures her assessment of meaning in a recursive or reflexive manner. She must accommodate earlier understandings with current information and conclude with meaning that is an amalgamation, something newly made.

The responses of the participants in my research demonstrated that these readers made meaning with the text, with the photographs, with what they know about human emotions, and with what they know about how books called nonfiction/informational literature work. Participants expressed pleasure and satisfaction from their experiences with the books they read for this research. These seventh grade gifted students demonstrated that their exceptional language ability can be utilized in combination with their artistic ability and creativity to engage in a project that extended over a long period of time.
Summary of the Findings

The participants in this research, seventh grade language arts students identified as gifted, talked and wrote about their experiences when reading several books they chose from a set of six nonfiction/informational books I selected for this investigation. They wrote their own nonfiction/informational books on topics they selected and illustrated their books with photographs they took.

The response of these readers showed that they were actively engaged with the books they chose and they were capable of raising and discussing the topics of the books. They were critical readers who could describe textual and visual features of the books with which these readers could relate their own experiences. These readers constructed meaning from the photographs used as illustration in the books they read in combination with the text.

Participants who wrote and illustrated their own nonfiction/informational book didn't describe themselves as photographers. Most of them didn't seem to have much experience taking photographs, certainly not with using photography as an artistic expression. Design decisions that involved selection, placement and arrangement of their photographs showed limited experience with editing their photographs in the sense that they could edit their text. Often my sense was that these seventh graders had not considered that photographs could be cut to eliminate unwanted areas, altered by drawing on them, arranged other than with one edge of the photograph parallel to one side of the page of the book.

I also wondered whether students considered their books as art objects. The art teacher at their middle school has a strong program and offers many experiences with different techniques and materials, but does not have the
facilities to teach photography. She often uses children's literature as models for artistic styles and decorative elements such as borders and repeated motifs that contribute to a theme. She regularly tells students that she is interested in any art they do as part of their other classes. She offers extra credit when the students share this work with her. She was very interested in the participants' books, and I had many conversations with her. At the end of the research which was at the end of school year, none of the participants who created their own books had brought them to her as examples of art they had done for another class.

Implications

There are implications from this research for preservice and inservice education for teachers. It is strongly indicated that preservice education, graduate studies in children's literature, and inservice opportunities should specifically address how teachers instruct and use nonfiction/informational literature in the classroom. Preservice teachers typically have only one children's literature course which includes all genres and considers how one chooses books based on an understanding of child development, reading theory, and literary criticism. Special emphasis on choosing nonfiction/informational literature and using nonfiction in the classroom will facilitate children and young adults reading for a wider range of purposes and reaching for books to satisfy curiosities and to explore new ideas.

It is important that children's literature be integrated with language arts and reading methods courses and that it be viewed as an integral part of other content areas. Particular strategies which enable students to read expository text fluently must be seen as an important part of language instruction. Many teachers rely on using fictional literature for instruction. Students whose primary
contact with nonfiction/informational text is through content area text books such as social studies and science may not associate reading nonfiction/informational text with the excitement and pleasure derived from fine literature. Reading and writing are knotted together, experiencing nonfiction/informational literature across the curriculum will facilitate writing to learn and learning to write persuasively and expressively.

Preservice teacher education must also include information about meeting the needs of gifted learners in the regular classroom. Often other kinds of special educational needs of students are addressed through mandated services, but the erroneous assumption is often made that learners with exceptionally strong abilities will succeed without specific instructional and content modifications. The characteristics of gifted learners and ways to provide them with appropriate challenge, instruction and materials must be incorporated with courses that deal with child development and effective teaching practice.

Teaching practices that include modeling predictions, asking for clarification, summarizing, asking open ended questions that solicit opinions, expecting supported positions, and being open to differing points of view will best meet the needs of gifted language arts students. These teaching practices and providing a variety of literature can encourage critical reading and strong written communication. Leal (1993) found that the combination of strong, evocative narrative and the expository character of nonfiction/informational literature "has the greatest potential to enhance student discussion" (p. 119). She found children's conversations were longer, that they made more predictions and speculated more, and made more intertextual connections when reading books to which readers were engaged aesthetically and efferently.
Inservice education provided within a school district can keep teachers, and administrators informed about the most current educational research and strengthen practice in order to meet the needs of learners with different levels of competency and ability. Teachers must know how to implement curriculum—the content, concepts, and skills. Inservice education can include topics such as differentiating instruction; how to plan, facilitate, and assess long term projects/independent studies; how to structure instruction in order to address such things as proficiency outcomes within thematic units; using literature discussion groups for instruction; to actively involve students in their learning; and to expand students' reading experiences; effectively using nonfiction/informational literature across the curriculum. Inservice education can be provided by classroom teachers modeling exemplary practice as well as other professionals from outside a school district.

Graduate level programs that center on children's literature are important because such course work enables graduate students to focus on particular topics and to study in greater depth issues related to literature for younger readers. Studies can apply to such specializations as language arts instruction, understanding early literacy, reader response, and library work with special collections. A course specific to nonfiction/informational literature can address readers and their interests from preschool through middle school, can consider literature across the curriculum, cultural diversity, and gender issues.

Further Research

There are several directions in which additional research might extend from this investigation:

1. What do middle school readers recognize and describe as organizational features in nonfiction/information literature? How is
instruction about organizational patterns in nonfiction/informational literature, such as the seven patterns identified by Billmeyer and Barton (1998), reflected in the response of gifted middle school readers to this kind of book.

2. How do middle school readers determine/perceive and define realism in photographs? How do these readers compare realism in black and white photographs and in color photographs? The investigation could consider in what ways perception of realism in photographs could be modified by increasing readers' experiences—reading, writing, publishing—with nonfiction/informational literature illustrated with photographs.

3. What do middle school students know about photography as an art form? What kinds of experiences are part of a middle school curriculum that promote students using photography as a medium of expression? What contributes to a middle school student perceiving herself as a photographer? In what ways are perceiving herself as a photographer reflected in the reader's response to nonfiction/informational books?

Concluding Comments

After finishing this data analysis, I recognized that the responses of these gifted middle school language arts students can be characterized generally as positive. Once the group of 18 seventh graders decided to participate, they maintained their commitment to being involved in the research. They met with me regularly and were prepared to discuss the books and their progress on the nonfiction/informational books they were writing and illustrating. Their discussions were lively as they raised issues and negotiated points of view.
They could identify what they considered strengths and weaknesses of the books they read, and they could support their assessments with examples. They interacted with each other, offering opinions and support. The participants' commitment toward their involvement with this research was evident throughout the nine months I was in their classroom.

My research was not designed to investigate reader preference for particular topics, or reader perception of quality. I deliberately chose books that were written by award winning authors and/or books that received strong reviews. I chose books that met my definition of literature because of exemplary writing, illustrations, and design. The books were fertile ground from which response grew.

I believe that offering these participants choices was a factor in their positive attitude and their commitment; they chose the books they would read, and they chose the topics for the books they wrote. Other factors that determined their positive responses were: each of the six books has a strong narrative voice; each of the accounts involves people with whom these middle school readers could connect, with whom the readers could empathize; and the photographs contributed to a perception of factualness.

The books—the words, the art of the design, the photographs—"need readers, who bring them sound and smell and light and all the rest that can't be in books. The book needs you" (Paulsen, 1989, p. 6). Thank you, Gary Paulsen, for giving me these words that describe what this group of seventh grade young men and women contributed to my understanding of ways in which middle school gifted readers respond to nonfiction/informational books illustrated with photographs.

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Children's Literature Titles Cited


270

APPENDIX A

GIFTED/TALENTED DEPARTMENT: EDUCATION, CERTIFICATIONS, YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
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APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS' ACHIEVEMENT AND ABILITY SCORES AND CONTRIBUTION TO DATA SOURCES
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<td>*Linda</td>
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<td>*Helen</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td></td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Gene</td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
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<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*: participated in small group discussions
+: completed a book she/he wrote and illustrated (one book not finished)
^: turned in a reading log (one log had no name)
/: gifted: cognitive or specific academic
APPENDIX C

STUDENT INTEREST INVENTORY
Interest Inventory

1. What kinds of books do you like to read? Name one of your favorites.

2. What are your favorite magazines?

3. What is your favorite subject or activity in school? Briefly tell why.

4. If you were given $1,000, how would you spend it?

5. What kinds of things do you like to do on a rainy day?

6. What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?

7. What kind(s) of writing do you like to do?

8. What question is not on this survey that you think should be?

9. Tell me something about yourself that you think I should know?

Questions were adapted from Susan Winebrenner's Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom, 1992.
APPENDIX D

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS FOR MEMOIRS UNIT
"Memories and Memoirs"

   Aliki captures the essence of a true and lasting love between grandfather and grandchild.

   A grandfather tells his grandson that a memory box is "a special box that stores family tales and traditions. An old person and a young person fill the box together. Then they story it in a place of honor. No matter what happens to the old person the memories are saved forever." The boy must confront his grandfather's developing Alzheimer's disease.

   The author writes about the period from September 1939, when France and England enter the war against Germany, to October 1945, when he go back to school in peace for the first time.

   A boy learns about lessons about lives of all that inhabits the meadow from the red-tailed hawk. "There are things I can tell you, and things I can't. There are things I will tell you that you won't understand until you are older, and there are things you will never understand. And if you don't understand something you must try to think about it for a year before you ask me to explain."

   A novel set during the 1830s. Told as the journal of a girl living in New Hampshire, the story tells of the hardships and joys of pioneer life.

   Capote evokes the young boy's profound love for the grandfather at the same time that he acknowledges the inevitability of change.

   Alice grows up and fulfills her desire to travel. When she returns to her home by the sea, she fulfills her promise to her grandfather to make the world more beautiful.

   Crews tells about summers spent with his grandmother in Cottondale, Florida.
   This autobiography includes Dahl's life from kindergarten to his being twenty. He says his tale of growing up includes times that were funny, painful, and unpleasant. Dahl writes with the same wit and humor that he employs in his novels.

    In a month by month journal through the passing year Dahl mixes past and present...childhood, adolescence...observations about the changing season and the festivals we celebrate.

    A novel - Steven doesn't remember much about his childhood. What he does remember are bits and pieces of memories that he can't string together...
The author draws a realistic portrait of a child searching for himself while coping with a situation beyond his control.

    This is the diary kept by a thirteen year old Bosnian girl. Zlata began her diary in September, 1991. In the summer of 1993 the diary was published with the help of UNICEF. While similarities exist between Zlata's diary and that of Anne Frank, Zlata survives the terrible war in Sarajevo.

    A young boy lives next to an old peoples' home. His favorite person there is Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt who has lost her memory. In trying to understand what this means, Wilfrid learns what a memory is.

    A young boy remembers a teenage neighbor who committed suicide.

    One of the joys of visiting Aunt Pinny was bedtime, because at bedtime, Aunt Pinny told stories. And not just any stories, but marvelous stories from her own childhood.

    The grandmother's stories are inspired by ordinary treasures in her apartment - a button box, an embroidered shawl, freshly baked strudel.

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A novel - This a story of four generations of women...Janet Hickman seamlessly interweaves the past and the present.

Charlie want a straw hat to wear to school. This incident is based on a true story and is set in Breathitt County, Kentucky during the Civil War.

Clara, a slave in the Big House, decides to use the cloth in her scrap bag to sew a map of the land that will show escaping slaves the way to the Underground Railroad.

The story of the very special relationship between escaped slaves and the Seminole Indians who took them in.

Minna narrates this story of Africans being taken forcibly from their homes and sold into slavery.

Some family traditions cannot live on. But from a string of broken beads and a fly-fishing expedition, Austin and his grandmother begin new traditions-and at the same time they discover each other.

This book provides a step-by-step process for writing a personal or family history. In the process, ones awareness of important details is raised, story telling techniques and strategies are strengthened.

A young visitor to Mesa Verde, Colorado is transported to the time of the Anasazis.

A mother and son talk about the people who have come before them to the place where they live.
   The author has crafted a moving homage to the American farm, recreating...one family's connection to the land.

   Set in the time of the Great Depression and about a family leave the prairie, the father tells his daughter, "Maybe you'll remember because the place you know first stays with you forever, no matter where you may go."

   Great-great aunt Drew has been putting pennies in a keepsake box, one for each year of her life. Her nephew learns about her and his family through the stories she tells, one for each penny.

   The story weaves true incidents of Beethoven's life into a fictional correspondence between a boy and his uncle, music student in Salzburg.

   A quilt made from fabric from the family's clothing is passed along from mother to daughter for almost a century, through four generations.

   The artist has created an accordion book with flaps that open up a real street in Columbus, Ohio - Mt. Vernon Ave. - to each reader. What is revealed is a self-sufficient neighborhood, the people and the places that Robinson knew as she grew up.

   The authors take passages from Columbus's log to create a story.

   Here is a story almost two hundred years long. And all of it happens in one house that from year to year has grown and changed and gathered in one family.
34. Sis, Peter. *A Small Tall Take from the Far, Far North*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1993

Inspired by the memoirs of Czech folk hero, Jan Welzl, the author has re-created an extraordinary Arctic odyssey. Mixing fact with tall tale and Welzl's own words, this fascinating story of a little-known explorer and the Eskimos who became his teachers and his friends.


Lydia Grace Finch goes to the city to live with her Uncle Jim who is a baker. Among her few belongings are seeds for a garden. The reader learns through Lydia's letters home and the glorious art for this book's about the transformation that takes place not only in the bakery, but in Uncle Jim. The story is set during the Depression.


The author tells the story of Mr. Sweet, an elderly neighbor of hers and the influence his life had on those around him.


The author tells a story that reveals the enduring quality of Matthew Wheelock's wall and its importance in providing a sense of continuity for generations of his family.


The author and the illustrator share their family stories and the things they learned about farms. The stories are arranged as events on a midwest farm from January through December.


This is a good source of projects and activities that can be used in the classroom or for independent study. There are projects for developing a family history and for researching the history of ones neighborhood or community.


A complete introduction to genealogy, this serves as a way to involve students in researching their family history.
   In the middle of this century, the Swift River towns in western Massachusetts were purchased by the government and flooded in order to form the Quabbin Reservoir. This story is told through the eyes of a young girl.

   The author's text vividly re-creates a small family drama, the father leaving to fight in WW II, as seen through the eyes of a child.

   The author shows how to collect family history with audio and video tape recordings. There are suggesting for incorporating family heirlooms into the recordings. The book includes many forms that can be used for collecting and organizing the information.
APPENDIX E

OUTLINE OF PARTICIPATION INFORMATION GIVEN TO STUDENTS
Outline of Information Presented to Participants

I Who am I/what do I do in the school?
A. I am Carol Wolfenbarger, Middle School Gifted Coordinator.
B. I work with teachers at the five middle schools who have the Accelerated Studies Program students in their classes. Because the students in the ASP language arts classes have shown that they have very strong reading and writing skills, Mrs. Nash (the classroom teacher) and I work together to plan work that will be challenging and interesting.

II What will I be doing in their classroom/why am I doing it?
A. In addition to the regular ASP work I do, I will be in their class to investigate their reactions to several books that they will be reading as part of the first unit Mrs. Nash and I have planned.
B. I’m doing some research at The Ohio State University that will be part of my work to complete my PhD. I want to know more about what middle school students think about as they read informational books. The only way I know to find out about how you react to certain books is to ask you.

III What will I ask them to do/will this “count” as part of their work?
A. 1. I’ll be meeting with some of you in two small groups. I’ll ask you to choose at least three books from six that I’ll bring. You’ll read the three you choose and keep a reading log. There will be four questions for you to answer.
    2. You’ll meet with three other kids and me once a week and talk about the books you read. I will tape our conversations.
    3. You will meet with me, one to one, once a week and talk about what you have written in your reading log.
    4. We will meet till about the time of Thanksgiving break.
    5. You will make your own nonfiction book. You will choose the topic, write the text, take photographs to illustrate your book, and share the finished book. I will get you the materials you need, including the camera and film and developing the film. I will work with you.
C. The work you do will not be “extra.” Mrs. Nash, you, and I will talk about how reading the books you choose and making your own book will be a part of your regular classwork.

IV The permission letter—necessary because they will be “participants” in my research.
A. Your parents will have to give permission for you to be a part of my study because I will be writing about what you say and do. When I write, I will not use your real names or the real name of our school or our school district. I have a letter explaining what I’m doing for you to take home.
B. People are more willing to discuss what they really think if they are assured that they can remain anonymous.

V What if they do agree/what if they don't agree?
A. If you agree to participate, I will start keeping a journal of what goes on in class. Mrs. Nash and I will form two small discussion groups that will meet with me. I will bring notebooks for members of the small groups to use as a reading log. In the notebooks will be four questions that I want you to consider as you read the books you choose. I will bring six books from which you will choose at least three to read. Each group will have the same six books from which to choose.
B. After the books have been read, you've talked with me, and you've written in your reading log, you will make your own book. You by yourself, or with a partner, or as a group will write and illustrate your own informational book.
APPENDIX F

MATRIX OF FEATURES OF NONFICTION/INFORMATIONAL BOOKS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Great Fire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aniasia's Album</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over the Top</td>
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<tr>
<td>of the World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing Up in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coal Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orphan Train Rider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Am An American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey of Book Features

1. This is for looking at the way the books you're reading are organized.

2. There are 24 features for you to notice. Most of your responses will be either making a check in the box or leaving the box blank.

3. There are several exceptions:

   - **ISBN #** locate and copy this number
   - **Dewey Decimal #** locate and copy this number
   - **Edition** write the number
   - **Book's Predominate Color** write the color
   - **Info Organization** write *chron.* (chronological) or *other*
   - **People** this refers to characters—*m* for male, *f* for female, *b* for both
   - **Copyright Date** write the year
APPENDIX G

PERMISSION LETTER TO WORK AWAY FROM SCHOOL
March 12, 1998

Dear Parents,

Most of the students are ready to have their books bound. I've arranged for help from friend/teacher/sister-in-law from Pittsburgh to come on Monday, March 16, to put hard covers on the books. She's perfected a process that will add a finishing polish to these wonderful pieces of text, art, and design.

If your student is ready to have his/her book bound, I would like your permission to take them back to the Curriculum Center at the Jackson Building on Park Street. This facility will provide us with the best place to work. The students who go should bring a sack lunch. I'll provide soft drinks.

We may be able to finish during the morning. If not, we'll work after lunch. I will arrange transportation from Brookpark to the Curriculum Center and back to Brookpark.

I've talked with the seventh grade teachers. Because of the sixth grade proficiency test, the seventh grade students will work with one teacher for the first three hours on Monday. Your students will not miss tests if they are with me. The teachers agree that these students can leave on Monday. I've also talked with Ms. Wank about the students' leaving.

If your student has his/her book ready to be bound and has your permission to go to the Curriculum Center with me, please sign the form on the bottom of this letter.

Carol Wolfenbarger

__________________________________________________
My child has my permission to go to the Curriculum Center, 3207 Park Street on Monday, March 16, 1998. I understand that the purpose of his/her leaving is to have his/her book bound.

Signed ____________________________________________
APPENDIX H

PARENT LETTER
Dear Parent/s,

I am Carol Wolfenbarger. My new responsibilities to South-Western City Schools are as the middle school gifted coordinator. For the last seven years I have been the language arts/literature resource teacher for the five middle schools. As the middle school gifted coordinator I will still be working with the middle schools teachers who have the Accelerated Studies Program students in their classes, but in a somewhat different capacity.

I am also a doctoral student at The Ohio State University. My advisor at the University is Dr. Evelyn Freeman. Dr. Freeman will supervise my dissertation research and as such will be considered the principal researcher. The research will focus on middle school students identified as gifted in the academic area of language arts. In particular, I am interested in the responses of these language arts students to nonfiction/informational books.

I have explained my research plans to Dr. Robert Rinehart at Central Office, to Ms. Elaine Wank, principal of Brookpark Middle School, and to Mrs. Susan Nash, seventh grade language arts teacher at Brookpark and have their permission to be in Mrs. Nash's room. I have assured them that the time I spend with the students in Mrs. Nash's ASP language arts class will not compromise their instructional time, and my work will in no way be an assessment of the ASP language arts instruction at Brookpark, of Mrs. Nash's teaching, or used to evaluate students' work. The length of time for this research will be about eighteen weeks. I will meet with students once a week for small group discussions of the books they are reading. Also, I will meet with individual students who are in the small groups once a week. The identity of the students who participate will be protected by the use of pseudonyms, and the names of the school and of the school district will be changed in my dissertation. Your child's participation in the research is voluntary. There will be no consequences if you choose not to have your child participate.

Because students' scores on standardized tests are used as part of the identification for the Accelerated Studies Program in the middle schools, these scores are available to me as the middle school gifted coordinator. I am requesting your permission to use your child's scores only to identify him/her as gifted by the State of Ohio, Department of Education standards. These scores will be used only to assure that the participants meet the State of Ohio, Department of Education standards for gifted and talented identification.
Students' names will not be identified with their scores in my analysis of the data collected.

The plan is for me to work with Mrs. Nash at the beginning of this school year and to be in her class observing what the students are doing and saying. I will also talk with small groups of students about what they are reading as regular class assignments. I will ask some students to keep reading logs of their reactions to several books, and I will ask these students to create nonfiction books of their own. Also, I will capture the students' responses on audio tapes, and I will keep my notes in a researcher's journal. After the students' taped conversations have been transcribed and I have completed my dissertation, the tapes will be destroyed.

I am asking for your permission to include parts of students reading logs and their original books in my dissertation. The students' reading logs and their books will remain the property of the students and will be returned to them.

I believe that research done in the classroom is essential to refining our understanding of how to best meet students' educational needs. If I have your permission to include your student in my study, please complete the "Consent for Participation..." form and have your student return it. Should you not want your student to be a participant, it will not affect your students' work in the class in any way.

If you have any questions, you may call be at 875-2318 extension 315.

Sincerely,

Carol Wolfenbarger,
Middle School Gifted Coordinator, South-Western City Schools

Dr. Evelyn Freeman,
Associate Professor, School of Teaching and Learning -The Ohio State University
APPENDIX I

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE
Parental Consent for Participation

I consent to my student's participation in the research entitled: *Gifted Middle School Students Respond to informational Books Illustrated with Photographs*. I understand that the principal researcher is Dr. Evelyn Freeman from The Ohio State University and that Dr. Freeman is supervising the research of Carol Wolfenbarger.

The purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected time and length of the research have been explained to me.

I know that any questions I have before, during, or after the research is done will be answered by either or both of the researchers. I know that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time and that my student can discontinue her/his participation without any consequences to her/him.

I understand that my student, her/his school, and the school district will not be identified in Mrs. Wolfenbarger’s dissertation. I have been assured of confidentiality for my student.

Date ______________________

Signed ____________________________________________

Parent (Guardian) of

____________________________________________________

Signed ____________________________________________
(Principal Investigator)

Witness ______________________________________________

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APPENDIX J

ANALYSIS OF INTEREST INVENTORY RESPONSES
Analysis of "Interest Inventory"

I analyzed the responses from all 26 students in the ASP language arts class for their responses to #6 "What do you plan to do after you graduate from high school?" All of the students stated that they would go to college.

I also analyzed the responses from all students to question #1 "What kinds of books do you like to read? Name one of your favorites." Three of the 26 students responded with a kind of book that could be categorized as nonfiction: Marge said sports; Karl said computer books; Jim said historical. Since Jim listed historical and historical fiction, I included his response as a preference for nonfiction. None of these three students listed specific titles as examples, therefore their responses on the survey could not be verified by other written responses on the "Interest Inventory".

I looked at the responses of the 18 students who participated in any of the situations in which I collected data: discussion about the six nonfiction books I chose for this study; writing, illustrating, and publishing their own nonfiction books; exit interviews; the video taped morning school TV program. I specifically analyzed participant answers for these items on the teacher-created survey:

#3 What is your favorite subject or activity at school? Briefly tell why.
#4 If you were given $1,000, how would you spend it?
#5 What kinds of things do you like to do on a rainy day?

Reflecting on the participants' own books after my having observed the process of planning and producing these books and then reading these surveys done on the first day of the 1997/1998 school year,
August 27, 1997, I recognized some connections. In some cases participants' responses could be associated with the topics they chose for their own nonfiction books and what I believe I know about the participants as students in the setting in which I conducted my research.

#3 What is your favorite subject or activity at school? Briefly tell why. Because these students were identified as gifted and talented in the academic area of language arts, one could expect that language arts would be their favorite subject. Of the 18 participants eight indicated language arts as their favorite subject. Four of the participants indicated math: Alan who is not identified gifted and talented; Marge whose gifted and talented identification is math, not language arts; Kristi who is not identified gifted and talented; and Jake who is identified as gifted in both language arts and math. Two participants indicated science as their favorite. One participant indicated social studies, one participant indicated band, and one participant liked everything. The young woman who wrote that art was her favorite subject, created the books that is the most extensively decorated of the students' nonfiction books.

#4 If you were given $1,000, how would you spend it? When reading the whole set of completed surveys, I was impressed by how many of these 26 students responded that they would share at least part of the one thousand dollars with someone else (10). I interpreted the altruism expressed by 10 students who said their would share some part of their money as an indication of their sensitivity to the feelings of others. This sensitivity could be related to an empathetic response to the circumstances of characters about whom they read in books. This is an
assumption on my part as researcher. I did not attempt to explore this connection in this research.

#5 What kinds of things do you like to do on a rainy day? The questions seems to tap into the respondent's opportunities for choice. By stipulating a rainy day, this somewhat limits a seventh grader's range of activities. There is some constraints on the number of persons who might be involved in the choice activity. With the exception of phone conversations, the activities that the participants listed could be done alone.

Of the 12 participants who started or completed their own nonfiction books - one participant did not complete his book - I could make a connection between their responses to this item on the survey and their nonfiction book or what I knew about their family. I believe that this supports argument that students identified as gifted and talented write more fluently when they are given a range of choices of topic and they are given the opportunity to write from their own experience.
APPENDIX K

PARTICIPANTS' BOOKS
South-Western City Schools: A District in TROUBLE!
Chapter Two:

Deterring Schools!

A lack of a toilet at Richard Ave. ele!
Is the noise you make when you cough related to your vocal cords? In a limited way, yes. It vibrates minutely, yet enough to produce a sound. When you lose your voice from a cold, it is because the muscles are sore from the sudden strain, contractions, and expansions caused by a cough.
Why does my voice get hoarse, and what is causing it? One reason could be vocal nodules, or vocal nodes. These are calluses or blisters that form on the vocal cords when the voice is abused by improper talking or singing. Although some cases require surgery, a speech pathologist can usually help you determine how to cure this condition.

What about posture? Poor posture can decrease respiratory efficiency and increase vocal cord tension.