

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BOOKS READ ALOUD BY KINDERGARTEN  
TEACHERS AND THEIR REASONS FOR BOOK SELECTION

By

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Katrina Willard Hall

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and my students.

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By

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Since most kindergartners cannot yet read, the books that teachers choose to read aloud have an impact far beyond their entertainment factor. Reading aloud is an important part of the reading curriculum in emergent literacy, and there is little research that examines the content of books that teachers read aloud. This study used multiple data-collection strategies (including a questionnaire, interviews with and observations of the teachers, and book logs) to examine the content of books read aloud; and teachers' strategies and reasons for book selection.

I analyzed a total of 428 books from teachers' book logs during three different weeks for genre, content, theme, and for issues of gender, race and ethnicity, and social class. The books read aloud by the teachers were similar throughout the district, despite the fact that the schools varied a great deal with regard to demographics. Most of the books read aloud related to social studies or science unit content, or reading or math

skills, and half were categorized in the fantasy genre. The vast majority of the books contained White middle-class characters or animal characters in middle-class settings.

Findings suggest that the kindergarten teachers in this study had a limited view of purposes for reading aloud and of opportunities for learning through exposure to a wide variety of types of literature. In addition, they did not appear to recognize the importance of providing their students with a diverse, multiethnic, and multicultural selection of read-aloud books. In light of the racial gap between on-level and below-level readers, further research needs to be done on the kinds of books that teachers read aloud; and on the cultural match between the books and the children in the classrooms. This study suggests a need for professional development on the role of literature in the education of young children.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Nature of the Problem**

Kindergarten is often the first public-school experience for young children: the start of their elementary education. Children enter kindergarten with vastly different literacy backgrounds (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000). Some children's parents have read aloud to them since they were born, while others have had little exposure to or experience with books (Heath, 1983; Huck, 1992; Smith, 1997; Sulzby, 1985; Taylor, 1983). Children who spend time in early-childcare facilities or preschools also come to kindergarten with a wide range of experience with books and reading (Gallas, 1997; Goodman & Alterwerger, 1981; Lindfors, 1987; Monson, Howe, & Greenlee, 1989; Russell, 2001; Zill, Collins, West, & Germino-Hausken, 1995). Further, kindergarten is a complex time and place for children (McCadden, 1998; West et al. 2000); it is often their first real exposure to persons of a different race or ethnicity than that of their families (Durkin, 1975; Paley, 1981; West et al. 2000). One task of the kindergarten teacher is, therefore, to build on children's prior experiences while at the same time exposing them to the language of literature and life beyond their neighborhoods (Au, 1998; Paley, 1981).

Many children begin to learn to read through responses to stories and read-aloud literature (Elley, 1998; Karolides, 1997; Lindfors, 1987; van Kleeck, 2003). Reading aloud to young children has long been accepted as a powerful tool to promote a love of reading and to foster literacy (Butler, 1985; Cambourne, 1988; Durkin, 1966; Elley, 1998; Teale, 1984). In addition to being a pleasant activity (Wells, 1986), research shows

that reading aloud can affect children's understandings of story patterns and structures, vocabulary, and word knowledge; and can increase print awareness (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellingrini, 1995; Clay, 1979; de Jong & Bus, 2002; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Elley, 1998; Goodman & Alterwerger, 1981; Lehr, 1988). Further, research suggests that teachers, through their selections of read-aloud books, can positively affect their students' higher-order thinking skills and their students' verbal and written responses to books (Creighton, 1997; Eckoff, 1983; Kiefer, 1982; Kosanovich, 1996; Lancia, 1997; Lehr, 1995; Lurie, 1990; Many, Wiseman, & Altieri, 1996)

In addition to impacting children's emergent literacy, research indicates that teachers can impact their students in other ways through the books they choose to read aloud. Not only can teachers sway students' genre and book preferences; teachers can also influence their students' values, ethics, and their attitudes about others (Barnes, 1991; Darigan, 1991; Fry, 1994; Hall, 2000; Jantz, Seefeldt, Galper, & Serock, 1976; Kramer & Radey, 1997; Merenda & White-Williams, 2001; Smith, 1993).

Reading aloud "weighty" books (with issues such as diversity or social justice) can deepen students' understandings about themselves and the world around them (Teale, 2003, p.127). This type of literature allows students to "find themselves, imagine others, value difference, and search for justice. They gain connectedness and see vision. They become the literate thinkers we need to shape the decisions for tomorrow" (Langer, 1995, p. 1).

Most kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students on a regular basis, and since many kindergarten students do not enter as fluent readers, they are dependent upon teachers and other adults in their lives for their reading experiences (Galda & Cullinan,

1991; Klesius & Griffith, 1996; Martinez & Roser, 1985; West et al. 2000). Thus, the reading aloud program in kindergarten can be an important factor in establishing literary preferences and questioning behaviors (Hickman, 1981; Lehr, 1988; May, 1995; McGillis, 1988). Kindergarten classrooms provide communities where children “learn to value literacy as integral to their lives and to practice literate ways of knowing and talking” (McGill-Franzen & Lanford, 1994, p. 270). Martinez & Roser (1985) noted that reading aloud to children is a three-pronged event involving the child, the adult, and the book. Although a great deal of research has been done on the quality of the interaction during the read-aloud event, and on the effect of genre, little attention has been paid to how the actual books themselves might influence children’s emergent literacy development (Cai & Traw, 1997; Elster, 1998; Pellegrini & Galda, 2003). In fact, van Kleeck (2003) described the study of book characteristics as the “ignored dimension of the adult-child-triad” (p. 280). According to Barrera & Bauer (2003), “the text is a key component of storybook reading” (p. 262). They and other researchers note the importance of studying what books are read aloud to young children (Teale, 2003; van Kleeck, 2003).

In addition to its literacy function, children’s literature is filled with social and ethical ideologies, making it vital that we understand the content of the books kindergarten teachers read aloud (Egoff, 1981; Harris, 2003; Stephens, 1992; Sutherland, 1985). Peter Hunt (1995) argued that it is impossible for a children’s book not to be “educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology. All books must teach something” (p. 3). Children’s literature has long been considered a vehicle for transmitting the accepted values and morals of our society (Apol, 1998; Harris, 1999;

Sutherland, 1985). Soter and Letcher (1998) proposed that children's literature has been included in the school curriculum as a device to transmit cultural values; a tool for teaching literary interpretations and analysis; and a way to teach morals and what our society deems acceptable. Giroux (2000) affirmed this, stating that through their selections, teachers consciously and unconsciously transmit cultural, political, and moral values to their students. Clearly, teaching is not merely instructional practice; it is highly political as well (Miller, 1997). Theorists posit that both teaching and learning are political because those in power make decisions on what to publish based on particular agendas, and access to knowledge is restricted and censored according to what those in power value or want transmitted (Banks, 1994; Giroux, 2000).

In fact, critical theorists argue that the knowledge being overtly and covertly transmitted through schools is a representation of the dominant culture and ruling groups, thereby excluding those who are not members (Apple, 1996; Banks, 1994; Delpit, 1988). Children as a group have little power, and are at the mercy of what adults tell them is truth, all the while themselves being culturally situated and developing their own conceptions of literacy, culture, and society (Apol, 1998; Gutmann, 1987). Adults write children's literature for children, and adults make the decisions of what knowledge and values should be transmitted (Asch, 2000; Nodelman, 1996). To complicate matters, major publishers have absorbed or bought out many smaller publishers and booksellers, diminishing the potential for diversity in books (Hade, 2002). As a result, a handful of adults are in charge of what is published for children and decisions are oftentimes based on profit margin and available storage space (Nodelman, 1996; Hade, 2002). Hibbitts (1994) argued that the diversity of children's books is also impacted negatively by the

fact that the mainstream culture is responsible for creating the images of individuals from non-mainstream cultures based on their personal assumptions and misperceptions.

From this selection of children's literature, teachers then further make choices about what to transmit to their students, with issues such as curriculum and time restraints driving their decisions (Nodelman, 1996). Since young children are usually not independent readers, kindergarten teachers' choices of what information and what books to promote are particularly significant. These young children are highly dependent on the adults (including teachers) in their world for information and knowledge (Greene, 1988).

Teachers are the gatekeepers of the classrooms, which are seen as sites for learning (Banks, 1994). Through inclusion or omission, teachers are responsible for a great deal of what their students read and learn about. Kindergarten teachers control (to a large degree) the access their students have to books through their read-aloud decisions. They also, for a variety of reasons, make deliberate choices to privilege certain books over others, and teach their students to "prefer or privilege certain experiences and knowledge" (McGill-Franzen & Lanford, 1994, p.270). Teachers have no choice but to censor, because of time or curriculum restraints, availability or access, or personal values. Since literature is a powerful conduit to developing cognizance and meaning within the classroom, what teachers choose to privilege in their read-aloud sessions is significant (Au, 1998; Greene, 1988).

According to Bruner (1990), human beings are born with the need to generate meaning. As part of their meaning-making, students use the context of the narrative form and its fit within their cultural understandings (Bettelheim, 1995; Greene, 1995). Literature has a powerful impact on children's language and reading, as well on their



cultural knowledge (Baghban, 1984; Butler, 1975; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Durkin, 1966; Eldredge & Butterfield, 1986; Galda, 2001; Hickman, 1981; Lehr, 1991). Miller (1997) stated that individuals develop their identity through their culture. “As part of that culture, literature both makes and remakes its readers, especially but not only, in school” (Greene, 1988, p. 187). Literature, with its ability to expose readers to a wide range of thoughts and ideas, both implicit and explicit, allows readers to live other lives vicariously and learn about human nature (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Soter & Letcher, 1998; Willis & Harris, 2000). Greene (1988) suggested that looking closely at literary texts enables teachers and students to “perceive their own illusions and stereotypes, even as they expose them to the multiple ways in which the world means to those inhabiting it” (p. 187). Nodelman (1996) agreed, adding that literature offers children a picture of the world and of how they fit – if the “representation is persuasive, it will *become* the world that those child readers believe they live in” (p.91). Troublesome is the idea that perhaps “these texts do not reflect reality, they promote a certain version of reality, and they position their readers within a certain version of reality as well” (Apol, 1998, p. 33). Therefore, studying what impact teachers’ read-aloud choices might have on their students’ identity creation and meaning-making is important (Strickland, 1994).

In this study, I explored the reasons why kindergarten teachers say they read particular books aloud and used a critical theory-based wondering perspective as a lens for analyzing the content of the books they read aloud to their students over a period of time. Although a broad field of study, many critical theorists ask questions revolving around the concept of power, asking who is in control and how the actions of those in power affect others. Jay (1973) noted that the term “critical” is difficult to define, but

that it involves questioning what is accepted as the norm and examining closely what is taken for granted. This questioning fosters deeper understanding, which allows one to be conscious of choices one makes, and enables one to be more deliberate (Hinchey, 1998). The basis of all critical theory is “an aversion to closed philosophical systems. To present it as such would therefore distort its essentially open-ended, probing, and unfinished quality” (Jay, 1973, p. 41). As a lens for looking at children’s literature, critical theory allowed me to examine the books from “as many different perspectives as possible” in order to gain insight into what access students have to ideas, what perspectives are presented, and to what assumptions and “truths” children are exposed (Hinchey, 1998, p. 73). I used the aspects of critical theory to “read against the grain” (Mendoza & Reese, 2001, p. 18).

Children’s literature research varies with regard to what is studied as well as how the studies are conducted, and can be focused on such subjects as content analysis or reading-interest studies. “Research on children’s literature also overlaps research in other areas, such as research on emergent literacy, literature-based instruction, reading comprehension, reading motivation and attitudes, and response to literature” (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000, p. 362). Reading aloud and response to literature have been studied in kindergarten and the primary grades (Battle, 1993; Feitelson et al. 1993; Sipe, 1997), and in preschool and childcare settings (McGill-Franzen & Langford, 1994). These studies have shown that the style and genre of books as well as the number of times they are read aloud impact students’ comprehension, writing ability, enjoyment, and preferences (Eckoff, 1983; Elster, 1998; Lehr, 1988; Martinez & Roser, 1985; Oyler & Barry, 1996; Rosenhouse et al. 1997; Sipe, 1997).

Children's literature, primarily award-winning literature, has been studied from a variety of content analysis approaches (Nodelman, 1996). However, few studies have examined the actual books that kindergarten teachers read aloud (Elster, 1998; van Kleeck, 2003). Studying these choices is important for least at two reasons. First, teachers are "significant others" in young children's lives, and what they select and choose to highlight or emphasize is considered noteworthy by their students (Cambourne, 1988; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Shannon, 1989; Smith, 1988). Teachers' literature choices (whatever they are) send value-laden messages, endorsements, or rejections to their students (Hinchey, 1998; McCadden, 1998; Shannon, 1986). Further, the content of books teachers choose to read aloud determines much of their students' exposure to many topics and ideas when children are at a highly impressionable age (Applebee, 1978; Lehr, 1988; Morrow, 1988; Shine & Roser, 1999; Wells, 1986).

In content analysis, the researcher studies the book closely, scrutinizing the illustrations and the language (Nodelman, 1996; Short, 1995). Some of the first content analysis studies of children's literature were quantitative. Questions about images were first selected and then counted. More recently, the issues of gender, ethnicity, race, and social class have been studied using critical theory as a base (Short, 1995). I approached this content analysis from multiple perspectives (including genre, theme, content, gender, race, ethnicity, and social class) in order to glean a more thorough picture of the books read aloud. Although small in scope, the comprehensive nature of this analysis set it apart from other analyses of children's literature, which often highlight a single issue such as gender or ethnicity. In addition, the analysis dealt wholly with the books that a group of teachers selected to read aloud, not children's books in general. Moreover, this

analysis fit within a framework of the particular classroom contexts, specifically the demographics of each room where the books were read aloud, allowing for a closer examination of the kind of access these children had to books read aloud in their classrooms.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The research study arose from a combination of personal experience and the technical literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As a kindergarten teacher, I had first-hand experience of the power of the read-aloud event in the classroom. The books I read often became the children's favorites. Through my selections, I influenced their opinions and beliefs about a myriad of subjects. My personal observations were supported by the technical literature on reading aloud (Barnes, 1991; Darigan, 1991; Kramer & Radey, 1997; Merenda & White-Williams, 2001). After researching the topic, I found that there was a need for research on the actual books that teachers read aloud (Teale, 2003; van Kleeck, 2003). As I formed the research question, I used Strauss and Corbin's (1990) guidelines to set boundaries while keeping the question flexible. In qualitative research, the concepts are not fully defined, but become more concrete as the study progresses. Therefore, my initial question was to determine what kinds of access to books kindergarten teachers provided to their students through their read-aloud events. As I determined how to best get at this information, I kept in mind that I would use a grounded theory approach, which meant that although I used the initial question to stay focused, I would need to take care to avoid rigidity and assumptions, adjusting as necessary (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The purpose of this study was to both examine the messages conveyed in the books that a group of kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students and to explore the

reasons why teachers chose particular books to read aloud. After conducting a pilot study, I sent a questionnaire to all kindergarten teachers at public schools in a Southeastern school district to find out why teachers read aloud, the resources they used, and the factors that went into their selections. Their responses gave me rich descriptive data, which I charted using open coding, or looking at the responses line by line as I developed categories of response (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During the process, I requested that teacher volunteers keep logs of books read aloud for three 1-week periods during the last half of the school year.

I collected book logs of the books read aloud over three 1-week periods in March, April, and May from each teacher who completed a questionnaire and agreed to keep the log. I chose these months because they were well into the school year, when young children typically are considered to have longer attention spans and when the kinds of children's literature read aloud may be more complex and sophisticated (Darigan et al. 2002; May, 1995). Teachers often tie their read-aloud sessions to themes or particular times of the year (Cullinan, 1989; Darigan et al. 2002). As such, I elected not to collect book lists during February, African-American history month, because of the risk of the book lists being skewed as a result.

After receiving the book logs, I did an in-depth analysis of the books, again using open coding to develop categories for each focus area (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I sorted by genre, and studied the books for theme, gender, race, ethnicity, and social class. Although I have taken many children's literature courses, taught children's literature to undergraduate and graduate students several semesters, and taught kindergarten for 10 years, I am a White female immersed in the mainstream culture

(Helms, 1993). As such, I recruited four volunteer readers from various race and socioeconomic class backgrounds to review selected books, and compared their observations and analyses with my own.

After analyzing the books, I found that the books read aloud by the teachers were similar at all schools, despite the vast difference in demographics. Most of the books featured animals as people or White main characters. In light of the racial reading gap between White and non-White students (Florida Department of Education, 2003), I elected to narrow the focus on two schools with both high-poverty and high-minority populations. I interviewed six teachers from these schools, and observed five of them reading aloud. I studied closely the cultural match between the books these teachers read and the students within their classrooms (Au & Raphael, 2000). These interviews and observations helped corroborate the questionnaire and content analysis, and gave a more in-depth look at the reasons why teachers read aloud the books they did.

A variety of research methods, including content analysis, questionnaire, personal and phone interview, document collection, observation, and research journaling were used to answer the following research questions:

#### Questions about Access:

- How much and what kind of access to books did kindergarten teachers provide to students through their read-aloud sessions?
- What types (genre) of books did kindergarten teachers read aloud?
- What reasons did kindergarten teachers give for selecting the books they read aloud to their students?

#### Questions about Content:

- What were the themes and content of the books read aloud by kindergarten teachers to their students?

- Who were the authors and illustrators; were they “insiders” or “outsiders” to the cultures they depicted (Fox & Short, 2003)?
- What were the gender identities of the story characters?
- What were the racial and ethnic identities of the story characters?
- What were the socioeconomic class identities of the story characters?
- What stereotypes were reinforced or countered in the books?

For the purposes of this study, I defined the following terms:

**Read-aloud event:** the event of reading a book orally to a group of children.

During these read-aloud sessions, students are sitting in close proximity to the teacher and the book, with the teacher holding the book outwards facing the audience of children, who listen and may participate as a group. The children may raise their hands to respond or may engage in choral (group) response (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999).

**Read-aloud:** the book that the teacher reads orally to a group of students (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999).

**Literature:** the published books that the teacher reads aloud to the student and to the books that are present in the classroom or school library. In this study, I use the term literature to refer to all books read aloud, including all genres as well as those oversized books commonly called “Big Books” (Holdaway, 1982).

**Big Books:** the oversized books read aloud as shared-book experiences and designed to resemble a more home-like learning environment. These books are typically around 24” x 30” and have oversized print and illustrations. Teachers often use these books to teach directionality, phonics, and language play (Holdaway, 1982; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999).

**Access:** the book being made available to the student throughout the read-aloud event. During the interviews and observations I ascertained if the teachers believed that their students responded or interacted with the book being read aloud, and if so, in what ways.

**Books:** the various kinds of texts that teachers read aloud to their students. The kinds of texts may be a variety of genres, including fiction, realistic fiction, fantasy, fairy or folk tales, information or nonfiction, international, poetry or song. The texts may be a combination of one or more genres, such as information encased in a fantasy format.

**Culture:** the set of shared beliefs, attitudes, goals, practices, and symbols that a group possesses (Banks, 1988; Harris, 2003). The culture of children may also include the classroom environment and childhood events such as losing a tooth (Heath, 1983). In this study, I limit the definition of culture to the race, ethnicity, gender, and social class as determined by free and reduced lunch populations of the classrooms.

**Multiethnic:** “groups such as those of African, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino/Latina, or Native American ancestry” (Harris, 2003, p. 119).

**Multiculturalism:** the education that addresses the interests, concerns, and experiences of those considered to be outside of the sociopolitical and cultural mainstream of American society (Taxel, 2003).

**Social class:** the socioeconomic class of the teachers, students, and books analyzed in this study.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This study was both a comprehensive content analysis of the books that kindergarten teachers selected to read aloud to their students, and an in-depth look at how a group of teachers determined their students' access to certain books. In the content analysis, I studied the books holistically, examining the authors, illustrators, themes, and genre. I analyzed the illustrations, how they interacted with the texts, and what kinds of messages they transmitted (Lewis, 2001). Further, I examined issues of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, and family relationships as they were depicted in the books that this group of teachers read aloud. With regard to access issues, I studied how teachers selected books and what genres they selected. In addition, I analyzed the reasons why they said they chose to read them aloud, as well as how often and the manner in which they said they conducted read-aloud events.

To frame this study properly, it was imperative to have a theoretical understanding of several areas, including critical theory and how it connects to book content, and reader response theory. In addition, it was important to examine the research that has been done in the area of children's literature content analysis, reading interests and preferences, as well as research done on reading aloud.

#### **Critical Theory**

Understanding how I planned to use critical theory and its relation to children's literature in this study required an historical perspective. In the early 1920s, a group of scholars (including Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Erich Fromm) formed the

Institute of Social Research, called the Frankfurt School, at the University of Frankfurt. The group studied the power relations of society. Though their work was done early in the century, it was not translated into English until the 1960s, when it then began to be studied by university academicians, including philosopher Jurgen Habermas, who added to the Frankfurt School's body of ideas during the 1970s. These theorists form the bedrock of critical theory.

Critical theorists study the blending of society -analyzing how culture, individuals, and institutions interact to create society as a whole, while looking at relations among individuals and institutions. Horkheimer argued that the world is the result of how society as a whole operates (Horkheimer, 1972; Jay, 1973).

Related to this idea, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) used the concept of critical race theory to study the impact of race in education. Critical race theory is based on the idea that race, class, and gender privilege White citizens of European heritage. She argued that racism is so deeply woven into our society, including our education system, that it cannot be extracted easily. In fact, research has indicated that non-White students may not do well academically in school because of incongruence between their home culture and that of the school (Au, 1998).

Further connecting the concepts of relations in society to the institution of education, Paulo Freire, the Brazilian philosopher and educator, linked power with literacy (Siegel & Fernandez, 2001). Freire studied the conditions of poverty in Brazil during the 1960s and developed what is called a "critical pedagogy" or a "pedagogy of liberation," arguing that humans have the ability to reflect and subsequently to change their conditions and society. He termed this ability a "critical consciousness" or an

awareness of the underlying reasons for the cultural situation. By becoming aware, Freire believed that people work toward changing their world for the better (Freire, 1973). With his emphasis on the value of literacy and thinking critically to create change, Freire's (1973) perspective provides the basis for the questioning of the school practices that keep the social and class structure of society intact and non-changing – the wealthy stay wealthy and the poor stay poor (Gibson, 1999; Giroux, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In response to Freire's critical pedagogy of power, poststructuralism (a reaction to structuralism, which argued that all human activity is organized or structured rather than natural or unstructured) challenged traditional cultural values and fostered a sense of fragmentation, thus reshaping Freire's concept of critical pedagogy and power. Under this poststructuralist umbrella, theorists such as Foucault (1977) argued that no theory is universally true and that truth is "a thing of this world and is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of restraint" (p. 79). Foucault (1977) stated that people could not liberate themselves simply by becoming critically conscious of their plight, because what they believe are truths are in fact the effects of power spread throughout history and society. Hinchey (1998) agreed that critical consciousness alone does not bring change, suggesting that "an essential element of critical consciousness is praxis: action based on reflection" (p. 145).

Kindergarten students are emergent readers and rely heavily on adults to provide them information. Adults often give this knowledge through reading aloud children's books (Klesius & Griffith, 1996). What books did teachers in this study privilege by reading aloud, and why did they select those books? How often and how much access to

books through read-aloud sessions did the teachers give their students? Researchers assert that many teachers fail to see or acknowledge minority students' cultures, which may reflect in their read-aloud choices and practices (Perry & Fraser, 1993). Similarly, other theorists suggest that the reader's background and culture plays a large part in his or her comprehension and engagement with a literary text, which in turn affects learning (Langer, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1938). McGlinn (2001) argued that young children in particular see themselves as "the center of the world" and "want to see themselves and their everyday lives in the stories they read" (p. 50). Were students' backgrounds taken into account when kindergarten teachers selected books? Some theorists assert that people develop their perspective of themselves and their lives based on their culture and socially constructed reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As a result, they sometimes are not aware of their own biases or of those biases around them (Greene, 1988; Zeichner, 1993).

Teachers may speak of themselves and their students as being colorblind, yet researchers have established that children notice race and have attitudes, opinions, and preferences regarding race, gender, and the elderly as early as age 3 (Clark & Clark, 1950; Cross, 1991; Horowitz, 1939; Lasker, 1929; Minard, 1931; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Ramsey, 1987; Valli, 1995). Racial identity theorists Lawrence and Tatum (1998) suggested that individuals from the mainstream White culture fall along a continuum of awareness about race, and their perspectives affect their understanding of themselves and others in various ways. With regard to children's literature, teachers (particularly those from the mainstream culture) may struggle to be aware of their own biases as well as those of publishers, authors, and illustrators (Nodelman, 1996; Sleeter, 1992; Strehle,

2001). My study examined whether kindergarten teachers appeared to be aware of their personal biases or of the biases in the children's literature they selected to read aloud; whether they appeared to deliberately select books that fostered critical thinking or other concepts; and whether or not they reflected on their selections and practices (May, 1995; Paley, 2000).

Using critical theory as a lens to study children's literature allowed for the meshing of many viewpoints (including multicultural theory) as I examined the books that teachers read aloud (May, 1995). Critical theory enables researchers to study how authors rely on their readers' past literary experiences to help them understand what is written in each new story, or to understand how the illustrations function in telling the story (May, 1995; Nodelman, 1996).

I incorporated critical theory as the foundation to search for issues of theme, gender, race, ethnicity, and social class in books that teachers favored by selecting them to read aloud. Critical race researchers studying legal issues argue that language and visual images, including illustrations and photographs, can be manipulated to continue the practice of covert racism (Hibbitts, 1994). Other researchers have suggested that this type of close analysis can be transferred to the area of children's literature (Mendoza & Reece, 2001). Further, theorists argue that children may not become readers and lovers of literature if they do not see their own cultures and identities portrayed in books (Liaw, 1995; McGlinn, 2001; Sims, 1983). Recent studies suggest that children who have access to authentic multicultural literature are better able to understand complex themes and multiple perspectives (Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 1999; Medina, 2001; Short & Fox, 2003). Although more accurate multicultural and multiethnic books are being

published, only about 7% of books published in 2000 were about or by people of color, with most authors and illustrators being White and most children's books being about White, middle-class culture (Fondrie, 2001). According to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Cooperative Children's Book Center, a total of 5,000 books for children were published in 2002 and African-Americans wrote or illustrated 69 of those books, while another 166 were written about African-Americans by White authors. Two hundred and forty-nine children's books were by or about all other non-Caucasian people (University of Madison-Wisconsin, 2004). These statistics support critical theorists' argument that those who are not from the majority culture have little control over the "production of the images of themselves" (Mendoza & Reece, 2001). I studied the authors and illustrators of the books the teachers read aloud, and compared the race and ethnicity of the book characters to the students'. I researched whether the authors and illustrators were "outsiders" or "insiders" to the topic or culture about which they wrote, and if that appeared to affect the authenticity of the book (Fox & Short, 2003). I studied the content of the books for evidence that the students' cultures were represented.

My study also examined how gender was depicted in the illustrations and text of the books read aloud. For example, fairy tales, a favorite read-aloud of young children, frequently present stereotypical gender roles such as the female as submissive and the male powerful (Zipes, 1985). Similarly, historical fiction picture books often portray females in traditional gender roles (Kolbe & LaVoie, 1981; Romines, 1997). In fact, researchers and authors assert that children's literature perpetuates many potentially dangerous male stereotypes, including aggressiveness and rebelliousness (Fox, 1993; Nodelman, 2001). In a study of Newbery and Caldecott books published in the early

1990s, Ernst (1995) found that only two females were primary characters in the four Newbery books studied. She noted that the two females were “followers” rather than leaders and that the males in the books were leaders. In the 13 Caldecott Honor books she studied, Ernst found that only two featured female protagonists, and that the one courageous female used her bravery to help a male character succeed. Lehr (1995) found that many female characters are portrayed as strong, but with feminine talents, such as being able to heal or create nurturing homes. Pace and Lowery (2003) did an in-depth study of Dulcie Dando, soccer star (Gliori, 1992) and found that gender stereotypes were profound in the text. I wondered if there were stereotypical gender images in the books that the kindergarten teachers read aloud to the students.

Along with gender, I studied the books that the teachers read aloud for evidence of social class. Research suggests that social class stereotypes are prevalent in children’s literature (Nodelman, 2000; Rodman, 1994). For example, in a content analysis of 100 picture books, Rodman (1994) found that the dominant image of families were traditional, intact Caucasian families residing in suburban or rural single-family detached houses. Many children are not in nuclear suburban families and have a different schema for “home” (Rodman, 1994). In a study of books about farmers and rural life, Kruse (2001) found that stereotypical images of poor, usually dirty, primarily White males in overalls dominated the illustrations. Children who are not familiar with rural areas or farming may gain incorrect perceptions of contemporary rural culture or farming (Kruse, 2001). I analyzed the books that teachers read aloud for evidence of social class and studied how closely the books appeared to match the social class of the students in that classroom. I also examined the illustrations and texts for possible stereotypes.

### **Critical Theory, Critical Literacy and Book Content Issues**

As mentioned, one possibility of a critical theory perspective is that it can provide a foundation for analyzing our society's institutions and products (including our literature) while looking for unequal power relations (Banks, 1988; Berger & Luckman, 1966; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Within a critical theory perspective, critical literacy is a thread closely connected to the pedagogy of learning in schools. Critical literacy has a complex background; as such, I highlighted a few of the concepts to provide a base for the study. Freire (1973) redefined literacy as not just the ability to read and write, but rather as a political act involving studying the culture and society, and actively transforming that culture or society. Critical literacy encompasses both literacy instruction and social awareness and describes the acts of uncovering and improving oppressive conditions (Gibson, 1999; Gore, 1993). However, Freire's definition of critical literacy focuses primarily on class structure and has been criticized for being too limiting. Feminists, for example, charge that Freire's theory ignores the oppression that arises from gender and racial inequalities (Weiler, 1991). Other theorists suggest that Freire's critical pedagogy is as restrictive as the traditional educational practices he hoped to replace (Gore, 1993).

Although current definitions of critical literacy vary, there are some commonalities. It is important to note that critical literacy differs from "functional literacy," which is defined as the "technical mastery of particular skills used to decode simple texts" (Kanpol, 1999, p. 54). Critical literacy is a "social and political practice rather than a set of neutral, psychological skills" (Siegel & Fernandez, 2001, p. 149). Our body of literature itself is considered a social construction, and it too is a political product (Apple, 1996; Banks, 1990; Giroux, 2000). "Critical literacy empowers individuals in the



postmodern sense to analyze and synthesize the culture of the school and their own particular culture circumstances” (Kanpol, 1999, p. 54). Critical literacy theorists examine and question practices and policies of traditional literacy education that keep the social structure of our culture intact. Critical literacy practitioners consciously divide their students into diverse groups and select literature that supports critical thinking and transformation (Kanpol, 1999). In short, critical literacy attempts to improve the current state of literacy education by questioning assumptions, uncovering unequal or unjust power relations, and by facilitating positive change (Anderson & Irvine, 1993).

Critical literacy theorists support the use of multiple texts connected with student experience to help them understand and make sense of the world (Shannon, 1989). I incorporated a critical literacy perspective as I looked for issues of representation in the books read aloud and analyzed the books for evidence that teachers attempted to use multiple texts that related to the students in their class. Further, during my interviews, I sought to determine if the teachers in this study appeared to use a critical literacy stance when selecting books to read aloud. I wondered if they noted the authors or selected books because of the authors or illustrators. Did they look for issues of culture or ideology? Did they deliberately select books that they felt would promote critical thinking and reflection?

### **Multicultural Theory**

I planned to study the content of the books from a variety of perspectives so it was important to define each viewpoint. Multicultural theory lies under the umbrella of critical theory and was a part of my approach. Recognition of the value of diversity and multiculturalism has increased, particularly in schools, in recent years (Banks, 2001; Mendoza & Reese, 2001). Similarly, multiculturalism in children’s literature has

increased in the last decade (Fox & Short, 2003; Nodelman, 2001). The concept of multiculturalism in literature has been defined as the “project of making education more inclusive of the perspectives of women, minorities, and non-Western cultures in recognition of the increasingly diverse character of life in modern Western societies” (Childers & Hentzi, 1995, p. 196). Nodelman (2000) suggested that the books that fit within a multicultural category “tend to almost always be *about* multiculturalism, and to insist in one way or another on the significance of tolerance and acceptance” (p. 8). As a result, there are many children who do not see themselves (or see themselves only superficially or in a didactical manner) in the texts used at school. Those marginalized by the texts are well aware of the differences between their lives and the ones to which they are exposed in books read aloud (Fox & Short, 2003; Herrera, 2000; Nodelman, 2000).

Multicultural theorists assert the importance of multicultural literature to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity. Tway (1989) argued that multicultural literature is necessary because it helps children understand themselves and others. Igoa (1995) stated that multicultural literature affords children “a sense of solidarity with all people, making them transcend cultural attitudes.” Moreover, research suggests that diverse children’s literature is important for European American cultures to appreciate cultures different from their own (Altieri, 1993; Barnes, 1991; Enciso, 1994; Fox & Short, 2003). Adoff (1986) argued that “if all the parallel cultures and literatures of all the Americas are not presented with force and conviction, then no part of the so-called American children’s literature is true; all must fall like some house of cards built on partial foundations” (p. 10).

Enciso (1994) studied students' reactions to culturally different characters in Jerry Spinelli's (1991) novel Maniac Magee. Fourteen children, including five European American boys, five European American girls, two African-American boys, one Latina girl, and one boy of Hmong heritage met with Enciso to discuss the novel, which has been criticized for being an inaccurate portrayal of racial relationships. She found that by discussing the book, children were able to construct complex understandings of race and ethnicity and to appreciate their own diversity as well as the diversity of others. The children were able to make sense of their place in society. Enciso argued that literature and frank discussions can promote a deeper understanding of our "cultural and social identities." The study's limitations include the size, but the results suggest that literature can change a reader's understanding of diversity.

Macphee's (1997) study of White first graders concluded that children were able to empathize with characters of a different race or ethnicity. In addition, Liaw (1995) found that children who do not see themselves in literature are not as likely to be engaged. These studies suggest the importance of reading aloud books with a variety of ethnicities and races (including those ethnicities and races both present and absent from the classroom). In my study, I examined the books that were read aloud and compared the demographics of the book characters to the demographics of the students in the classrooms. I studied whether both similar and different races or ethnicities were present in the books read aloud.

### **Multicultural Identity**

Along with multicultural theory is the concept of multicultural identity or how we see ourselves and with whom we identify culturally, socially, and ethnically. Author and illustrator Juan Felipe Herrera (2000) wrote that "there were many years as a child and

teenager that I felt I had no language at all, no culture, no worth, not even an identity I could count on....” (p. 56). Teachers, because of their position, can influence children’s sense of self-worth, value, and identity. “When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing” (Rich, 1986, p. 5). Perry and Fraser (1993) suggested that teachers, under curriculum pressures, may fail to see or acknowledge minority student cultures and as a result fail to engage these students in the learning process. In my interviews with the teachers, I attempted to determine if the teachers in this study felt pressure from curriculum or other areas and if they chose books with their students in mind.

Herrera (2000) warned that our world is in an “age of fracture and floating borderlines where identity, origins, home, family, and national self are fragile, transitory, and highly endangered” (p. 58). Teachers, like most children’s literature authors and illustrators, are often from the mainstream culture and take for granted certain world “truths” (Perry & Fraser, 1993). Further, teachers sometimes assume that information in print is accurate, which is not always the case (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 2003; Nodelman, 1996). As a result, they may be unaware of misinformation or stereotypes (Lawrence & Tatum, 1998; Sleeter, 1992). I asked the teachers if they noticed stereotypes and how important they felt these issues were as they selected books to read aloud.

In a study of pre-service teachers, Velsor and O’Neill (1997) found that individuals were not initially able to identify themselves as being of a particular culture or ethnicity. After grounding themselves in a cultural background, they embraced the importance of heritage and responses. Slonim (1991) argued that ethnicity, which Banks (1988) defined

as a person's "psychological identification" to a certain group, can be difficult to determine, because psychological factors vary with each individual. Broadly defined, ethnicity or cultural heritage is considered to be a shared system of values and beliefs (Holmes, 1995; Slonim, 1991). Through the questionnaires, interviews, and observations, I attempted to determine with what groups these teachers appeared to identify and how that identification might have affected their reading aloud practices.

Defining oneself as being of a particular ethnicity is a process involving revising one's view of oneself as being different or similar to others (Banks, 1988).

Consequently, one's identification can vary greatly over time. Since humans are individuals with unique backgrounds that blend with their ethnic or cultural background, assigning certain behaviors or values to a particular ethnicity can promote stereotypes and inaccurate perceptions (Frisby, 1992).

To compound the issue of changing self-identification, Aboud (1987) found that children's understandings of ethnic identity were not static until age 6. Davidson et al. (1993) asserted that children often do not assign themselves a constant ethnic identity until the teenage years. The researchers suggested that teachers and schools are a powerful influence in students determining their ethnic identity. Smith and Brookins (1997) agreed, but cautioned that the construction of ethnic identity in children is a complicated and poorly understood process and no simple answers are available. Their studies suggest it is likely that the books read aloud in the school setting can play a part in this process of ethnic identity formation. As part of my study, I noted whether teachers took their students' backgrounds or ethnicities into account when selecting books to read aloud. On the questionnaire, I asked, "How important are your students' backgrounds in

your read-aloud selections?” Later, in the interviews, I again explored the student composition of the class and the degree to which it impacted the teachers’ book selections.

### **Reader-Response Criticism and Theory**

When examining the reasons why teachers selected books to read aloud, an understanding of reader-response criticism and theory helped frame the study more clearly. Though I did not focus on reader-response in the classroom setting, it was appropriate to know what kinds of behaviors elicited responses. As I analyzed the questionnaire and interview results, I hoped to learn the reasons behind teachers’ selections and perhaps ascertain in some measure the degree to which the teachers valued their students’ responses to the books they read and how their students’ responses might have affected their read-aloud selections.

From the 1930s through the 1960s, an American literary critical movement called New Criticism influenced profoundly the study of literature, proposing that works of literature were autonomous and had set meanings or interpretations. The work exists for its own sake and the reader’s job is to discover the text’s primary meaning through close study. In contrast, reader-oriented approaches put more emphasis on the reader’s power to interpret the text. Reader-response criticism is a term used to denote a number of different approaches concerned with understanding the ways that readers comprehend literary works, a shift from the text to the reader’s engagement with the work (Fish, 1980). Interactional theorists agree with New Critics that texts have specific meanings, but argue that the reader does in fact have a role in the process of comprehending that meaning (Iser, 1974). Louise Rosenblatt (1938) first coined the term “transactional” in her theory that the reader plays a significant role in the interpretation of a literary piece.

Rosenblatt states that the reader, the text, and the context or reading event are all vital in understanding a literary piece (Rosenblatt, 1994). Basing her theory in part on the work of John Dewey (1938), Rosenblatt argued that no literary work or reading experience will be exactly the same for anyone, in short because the reader and the text are involved in an individualized reading transaction set in a particular and unique social context. The reader brings all his past experiences into the context of the reading event (which is where the actual literary work lies). The reader approaches the text from one or a combination of two stances lying along a continuum: aesthetic and efferent. Rosenblatt (1994) defined aesthetic reading as the reader being focused solely on the enjoyment and pleasure of a text. An efferent reading experience occurs when a reader is focused on the information that he or she will receive from the text. Depending upon the reader's stance, reading a poem may be a primarily aesthetic experience, while reading a recipe may be primarily efferent. However, the same text can be approached from either stance and is often a blend of both stances. The teacher reading aloud adds another element to the transaction (Teale, 2003). Listening to books read aloud and looking at the illustrations is usually considered to be an aesthetic experience for children, but can also be an efferent experience (or a combination). Further, teachers' questioning practices and read-aloud behaviors can affect their students' responses and experiences both positively and negatively (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999).

Transactional theory suggests that it is easier for students to be absorbed in stories when the cultures, race, gender, and class in the books they read match their own (Harris, 1999). Transactional theory also implies that authors and their backgrounds are an important element in the experience (Rosenblatt, 1994). Authentic literature often

represents cultures more accurately and tends to be written by authors who are insiders to the cultures about which they write than by those outside the culture (Harris, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Seto, 2003). Authors who write about other cultures often produce “tourist” books that emphasize the exotic or surface culture and promote stereotypes (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Rochman, 2003). As a result, children from different cultures or diverse backgrounds may have difficulty understanding or relating to books that are written about their cultures by outsiders (Knapp & Shields, 1990; Martinez & Nash, 1990; Matsuyama, 1983).

Langer (1995) found that a reader’s past experiences can be important in the understanding of a piece of literature. She identified four nonlinear stances or “envisionments” which she defined as “text worlds in the mind” that occur during the reading of texts: “being out and stepping into an envisionment; being in and moving through an envisionment; stepping out and rethinking what one knows; and stepping out and objectifying the experience.” (pps. 15-19). Prior knowledge is required for the reader to be able to step in or move through an envisionment and background information is necessary for the reader to analyze and reflect on the text effectively.

The reading process demands that the reader rely on background knowledge to develop a scaffold of understanding (Doctorow et al. 1978). Rosenblatt (1994) used the term “selective attention” to describe the choices that readers make when they are engaged in a reading event. These choices vary with the individual and are based in part on “social and cultural contextual differences” (Karolides, 1997, p. 13). Cultural experiences and background outline a reader’s understanding, making it possible for the reading aloud of a single text to be a rich experience for one student and a meaningless



one for another. If prior knowledge is not sufficient or scaffolded properly, then students' understandings are incomplete (Harris, 1999; Langer, 1995).

Studies of reading comprehension support this assertion. Reynolds et al. (1982) found that Black and White students interpreted text passages differently, depending upon their cultural backgrounds. The researchers' results suggest that cultural biases in text may create comprehension struggles for students, particularly minority students. Further, books that do not match students' backgrounds may fail to elicit engagement and envisionment building with the text during a read-aloud experience (Greene, 1993; Langer, 1995; May, 1995; Nodelman, 1996). Because kindergarten classrooms may have students who come from diverse backgrounds and with diverse experiences, my study examined the match between the books the teacher selected to read aloud and their students' social class, gender, and ethnicity.

### **Research on Response to Literature**

Although many children are in preschool and day care settings, kindergarten can be their first encounter with real academic demands and an increasingly difficult curriculum (West et al. 2000). The context of "classroom life is complex," with teachers and students working together to create the structure (McGill-Franzen & Lanford, 1994, p.264). In this study, I interviewed the teachers to determine how they dealt with the complexity through their read-aloud selections and if their students' responses affected their choices. For example, one question I asked was what books they read aloud on the first day of school (often a stressful day for new kindergartners and their families).

Janet Hickman (1979) was one of the first researchers to examine how children respond to literature in a classroom setting. Her ethnographic study examined how children responded in three mixed-grade primary classrooms. Hickman found that

children refer back to books read aloud long after the actual event, sometimes through artwork or discussions. Through her findings, she developed a number of student response categories, summarized by Martinez and Roser (1991):

- listening behaviors such as applause or joining in refrains
- contact with books such as browsing
- acting on impulse to share by reading together or sharing discoveries
- oral responses such as retelling or freely commenting on stories, actions, and drama,
- making things like pictures or games, and
- writing about literature or using literary models in one's writing (p. 646).

Similarly, in a study of children's responses to literature, Applebee (1978) found that young children were caught up in the action of the stories they heard and usually responded by retelling the story in great detail. During my interviews and observations, I tried to determine if the teachers fostered or encouraged these types of responses from their students.

Examining how children become knowledgeable about children's literature through their experiences, McGill-Franzen and Lanford (1994) conducted a study that suggests that children's understanding of text may in fact be closely connected to their experience with literary genres and the read-aloud practices of teachers. In a study of three preschool children, they found that one child's lack of exposure to a variety of literary genres limited his understanding of literature. A second child was in a classroom where the teacher read different genres but did not allow the students to talk during the event and did not allow later access to the books. The third child was exposed to more genres and encouraged to discuss, revisit, and interpret the literature. This last child was able to

respond and explore texts in a more sophisticated manner than the other two children, both verbally and when writing. In another study of young children, Elster (1994) found that children were able to retell stories accurately after they listened to books read aloud.

Teacher-researcher Gallas (1997) studied an African-American second-grade male in her class who refused to listen to stories during the daily read-aloud time. From what she could determine, the child had no prior reading experiences before school and she learned that he did not attend kindergarten. He began second grade determined to learn to read and diligently worked during the reading time. Gallas found that the child did not see a purpose for the story time and did not understand that the time was meant to be pleasurable. Instead, the child defined reading as simply word mastery, a belief Gallas attributed to the fact that he had come from a background where reading was functional and not done for enjoyment. Gallas determined that children bring “different social and cultural understandings of print to school,” a finding supported by other theorists and researchers, and that reading aloud stories is mostly a mainstream cultural practice (Bus, 2003; Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983). Her study is important in that she focused on a child who was not from the mainstream culture. She used her experience to adjust her teaching strategies and classroom to help her students achieve a “deep, decontextualized, and aesthetic appreciation and understanding of texts” (Gallas, 1997, p. 253). In my interviews with the teachers, I tried to determine if they adjusted their read-aloud events to meet the needs of their mostly minority populations of students.

Research on reading aloud suggests a connection between listening and responding to books and learning to read (Bus et al. 1995). In a yearlong study of the read-aloud program in New York second-grade classrooms, Cohen (1968) found that reading aloud

was critical in learning to read. Using an experimental control design, Cohen asked the teachers in the experimental groups to read aloud and do some type of story retelling every day. At the end of the year, the experimental groups had higher reading vocabularies and comprehension skills than the control groups. The researchers determined that reading aloud and retelling is important in improving reading skills and language. In 1974, Cullinan et al. replicated the study with kindergarten students and found similar results. In my study, I examined the questionnaire and interview responses for evidence that the teachers believed reading aloud was connected to learning to read and if they felt that retelling was an important event.

In a more recent study, Morrow (1998) studied four-year-olds' responses to story readings in low-income urban day care centers. Nearly 75% of the children came from single parent homes with a maximum annual family income of \$10,000. Around 40% of the children belonged to minority groups and 20% had been abused or neglected, according to the state's Department of Youth and Family Services. One hundred and ten children were randomly selected for two experimental groups and one control group. In one experimental group, the books were read aloud twice. In the other experimental group, the books were read aloud once. The children in the control group were not read aloud books. Seventy-nine children remained in the study until the end. Morrow found that the story readings increased the children's verbal responses and the complexity of their responses. As in other studies, Morrow found that children commented on meaning, not just technical aspects of the story (Roser & Martinez, 1985; Sulzby, 1985). She also noted that when books were read aloud twice, the children responded in a more complex manner. Morrow's study suggests that reading to children can increase the quality of

responses of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Further, providing discussions which focus on interpretation may increase children's interest in the reading event and their comments about meaning. When analyzing the books logs and questionnaires, I examined whether the teachers appeared to read aloud books more than once and if they encouraged responses.

Similarly, Martinez and Roser (1985) found that repeated readings increased young children's ability to comprehend and discuss more deeply various aspects of a picture book. Their study was conducted in homes and preschools of four children where six stories were read aloud a total of three times. The researchers found that the children tended to ask more questions with unfamiliar stories and made more comments when listening to unfamiliar stories. Their results showed that the focus changed from story characters to story details as the story became more familiar and that the children increased the range of responses and the number of responses as they heard the initially unfamiliar stories repeated. Although the study is small, it supports the practice of reading aloud a story more than once as a way to increase the complexity of children's responses and to deepen their understanding of the story.

In a study of 60 children in kindergarten, second, and fourth grades, Lehr (1988) reported that children were able to respond and reflect on the themes of books they heard, especially if they had had a great deal of prior experience with literature. The study was conducted in a middle-class suburb of a large metropolitan Midwestern city and the participants were given the Revised Huck Literature Inventory to determine their exposure to literature across several genres. The children were divided into two groups (those with high exposure to literature and those with low exposure). Six books from two

genres, realistic fiction and folk tales, were selected for each grade level and read aloud to the children. After the read-aloud session, the children were asked to state what they thought the story was about. Lehr scored all statements with the help of an independent rater, obtaining a reliability rate of 92.5%. Lehr found that having the books available when asking the children about the theme increased the quality of the responses, because they could look back through the books. Those children who were rated as having a high exposure to children's literature generated a higher level of thematic awareness than those children who were ranked as having a low exposure to children's literature. The study is limited in that it focuses on middle-class students and does not address race, ethnicity, or gender, but it provides interesting data and supports the theory that providing opportunities for children to listen to books read aloud in the classroom can affect their developing sense of theme. Peterson and Eeds (1990) found that although students were read to often and exposed to many types of children's literature, they were not given the opportunity to explore their understanding in more critical or profound ways.

Studies of literature response have shown that the reader's culture influences response. Focusing on older students, Beach (1997) found that students, particularly those from the mainstream culture, resisted literature that threatened their beliefs and values. The students were uncomfortable with literature that dealt with such issues as homelessness and homosexuality or that questioned traditional practices.

The teacher plays a large role in facilitating children's responses to literature (Battle, 1993; Martinez & Teale, 1993; Short & Armstrong, 1993; Short et al. 1996; Wood et al. 1976). Wood et al. (1976) found that adults are important in scaffolding young children's responses and interactions to read-aloud events. Likewise, Roser and

Martinez (1985) studied the roles that adults play in preschoolers' responses to literature and found that when adults did not respond, children's interactions were limited. Further, Peters (1993) observed that the interaction between the text, the teacher, and the children during read-aloud sessions actually facilitated literacy development. Short et al. (1996), looked at teacher talk within literature circles and found that the teacher's talk and social interactions influenced children's discussions in a positive manner.

In a study of sixth-graders, Guice (1995) found that the students' responses were less when the teacher did not allow children to talk with each other about the books. She observed that despite this, students often continued to discuss the books at other times. Guice concluded that teachers should honor student-initiated talk, a conclusion supported by others (Lin, 1995; Sipe, 1997).

Sipe (1997) observed that children in first and second grades increased their understandings through conversations and discussions. Sipe (1997) found that the students engaged in five types of responses, and that analytical was their primary response. Sipe cautions that requiring children to wait to respond until the end of the story often causes children to forget or to lose their response (p. 18). Cox and Many (1992) found that student responses became increasingly more complex as they continued to engage in discussion.

In a study of a multi-aged primary classroom, Copenhaver (1998) found that teacher questioning during read-alouds was primarily efferent in nature, with mostly close-ended questions, such as listing the names of characters or reviewing facts learned. Copenhaver defined a read-aloud strategy she termed "fill-in-the-blank," which involved the teacher reading aloud part of a passage and pausing to allow the children to verbally

respond with words that would fit. Here, unlike the other questioning events, where students were expected to raise their hands, students were encouraged to call out answers. Copenhaver found this strategy confusing for some students who already were unsure about the procedures for traditional school questioning events and concluded that this practice made it difficult for these children to participate in the classroom talk.

In similar studies of teachers eliciting responses, Cianciolo (1995) found that teacher questioning is an effective method to promote critical aesthetic response. By contrast, Blake (1995) suggested that teachers avoid asking questions in order to support students' personal connections and avoid steering the students to a predetermined understanding.

Higher quality responses appear to affect test scores in a positive manner as well. Dickinson and Smith (1994) observed that children who were engaged in extended discussions after the text was read showed higher gains when measured against children who were encouraged to respond only to factual detail and produce portions of the text in chorus.

Peterman (1988) stated that teachers who received training could enhance children's literacy learning. She found that procedures that emphasized connections between the children's experience and the story characters furthered understanding. She also noted that focusing on story grammar was an effective way to increase comprehension. Other researchers have done similar interventions with varying degrees of success (Dale et al. 1996; Whitehurst et al. 1994)

Because student response to reading can impact teachers' book selections, I examined the questionnaire and interview responses to determine the teachers'



approaches to eliciting responses and what kinds of responses they appeared to value. On the questionnaire, I asked what factors the teachers felt were most important to consider when selecting the books they read aloud. During the interviews with the focus teachers, I asked if they encouraged talk as a way for their students to create meaning during the read-aloud event (Bandura, 1986). As I observed the read-aloud sessions, I looked for evidence to corroborate their statements.

### **Teachers Conducting Read-Alouds**

In my study, I did not do extensive observations of the teachers conducting read-alouds. However, the teacher questionnaire and interviews contained questions about the teachers' read-aloud practices and I observed five teachers to confirm and corroborate the results of the self-reports and personal interviews. As such, it was necessary to be aware of the research on teachers and read-aloud sessions and how these sessions impact student learning.

The cultural practice of reading aloud is widely accepted as a powerful and valuable part of a child's life and literacy growth (Bus et al. 1995; Short et al. 1996). A primarily White, middle-class American tradition, reading aloud is often considered a method of socializing children to school culture and rules (Anderson et al. 2003; Heath, 1983). Most reading aloud is narrative form, which according to Huck (1992) is a "universal way of thinking" and important for children to experience (p. 4). Moffet (1983) speculated that children use narrative to order their thinking and problem solving processes and reading aloud is an important way to learn narrative.

A large number of research studies have supported reading aloud to children as a way to effectively increase their emergent literacy (Battle, 1993; 1986; Durkin, 1978; Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Wells, 1986). Reading aloud to children increases their

familiarity with print conventions and their meta-linguistic awareness about print (Clay, 1979; Doake, 1981; Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Taylor, 1983; Schickendanz, 1986).

Research on reading aloud in the classroom setting also suggests a connection between being read aloud to and school achievement (Teale & Martinez, 1989). Still other researchers have found that children's literature experiences in the classroom increased interest in reading and achievement, and had a positive correlation to writing ability (Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Lancia, 1997).

Cochran-Smith (1984) described reading aloud in the classroom as a mutually negotiated event of comments and interactions between the teacher, the children, the illustrations, and the text. Her study suggests that the teacher acts as a mediator when reading aloud books to children – defining vocabulary and concepts when necessary and assisting children in their understanding of the book.

Martinez and Teale (1993) studied the storybook reading styles of six kindergarten teachers and found that each had a distinctive reading style that varied somewhat in the type of teacher talk that occurred during the reading as well as the type of information that the teacher and student talked about and the instructional strategies used by the teacher.

Studies of reading aloud have shown that the practice has numerous benefits. Reading aloud to children deepens their personal responses, fosters their meaning-making strategies; and encourages critical thinking and collaboration (Butler, 1975; Chomsky, 1972; May, 1995; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Sipe, 1996; Wells, 1986). Reading aloud fosters children's enjoyment of books while nurturing their language development and comprehension (Anderson et al., 1985). Read-alouds allow children to hear the cadences

of written language and to discover how print functions as they acquire real-world knowledge (Clay, 1985). Moreover, read-alouds support literary development – children understand story conventions such as “once upon a time” and discover literary motifs. They become acquainted with literary characters such as the “trickster” or the “bad wolf” and the “rule of three” in folk tales (Huck, 1992). During read-alouds, children think in response to the literature, and when discussion is part of the experience, they learn how to engage in literary discussions (Morrow, 1983).

Several researchers have noted that the manner in which a teacher approaches literature and read-aloud events may have a great deal of influence on the responses of children to literature (Blake, 1995; Cianciolo, 1995; Cox, 1997; Sipe, 1997). Huck (1992) was one of the first researchers to propose that a teacher’s enthusiasm was an important factor for promoting a love of reading. Other researchers have observed that how teachers teach literature impacts student responses (Galda, 1988; Hickman, 1981).

Despite the evidence showing the importance of reading aloud, studies vary on the amount. Langer et al. (1990) analyzed the National Assessment of Educational Progress database and found that 57% of fourth-grade teachers read aloud daily. In a study of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, Morrow (1983) reported that teachers read 12 stories over the course of four weeks.

In another study, Hoffman et al. (1993) analyzed answers on questionnaires from 537 classrooms across the United States and found that 74% of teachers read aloud to their students daily. In kindergarten, 84% of teachers responded that they read aloud to their students at least once each day; 64% of fifth grade teachers said they read aloud every day. One question required teachers to list a book they read aloud. Studying the

books listed, the researchers found that no multicultural author or title appeared on the list of read-alouds. Some of the most common books were Martin and Carle's (1967) Brown bear, Brown Bear and Sendak's (1963) Where the Wild Things are, books considered to be well-written and illustrated, but published nearly 30 years earlier. The researchers found that the typical read-aloud session included a text unrelated to a unit of study, was usually less than 20 minutes long and contained a discussion that took less than five minutes. Frequently, no response activity followed the read-aloud.

In a study of preschool teachers' reading aloud programs, Stone and Twardosz (2001) interviewed 21 teachers in childcare centers throughout a medium-sized southeastern United States city. The study is limited in that the childcare directors chose to participate and the participants used self-reports. Still, the findings are interesting. All teachers reported reading aloud at least once daily and more than half of the teachers said they read aloud two or three times each day. The teachers noted that they took into account their children's interests when selecting read-alouds, often using a book to teach a skill or character trait. Teachers in their study reported reading to get children to sit quietly and acknowledged that they selected books on the basis of length or complexity. They chose shorter books when time or children's behavior were issues. One concern the researchers noted was that the teachers primarily read narrative picture books and did not appear to read other genres aloud, thereby limiting the children's exposure to other types of literature. They noted that some children may not be engaged by narrative and might not enjoy read-aloud sessions if not exposed to other kinds of books, a concern noted by others (Pellegrini et al. 1990). Poole (1987) found that primary teachers felt that the greatest value of reading stories aloud lay in improving written and spoken English,

emphasizing skill over the social and cultural experience. The teachers in Poole's survey also stated that they used reading aloud as a means of calming students down and keeping them quiet at the end of the day, when the children were tired.

I examined the genres that the teachers reported reading aloud to determine if their choices were primarily narrative as previous studies have found (Pellegrini et al. 1990). I also analyzed their responses as to why they read aloud and compared their answers to the answers given by teachers who completed Poole's survey (Poole, 1987).

### **Teachers as Readers**

As I conducted the interviews and analyzed the questionnaire responses, I looked to see if the participants appeared to be "readers" and if they were familiar with children's literature. Research has suggested a connection between familiarity with children's literature and a teacher's personal reading, whether that reading is of children's literature, adult literature, or professional literature. Of particular concern, some research has suggested that illiterate teachers or those who can, but don't read in their personal time, might impact their students in a negative fashion (Mangieri & Corboy, 1981; Many et al. 1998; Thompson & Meeks, 1990; Zancanella, 1991). Zancanella (1991) interviewed five junior high school teachers in-depth and found their "personal literary lives" contributed in a positive way to their teaching of literature. Thompson and Meeks (1990) surveyed 50 teachers. Thirty of the teachers taught in an inner city elementary school and 20 were completing graduate degrees in reading or library science. They found that the majority of respondents were not familiar with multiethnic literature, with the exception of a few African-American titles. Many et al. (1998) studied pre-service teachers and found that their perceptions of themselves as readers influenced their views on literature-based instruction. Those who considered themselves avid readers placed a higher value on

literature-based instruction than those who did not consider themselves avid. Other researchers posit that elementary teachers' perceptions of their personal and professional reading habits are important factors in how they learn about children's literature and why they read it (Small, 2000).

Because teachers who are readers themselves may recognize the importance of recreational reading and matching students' interests with books, I interviewed the teachers about their reading habits. I wondered if they appeared to see a connection between their personal reading habits and how they approached reading aloud to their students.

### **Children's Literature**

Children's literature is a vital part of children's cognitive, psychological, and social development; literature has the ability to both entertain and to help children develop their intellect and emotion (Bettelheim, 1975, p. 5). Nodelman (2000) argued that children's literature is a "teaching tool" whose goal is to make its readers different in some way, an assertion supported by others (Greene, 1988; Miller, 1997).

Researchers and educators recognize the power of children's literature to impact children's understanding of their identities and roles as well as their perceptions of society and culture in general. Nodelman (2000) placed great emphasis on the power of literature, stating, "children's literature has played an important part in making us who we are" (p. 16). "Everything we read...constructs us and makes us who we are, by presenting our images of ourselves as girls and women, as boys and men" (Fox, 1993, p. 85). These images are not always accurate, however (Ramirez & Ramirez, 1994; Seto, 2003). People of varying ethnicities continue to suffer from misperceptions and stereotypes in literature for children, despite a concerted effort on the behalf of publishers

in recent years to utilize people of different ethnicities in illustrations and photographs (Short & Fox, 2003). Studies have found that overwhelmingly, particularly in textbooks, characters portrayed as diverse are often middle-class characters with darker skin shades possessing the attitudes and beliefs of the white middle-class (Darigan et al. 2002).

As I analyzed the children's literature from the logs kept by teachers, I examined the accuracy of the books if they were nonfiction and for evidence of diversity in the characters as they appeared in the text and illustrations. I then compared the race and class of the story characters in the books to the composition of the classrooms.

### **Semiotic Theory and Picture Book Illustrations**

Studying the signs and meanings in picture books illustrations is a part of content analyses in children's literature (Cianciolo, 1976; Lewis, 2001; Nodelman, 2000). Semiotics, the study of signs and their meaning, is based on the work of philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce, who defined three types of signs based on the relationship between the sign and the thing it signifies. The "symbol" is an arbitrary sign based on cultural conventions; for example, the representation of a person wearing a skirt that appears on many women's restroom doors. The "icon" is a sign based on similar features, such as an object and a photograph of that object. Computer icons are probably the most familiar ones to contemporary children. The "index" has a causal relationship, such as the relationship between a thermometer reading and the temperature (Eco, 1979). Saussure (trans. Harris, 1983) moved the understanding of signs to the written language and believed that his theory could explain how writing communicates meaning through word choice and style. In the 1960s, Roland Barthes (1967) used the principles of semiotics in his analysis of cultural and social events and concepts. Understanding the pictures in children's books requires that children have a developed schemata or pre-

existing understandings that enable them to translate what they see as they develop a theory of what the world is like (Bettelheim, 1975; Lewis, 2001; Nodelman, 1996; Smith, 1975). For example, children must have a schema for “house” in order to understand that a square topped with a triangle represents a house. According to Nodelman (1996), “pictures don’t convey much meaning until we know the language in which they are expressed” (p. 217). Because cultures represent things in different ways and with different connotation and assumptions, children have to know enough about their culture in order to know how pictures represent it (Crawford & Hade, 2000; Nodelman, 1988). Each new experience or event in children’s lives is either folded into the existing theory or the theory is modified to make sense of the experience (Lindfors, 1987).

Theorists argue that picture books are complex and in fact unintentionally imply sophisticated readers, who (although never having been exposed to these things) are able to comprehend objects “floating” against solid backgrounds, abstract perspectives, or stylized drawings of things they have never seen before (Cianciolo, 1976; Nodelman, 1988). For example, infant books often show familiar objects “floating” on a colored background. Nodelman (2000) stated “interpreting different kinds of pictures at an early age doesn’t mean that understanding pictures is easy” (p. 217). Rather, he suggested that this ability is a result of “their [children’s] great flexibility and as great an accomplishment as learning to use spoken language, a skill that children also miraculously teach themselves” (p. 217). Goldstone (1999) agreed, adding that picture books have become more complex as they change to reflect our changing culture. Further, Nodelman (1988) suggested that teachers might limit their young students’



learning because they underestimate the children's ability to understand art in picture books (p. 41).

Crawford and Hade (2000) studied wordless picture books from a semiotic perspective, looking at the visual elements as signs interpreted by three children, aged four, five, and eight. Two of the children attended a private school, suggesting a higher social class level. All three children were from homes where they were read to often. The race or ethnicity of the children is not mentioned. The researchers found that the children were quite competent in making sense of the connections and relationships among the illustrations, frequently referring to other books with which they were familiar. The children's "tellings" of the wordless books suggested that they understood how stories work and how books function. The study limitations include its small size, but the findings indicate that young children are able to interact with wordless picture books in complex and multi-dimensional ways and suggest the potential of wordless picture books for rich engagement with both readers and emergent readers. More research with children from diverse backgrounds is needed to study the ways in which children who are from different social class and literacy backgrounds respond to wordless picture books.

Because children rely heavily on illustrations for meaning and understanding, I studied the illustrations in the books read aloud in the context of the classrooms in which they were read (Cianciolo, 1976; Goldstone, 1999; Sebesta, 2001). Were there cultural symbols or icons with which the children might or might not be familiar? Was there evidence of socioeconomic class? Did there appear to be stereotypical images in the illustrations? Illustrations should support response, and children relate to illustrations that

match their experiences or their lives (Langer, 1995; Fox & Short, 2003; Ramirez & Ramirez, 1994). Did these illustrations appear to relate to the children in the classrooms in which the books are read?

### **Literary Criticism and Analysis in Genres and Illustrations**

Literary criticism and analysis go hand-in-hand with content analysis in the study of children's literature and therefore needed to be mentioned when setting up the foundation for my study. In this study, I incorporated aspects of literary criticism and analysis as I examined the genres and illustrations in the books read aloud.

Literary genres are “sets of conventions and expectations” – knowing or believing we understand what kind of book we are reading causes us to make assumptions and take note of certain actions (Culler, 1997, p. 97). In a study of genre and young children, Shine and Roser (1999) conducted a study of the genre-related responses of nine four- and five-year-olds from a low-income community school in central Texas. Five of the children were girls and four were boys. Five children were Hispanic American, two were European American, one was African-American, and one was Asian-American. Shine and Roser analyzed the preschoolers' responses to ten picture books from four genres including informational, fantasy, poetry, and realistic fiction. They elected not to use books from the traditional literature genre to avoid the possibility of the children having heard the story before. Several children were often absent, but at least five of the nine children listened to a book read aloud each day for four weeks. The books were read aloud twice to encourage more in-depth responses to the books. The researchers found that the children were able to take different stances when responding to different genres, such as noting factual information from the informational books and responding with word play to the poetry. They noted that the children were most interested in characters

and stories presented in a narrative fashion and typically responded with personal associations, findings supported by other researchers (Bruner, 1986; Heath, 1983). This study is limited in that only a small group of children were involved and just 10 books were used, but the findings contribute to the idea that young children are able to engage in interpretation, respond appropriately to a variety of genre, and may prefer narrative. In fact, teachers tend to focus on narrative, often in a fictional format, rather than information books or other genres (Short et al. 1996). Since different genres generate different responses and transmit different kinds of knowledge, genre relates to teachers' purposes for reading aloud and children's enjoyment of the reading aloud experience. I noted the genres that the teachers read aloud in this study to determine if there were patterns in the genres selected. Did the teachers read books from one genre more frequently than other genres? Were their genre selections diverse?

Most literary analyses deal with the meaning as it lies within the text and illustrations of a book, rather than with the reader (Beckett, 1997). However, classroom use of books and instructional readers have typically not been examined except through reader response theory (Beach, 1997; Teale, 2003). Despite this focus on the text, literary analysis has been central to the development of children's literature theory (Beckett, 1997). In a classic literary analysis combining semiotic analysis, or analysis of signs and their meanings, reader response theory, and narrative theory, Nodelman (1988) explored how the picture book narrative is created through the blending of the text and illustrations, finding that a great deal of the story lies in the illustrations. In my study of the books read aloud, I examined how the illustrations and text worked together to create

explicit and implicit messages about society, culture, behavior, or other elements that might be transmitted to children during read-alouds.

### **Content Analyses of Children's Literature**

As noted previously, books are a powerful influence in the lives of children and have the potential to foster attitudes, empathy, and affect self-perception (Herrera, 2000; Igoa, 1995; Nodelman, 2000; Tway, 1989). McElhoe (1999) suggested that young children are “socialized...they develop a set of values and attitudes” through the text and illustrations in books (p. 249). According to Cullingford (1998), children use books to interpret the world in which they live “through exploring the fantasies as well as living through the everyday” (p. 78). However, too simple or misleading books can contribute to narrow views or prejudices (Lowery, 2000; May, 1995). Kindergartners rely heavily on books for their impressions of the outside world as well as of themselves (Bloom & Katz, 1997). In addition, research has shown that messages in books may shape children's behaviors and attitudes (Bandura, 1977; Darigan, 1991). Darigan (1991) found that the books that teachers read aloud had an effect on their student's attitudes about African-Americans. Further, the books that teachers read aloud are often the books that children choose to read or look at later (Short et al. 1996; van Kleeck, 2003).

Social learning theory asserts that models, including those transmitted through books, can influence children's behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Kramer & Radey, 1997). Researchers Kramer and Radey (1997) found that children who were read books with negative sibling interactions were more likely to behave in undesirable ways with their siblings. In a similar study, Bhavnagri and Samuels (1996) found that quality literature fostered positive peer relationships among preschoolers.

Content analyses allow for the close examination of those books which adults, in this case teachers, allow children to access. In this study, I analyzed the content of the books that kindergarten teachers read aloud to determine what values, attitudes, and impressions might be transmitted through the read-aloud sessions.

Novels were the basis of the first landmark critical content analyses conducted. Taxel (1983) studied 32 children's novels about the American Revolution published between 1899 and 1976. He analyzed the structure of the novels using Levi-Strauss' (1967) procedure of coding the characters by binary opposition – such as good characters and bad characters. To examine the actions of the characters, Taxel used a strategy developed by Wright (1975) to reduce the stories to a descriptive set of “functions.” Taxel found that most of the books published before and during World War II presented a simplistic, patriotic, and conservative perspective of the Revolution, omitting the controversy of who would rule in America as well as the concerns of the Black colonists. Of the 32 novels he analyzed, just one, published during the Vietnam War era, contained a Black protagonist and dealt with issues of economics and justice. Twenty-nine of the novels contained the “rite of passage” concept as a primary theme. Looking at the novels relative to their publication date, Taxel connected America's social class changes, including the changes in family relationships, and the increased focus on individuality to the historical changes occurring during the times that the books were published. For example, novels published in the 1960s and 70s (a time when parental authority began to break down) contained father figures who were weak, whereas novels published earlier contained strong and wise father figures. Taxel's study is important because he studied

the novels' content and form while at the same time looking at how the two structures melded with the current state of society.

In another landmark study, Sims Bishop (1983) examined realistic fiction about African-Americans published between 1965 and 1979. From her findings, Sims Bishop developed four major categories of books initially regarding African-Americans but which have expanded to include all cultural groups:

- books with a social conscience perspective or books written to promote the understanding of micro-cultural groups;
- melting pot books, or books that suggest that all Americans share the same middle-class values and lifestyles;
- culturally conscious books, which contain universal messages of basic themes including friendship, heritage, growing up, family relationships, equality and justice along with
- image-maker books written by authors with other ethnic or cultural backgrounds attempting to create more accurate images of blacks or other ethnic or cultural groups (Sims Bishop, 1982, p. 46).

Sims Bishop's categories form the foundation for numerous studies of cultural diversity.

In this study, I used Sims Bishop's categories as a resource when sorting the books into groups.

Lowery (1999) used thematic content analysis and a critical sociology of literature theoretical framework to analyze seventeen children's novels dealing with immigration experiences. She studied how issues of race and class played a part in these representations across three immigrant periods in the United States. Lowery found the image of immigrants to be primarily negative and immigrants were portrayed as "others," particularly immigrants of the non-dominant group. In addition, race and class issues of the periods were found to influence the United States' immigration policies and how Americans received immigrants into the country throughout our history. Lowery

concluded that the novels were not sufficient to be used alone as historical texts and would need to be used in conjunction with other texts which showed a more positive, less stereotypical view of immigrants (Lowery, 2000).

Other studies have also shown a tendency to simplify and generalize cultures and ethnicities. Noll (1995) studied 27 books dealing with American Indians. She found that the concept of “insider” and “outsider” status was quite complicated; an American Indian author or illustrator would not be an “insider” to all the cultures within the larger group, because, for example, Western peoples are quite different from those in the Southeast. She noted that even within same tribes, insiders’ cultural understandings vary depending upon their experience. Noll listed as an example the Navajo illustrator Baje Whitethorne, whose work is criticized by some fellow Navajos as being inaccurate (p. 31). However, the work *is* accurate from Whitethorne’s perspective, just not from the critics’ perspectives (Noll, 1995). She argued that authors and illustrators do not have to be insiders to the indigenous people they are portraying if they take care to learn about that culture, pointing out that several books written by White authors are authentic depictions of lifestyle and relationships. Noll mentioned Paul Goble as a storyteller who has captured the essence of American Indian peoples in South Dakota through intensive research and a deep appreciation of the culture.

In her analysis, Noll found that many books depicting American Indian cultures were stereotypical and misleading, a finding echoed by other researchers (Stott, 1996). She mentioned the picture book Ten little rabbits by Grossman and Long (1991) as one that, with its depiction of rabbits dressed as Indians with blankets and feathers, belittles the many cultures and perpetuates the stereotype that all American Indians look the same.

Going further, Seale (2001) noted that award-winning books such as Jeffers' (1991) Brother Eagle, Sister Sky, an artistic portrayal of Chief Seattle's famous speech, contained inaccuracies in both the text and the illustrations. She observed that horses were pictured in eight of the 16 illustrations, despite the fact that Chief Seattle was from the Northwest coast culture, which did not use horses.

Although researchers argue that authors and illustrators, teachers, parents, and publishers all have the responsibility to make sure that the messages expressed through books about American Indians are accurate and authentic portrayals of the various peoples, this is not an easy task (Noll, 2003; Reese, 1996).

In a study of books about farms and rural life, Kruse (2001) found that farmers were often portrayed as solitary, foolish, or old-fashioned. While she did note some positive images, she asserts that "a single book is unlikely to entrench limiting stereotypes in a child's mind, but the cumulative effect of negative or inaccurate images cannot be salutary" (p. 26). Kruse suggests that adults need to incorporate modern, nonfiction books that show a variety of farmers in respectful and accurate situations.

The tendency to simplify cultures and ethnicities crosses genres and is present in nonfiction or informational books as well as fictional books. In a study of the informational picture book, Rice is Life, Lamme and Fu (2001) found that the author, an "outsider" to the culture, "oversimplifies the process of rice growing" and depicts the laborers without a hint of the hardship involved in working in a rice field (p. 20). Lamme and Fu suggest that teachers and students learn strategies for critically reading informational and non-fiction books in order to "approach nonfiction literature with an eye towards social justice, class, and cultural authenticity" (p. 20).



The depiction of older people in picture books is also an area of concern, particularly for young children. Research suggests children form negative perceptions of older people at an early age (Jantz et al. 1976). Studies of children's literature have shown that older adults are often absent from literature or portrayed in a negative light (McElhoe, 1999; Janelli, 1988). Dellmann-Jenkins and Yan (1997) analyzed the images of older adult characters in eleven Caldecott Medal winners or honor books from 1972 through 1995. The researchers used the Jantz et al. (1976) semantic differential section of the "Children's Attitudes toward the Elderly" scale to develop 36 elements for content analysis. Their measurement criteria were tested by two outside instructors who independently analyzed and coded the illustrations of half of the books, with an inter-rater reliability of 91% to 97%. Dellman-Jenkins and Yan's analysis indicated that books published after 1984 had older adult characters frequently portrayed as warm and caring, while those published before 1984 contained many characters described as lonely or unhappy. All 11 books showed older adults as healthy and clean. Significant findings included that in eight of the books, older men were depicted as "active," while older women were depicted as "active" in only six books. Furthermore, older women were portrayed as "frightened" in four of the books, while none of the men were. Overall, they found that 70% of the books portrayed older people in a positive light, a fact they attributed to the sensitivity of judges who select the Caldecott winners. However, they expressed concern that just 12% of all Caldecott winners from 1972 through 1995 depicted older people, arguing that as the our aging adult population increases, so does the need for more older people to be presented in positive ways. The study limitations include the fact that only 11 books were analyzed and all were award winners. Young

children are exposed to a great many books that do not receive awards; studies need to be done of those books as well. As I analyzed the content of the books read aloud, I studied the text and illustrations for evidence of older characters and the manner in which they were portrayed.

Gender is a concept frequently studied in children's literature and pertinent because research suggests that preschoolers categorize themselves according to sex more frequently than by race and are likely to have developed stereotypical notions of gender (McGraw et al. 1989; Ramsey, 1990). In a content analysis of award-winning picture books, Weitzmann et al. (1971) found that males were shown more often in Caldecott Medal books published between the years of 1966 through 1971. Allen et al. (1993) conducted a comparison study of 13 Caldecott winners published between 1938 and 1940 and between 1986 and 1988. Their study found that women were again depicted less often than men. One surprising and significant finding was the presence of traditional role stereotyping in the more recently published books. Kolbe and LaVoie (1981) analyzed Caldecott winners published from 1979 to 1982 and noted that female characters were more likely to be depicted doing traditional activities such as cleaning house. They also discovered that books authored by females were as stereotypical as those authored by males.

Engel (1981) counted female characters of Caldecott Medal and Honor books published between 1976 and 1980 and found that only 26% of the characters were female. In addition, Engel noted that the male roles were closer to reality than the female roles in the books.

In a similar study, Crabb and Bielawski (1994) studied gender differences in Caldecott award-winning literature and found that females engaged in household-related activities and males engaged in activities involving construction or building perpetuated stereotypical gender roles. Tognoli et al. (1994) also found that men were more likely to be depicted outdoors, while women were depicted in the home or doing family-related activities.

These studies show an interesting pattern of award-winning children's books to be stereotypical with regard to gender and age. Certainly these studies are limited in that they analyze only Caldecott winners. More study needs to be done on books that are awarded other literary awards as well as those books that do not win awards or accolades (Poarch & Monk-Turner, 2001). Studies are needed that examine these factors in the books that teachers actually read aloud in their classrooms.

In a recent study, Poarch and Monk-Turner (2001) studied the gender difference in the illustrations in 22 non-award winning books defined as "easy readers" and published between 1963 and 1995, with most being published after 1986. They selected authors who wrote "series" books or had written at least two books with a similar theme or central character, arguing that authors of series books assert more influence on readers than do authors who have published just one book or use a character once. Poarch and Monk-Turner randomly selected one book listed under each letter of the alphabet in the children's section of easy readers in a large regional public library. Artifacts on each page were coded using Crabb and Bielawski's (1994) definitions of "production," or objects used to produce things outside of the household (construction equipment, auto repair tools, dental tools, etc.); "household artifacts" (brooms, vacuums, etc.); and

“personal artifacts” (hairbrushes, toothbrushes, etc.) (Poarch & Monk-Turner, 2001, p. 73). A cross-rater analysis was performed using three volunteers who coded 15 books with a 91.27 % reliability rate between the volunteers and the researchers.

Poarch and Monk-Turner’s results support the general research consensus that males are depicted more than females, although in their sample nearly 40% of the characters were female. Males were more often shown in an environment outside the home, while females were typically shown inside the home, with the exception of female characters, who were either teachers or females engaged in leisure activities such as shopping. As I studied the books read aloud by the teachers in my study, I examined the illustrations for evidence of gender and gender stereotyping.

In a study of 216 picture books reviewed in major journals in 1997, Lempke (1999) found that 116 of the books contained all White characters or White main characters, most dealing with issues such as growing up or staying up late. Of the 216 books, 42 contained animal characters, many of them animals as humans. Of those animals as humans, most of them appeared to be middle-class and White. Eighteen of the books were multicultural, but were either “tourist” (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Rochman, 1993) books about a particular culture or about a holiday. Just 21 of the books showed diversity in characters or settings. Lempke (1999) found that two factors seemed to apply to these 21 diverse books; classrooms are diverse and diversity is found in big cities, not in small towns or suburbs. African-Americans were protagonists in seven books and were in books that dealt with complex issues such as illiteracy, anger, and foster children. Everyday issues such as staying up late were reserved for White characters.

Lempke (1999) observed that despite the large number of new immigrants to the United States each year, very few immigrant children see themselves in the literature being published and reviewed in major journals, and much of this literature contains inaccuracies or perpetuates stereotypes, a statement supported by other researchers (Igoa, 1995; Lowery, 2000; Yenika-Agbaw, 2003). Lempke's research is important in that it focuses on books dealing with the culture of immigrants that are promoted by respected journals that are read by teachers and other adults responsible for reading to young children.

Social class has also been studied in children's literature, particularly in the illustrations. Rodman (1994) studied how homes were depicted in 100 children's books checked out from 23 metropolitan county public libraries. She found that over the past 50 years, the images of home and housing have not changed much. The primary image in all the books was that of a traditional nuclear White family living in suburban, single family detached houses. As part of the content analysis of my study, I studied the type of housing and apparent social class depicted in the children's books read aloud by the kindergarten teachers. I compared the social class depictions in the books with the social class in the student audience.

A slight trend toward more culturally conscious literature seems to be apparent in very recently published books (Galda et al. 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Short & Fox, 2003). Harris(2003) studied African-Americans in historical and contemporary children's literature and concluded that more culturally conscious literature has emerged in recent years, with Black authors taking more artistic risks. This trend suggests the date of publication is an important factor in the read-aloud selections made by teachers. I

noted the date of publication and examined the ethnicities and stereotypes present in or absent from the books teachers read aloud, while looking for differences in representations in older versus more recently published books.

Other studies have been done on the works of specific authors to determine their perspectives. In order to assess the authenticity of their books, Trousdale (1990) explored the concept of author as “outsider” in a study of four award-winning books about African-Americans. Trousdale analyzed the values and religious themes of the books and found marked differences between books written by White authors and those written by Black authors. He noted that the Black authors presented a more accurate and less tourist-guide approach. Like Sims Bishop (1982) and Noll (2003), Trousdale concluded that books written by “outsiders” need closer examination, agreeing that defining outsiders and insiders can be complex and a difficult way to determine authenticity and accuracy.

In my study, I examined the authors and illustrators of the books read aloud to determine if they were “outsiders” or “insiders” to the culture about which they wrote and studied how that issue was played out in the text or illustrations. Outsiders may or may not be able to create authentic portrayals of other cultures (Lester, 1998; Noll, 2003; Short & Fox, 2003), but it is important to examine if being an outsider or insider impacts the story or pictures. For this reason, I asked four readers, including one African-American and one with an Italian and Puerto Rican heritage to verify my interpretation.

### **Reading Preference and Interest Studies**

As I analyzed the questionnaires, interview transcripts, and book logs, I examined the responses for evidence that the teachers might have been familiar with common book preferences of young children and if so, did they select books to read that young children

typically enjoy. In order to evaluate their responses effectively, I needed to be familiar with the various reading preference and interest studies that have been done with children. Along with content analyses, reading preference and interest studies are a primary type of research into children's literature. Reading preferences indicate what children might enjoy reading while reading interest studies focus on what children are reading. Although reading preferences and interests are individualized, the common reading preferences and interests are important to note in order to determine whether or not children might have access to books they would most likely enjoy and how to expand their interests. Further, children who are interested in the reading material will be more engaged for longer periods of time (Harkrader & Moore, 1997; Saccardi, 1994; Stewig, 1987).

Amsden (1960) conducted a study of children's preferences in picture books. She selected a total of 60 children, 30 boys and 30 girls, from three to five years of age. The race, ethnicity, and social class of the children is not mentioned in the study (which is certainly a limitation) but the researcher does state that the children were students in preschools located in Ithaca, New York, and Woodstock, Vermont. Amsden found that the children preferred the picture to be on the right hand side of the page. A preference was shown for illustrations with lots of colors. In contrast to earlier studies, which suggested that children prefer bright, saturated colors (Bou & Lopez, 1955; Martin, 1931), these children preferred lighter, tinted illustrations. In addition, Amsden found that the children preferred photographs rather than black and white line drawings, but found no differences in the preferences of girls or boys.

In a more recent study, Wolfson et al. (1984) replicated an earlier study done by Wolfson (1960) and studied the reading interests of 415 fourth grade boys and girls in the Birmingham, Alabama city schools. The researchers used an instrument created by Wolfson (1960), adding 10 multiethnic items to the 120- question instrument. They found that while boys preferred adventure and machines and girls preferred the arts, there was more of an overlap than the previous study showed. The researchers noted that boys were more interested in personal or family issues than earlier noted and that both groups enjoyed fantasy. When comparing the interests of minority and non-minority children, the researchers found more similarities than differences in the two groups. They recommend that teachers learn their students' interests and highlight those areas. In addition, they suggest that fantasy, since it was the top choice of boys and the second choice of girls, be available at different reading levels.

Harkrader and Moore (1997) studied the literature preferences of 405 fourth grade boys and girls in a school district in Ohio. They found that both genders preferred fiction and that boys liked non-fiction better than girls, while girls liked fiction better than boys. Further, they found that boys preferred male main characters while girls preferred female main characters.

In a study of picture book selection behaviors of 102 preschool and kindergarten children, Robinson et al. (1997) noted that emergent readers preferred modern and traditional fantasy over other genres and typically selected books with one to five lines of text per page. Even more important is the finding that the children preferred familiar books and kindergartners in particular reselected familiar books more often than those books with which they were unfamiliar. One limitation of this study is the fact that most



adults read fantasy to young children and that might have lead to the children's preferences. More research needs to be done with children who are read different genres to determine if exposure to other genres impacts their preferences.

Current thought on reading preferences and interests suggests that the primary consideration should be learning children's interests and fostering their interests in other areas, while not underestimating the child's ability to grasp more complex stories or illustrations (Nodelman, 1996; Rothlein & Meinbach, 1996; Taxel, 2003). After analyzing the books read aloud, I interviewed the teachers to determine if they were aware of reading preferences and interest studies and if they appeared to take their students' personal interests into account when selecting read-alouds.

### **Teacher Selection of Children's Literature for Classroom Use**

In my study, I examined how and why teachers selected books to read aloud to their students and what they considered important when selecting books. Here I report the research on how teachers select books.

"Selective tradition" is a term used to denote the tendency of teachers to favor literature that primarily features White, middle-class, European-American male authors and subjects over works by and about women and other ethnicities or social classes (Luke et al. 1986, p. 209). In a survey of Australian student teachers, researchers asked student teachers to choose a children's book they enjoyed and felt would be a benefit to primary-aged children. The results showed that the selections were primarily written by Anglo-European males and were conventional characterizations. Most student teachers had not considered the gender and race of either the authors or the characters in the books they selected. The researchers concluded that their findings indicated an unconscious bias in the student teachers' selections and attitudes. One weakness in this study is the

researchers' failure to acknowledge that the majority of children's literature is written by White authors and are about White characters, which may have limited the student teachers' selections.

In a similar study, Jipson and Paley (1991) asked 55 female teachers to name three children's books they had used in their classroom in the past year and explain why they had chosen those books. Of the 155 books and 104 authors, 95% of the authors were of European American heritage. Just five authors were minorities or other ethnicities.

Jipson and Paley (1991) also found that teachers chose books to read aloud for three reasons. First, teachers appeared to select a book based on how the text fit within the curriculum and instructional context. Second, they selected a book because either they or their students liked the book or because it had won an award. Finally, a small percentage of teachers selected books that they felt were important in portraying ethnicity or gender. Instructional and curriculum reasons were the primary foundation for teachers' decisions about books; 46% of teachers chose a book to fit in the unit being studied or to teach a particular skill. Forty-five percent of the teachers selected a book because of personal or aesthetic reasons such as the book was one enjoyed as a child or the illustrator was a personal favorite. Just nine percent indicated that gender, race, or ethnicity were factors in selection. Jipson and Paley's results support their conclusion that book selection is part of a "complex, curricular process" and that the complexity of the process creates an unconscious bias on the part of experienced teachers.

Hart and Rowley (1996) conducted a study of preservice teachers' decision-making with regard to selecting children's literature for the elementary classroom. The participants were given a selection of 1-page excerpts from what the researchers

determined to be 13 high quality children's books and asked to select five excerpts that appeared to have the most value for classroom use and to explain the reasons behind their selections. The researchers then implemented a 12-week course in multicultural perspectives. At the end of the semester, the same packet of excerpts was redistributed and the preservice teachers were again asked to select excerpts and explain their choices. Their choices were categorized by instruction, personal, and quality of production. Sixty-eight percent of the pre-intervention responses and 78% of the post-intervention responses listed instructional reasons such as reading level, curricular integration, and multicultural understanding. The multicultural understanding focus responses increased from 41% to 95% after the intervention. Personal reasons, which included connections to the preservice teachers' lives and backgrounds, decreased from 43% before the intervention to less than 10% after the intervention. Reasons that dealt with production quality or quality of illustrations increased from 42% before the intervention to 58% after the intervention.

The researchers concluded that children's literature courses focusing on multicultural issues may cause preservice teachers to think in different ways when making choices about children's literature and support the idea that introducing multicultural education through a children's literature course is an effective way to effect change in preservice teachers' attitudes about book selection. Although the researchers do not discuss this issue, it is interesting to note that the personal responses, which would relate to enjoyment and aesthetic response, decreased significantly, suggesting that perhaps the preservice teachers may have lessened in their beliefs that enjoying or connecting with a text in a personal manner is important.

A similar study done by Johnson (1999) found that White teachers became more racially conscious and empathetic after constructing autobiographical narratives of their life histories. She found that teachers who became more racially aware had similar characteristics; they worked with people from diverse backgrounds; they were able to separate their identities from the White mainstream culture; and they leaned toward a social justice philosophical system of beliefs.

Small (2000) studied how and why elementary teachers chose children's literature and their responses as readers to the literature. She found that participants reported other teachers being their primary source for learning about books. She also found that reading aloud to students was the most-often cited reason for reading children's literature. Teacher responses to children's literature were primarily efferent or instructionally focused in nature. Small observed that participants valued aesthetic response, but were not sure how to bring it into the classroom.

My study looked at the resources teachers said they used for selecting books to read aloud and the reasons they said they read children's literature. I compared my results with previous research done to see what aspects were similar and which were different. I went further to actually examine those books teacher selected and compared their selections to their responses about book selections.

### **Summary**

In a study of this nature, it was necessary to have a solid background in a wide range of theory and research. The theories and research upon which my work is based suggest that reading aloud is important for children's development as readers and the development of their critical-thinking skills, literary preferences, and beliefs about reading and the world (Bus, 2003; Fox & Short, 2003; Peterman, 1988; West et al. 2000).

Good read-aloud experiences provide pleasure so children will want to read, and book choice greatly impacts what children gain from the read-aloud experience (Bissex, 1980; Rasinki, 1990). Research indicates that children typically engage more deeply in stories and books that have characters, settings, and topics to which they can relate (Au, 1998; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1994). I drew on a great many areas as I analyzed the questionnaires, interview responses, observations, and the lists of books read aloud in order to gain a greater insight into the kind of access to children's literature that this group of teachers afforded to their students.

## CHAPTER 3 METHOD

### **Purpose**

Since most kindergarten children are not yet independent readers, they rely exclusively upon the adults in their lives to read for them; thus the books selected by kindergarten teachers to read aloud in their classrooms have a powerful impact upon their students. Particularly in cases where children are not read to at home, these read-aloud events provide some children their only access to books. Therefore, it is important to determine which books kindergarten teachers choose to read aloud and the reasons for those decisions (Teale, 2003). The purpose of this study was to examine (using content analysis) the ideas and messages conveyed in the books that a group of kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students, and to explore the reasons (through questionnaires, interviews, and observations) that teachers chose particular books to read aloud.

### **The Research Problem and Question**

Identifying the problem and developing the question evolved through a combination of personal and professional experience, the technical and theoretical literature, and theoretical sensitivity. First, as an avid reader, I recognized the power of books to profoundly change my view of the world (Herrera, 2000). Second, as a classroom teacher, I saw first-hand how the books I read aloud influenced my students. As a kindergarten teacher, I noted that because the children were usually emergent readers, I held the key to much of their access to books. In many cases, the books I read aloud were the books that they selected as their personal favorites, an observation

supported by research in the area of reading aloud (Altieri, 1993; Barrera & Bauer, 2003; Hall, 2000; Merenda & White-Williams, 2001). Further, by my selections, I consciously or inadvertently transmitted both covert and overt messages about what society as a whole (and I as an individual) valued regarding such aspects as reading skills and knowledge, in addition to messages about culture, race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and ethics (Apple, 1996; Banks, 1988; Nodelman, 1996). With this in mind, I consulted the technical and theoretical literature to better form my question (Spradley, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

I incorporated “theoretical sensitivity,” a concept defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as “a personal quality of the researcher” gained through professional and personal experience, the literature, and the “analytic process of collecting data, analyzing the data, and developing more questions” (pp. 41-44). Because this was a qualitative study, I needed to ensure balance between the “creative and the scientific” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.44). I was painting a picture of what teachers read aloud, but I needed to make certain that my data were as accurate as possible. In order to do so, I stepped back often to look at the data from a different perspective, to be certain that the data meant what they appeared to mean. I was skeptical of the information, always questioning and keeping in mind that the data and analysis were unavoidably subjective to some degree, both on the participants’ part as well as my own. I kept the data-collection and analysis procedures the same throughout the study, alternating between collecting and analyzing, in order to ensure rigor (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

I used open coding in analyzing the questionnaires, which had been developed during a pilot study the previous year (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For the questionnaires, I

used a line-by-line analysis to develop categories based on the questions. For example, one category that emerged was the reasons that teachers read aloud. The reasons were both explicitly stated, such as to teach skills or for enjoyment, and implicitly stated such as to pass time or to keep students calm. While analyzing the books, I incorporated a selective coding approach, using initial categories such as genre, author, theme, and gender. I then augmented the categories and developed a framework of semantic relationships as the analysis progressed in order to gain a holistic portrait of the books read aloud (Spradley, 1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

### **The Study**

This study was conducted in three sections— first, through a questionnaire, I examined the factors that play a part in teachers’ decisions about what they read aloud to their classes. Second, through book-logs kept by teacher volunteers, I conducted a content analysis of the books they read aloud to their students. Finally, to add richness and depth, I narrowed the lens and focused on six teachers teaching in two schools in the county with high poverty and high non-White populations, examining what these particular teachers read aloud to their classes and the reasons behind their choices, including beliefs, personal and professional backgrounds, access, and curriculum issues. I interviewed the six focus teachers to learn about the children who were in these classrooms and what their lives were like; I then observed five of the teachers read aloud. Doing so allowed me to closely study the possible cultural match between the books read aloud by these teachers and their students (Au & Raphael, 2000). Because of the exploratory nature of my study, I was unable to determine the precise culture of each child in each classroom, since each child had a different background and prior experiences that shaped his or her culture (Harris, 2003). However, I was able to get



demographic information as well as information about free and reduced-price lunch status, which afforded me descriptive data. Within the six focus classrooms, I was also able to obtain information about the nature of these children's family structures, such as whether or not they lived with a mother or father or whether they had siblings.

### **Setting**

The study took place in a Florida county of about 218,000. Nearly 70% of the total population was of White, non-Hispanic or Latino heritage. The remaining population was 19.3% Black, 5.7% Hispanic or Latino, 3.5% Asian, and .2% American Indian. The average per capita income was \$18,465, and 22.8% of the population lived below the poverty line (Florida Department of Education, 2003). The schools in the district had a variety of curriculum and instructional programs that were incorporated differently, depending upon the principal and teachers at each school. The district's purchased programs included a newly purchased reading program, and science and mathematics programs that were several years old. The teachers were provided a social studies manual, but no additional materials were funded by the state. The reading, mathematics and science programs all contained varying amounts of children's literature or decodable readers. In addition, the state required that the teachers instruct their students using standards for language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies (Florida Department of Education, 2003). Most kindergarten teachers in this district taught science and social studies concepts using a unit-based approach lasting from two weeks to a month. Common units included African safari, oceans, insects and plants, spiders, and holidays.

Despite school busing practices designed to increase diversity, the county was divided along socioeconomic lines, with the schools on the east side typically having more than 80% free and reduced-price lunch population, and the schools on the west side

having free and reduced-price lunch populations of 50% or less (Florida Department of Education, 2003). The focus schools in this study were neighborhood schools on the east side. Jackson Elementary had three buses and Sunshine Elementary had one bus for incoming students; the rest walked or rode their bikes to school. Jackson had a free and reduced-price lunch population of 94% and a minority population of 94%, while Sunshine Elementary had an 84% free and reduced-price lunch population and a minority population of 85%.

### **Design and Procedures**

I designed the study based on the results of a pilot study done a year earlier with seven teacher volunteers from two schools in the county. During the pilot work, I interviewed the teachers about their read-aloud practices, including how they found books to read and what factors went into their decisions. I developed a questionnaire, which they completed. Afterwards, I sat down with each teacher and discussed their answers, rewording questions that were leading or threatening (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). Using their responses as a guide, I developed the questionnaire used in my study.

The seven teachers agreed to keep a log of books they read aloud for a month's time. I created several versions of a log form before finding one that they all found to be simple to fill out. From their feedback, I found that a month was too long and that they would prefer to keep a record for no more than a week at a time, in order to keep their workloads manageable. In addition, both schools taught in a team format, studying the same science or social studies topic at the same time, which meant that the books read aloud by the kindergarten teachers at School A were overwhelmingly about alligators and Africa and the books read aloud by the kindergarten teachers at School B were primarily about oceans and sea life. After discussion, we decided that keeping the logs over three

1-week periods during three different months would be manageable for the teacher and would give a greater variety of books to analyze.

### **Mail Questionnaire**

I began this study by submitting a request to the university to conduct research. After approval, I submitted a request to do research in the 24 public elementary schools (with kindergartens) in the county. Principals at 15 schools agreed to allow me access to their kindergarten teachers, a total of 36 teachers. The other seven principals provided a variety of reasons for their refusals.

I sent questionnaires to the 36 teachers and received responses from 28, or 78%. Teachers from 12 of the 15 schools returned questionnaires. A total of 25 White females, two African-American females, and one White male responded. The teachers who did not reply said they were too busy to complete the questionnaire. I was satisfied with the 78% response rate, because a good response rate is 75% or higher (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). I attributed my good response rate to the fact that this was a university town (teachers participated in a lot of studies) and I was a fellow teacher, which may have made them more willing to participate.

The questionnaire that I developed during the pilot study used both close-ended and open-ended questions (Appendix A). I designed the instrument primarily in a “funnel sequence” in which each question related to the previous question and became “progressively narrower in scope” (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). Research shows that the order in which questions are presented influences the respondent’s willingness to answer. Therefore, the first questions were close-ended, designed to put the respondent at ease. I placed more personal or evaluative questions at the end of the instrument. Interspersed open-ended and closed-ended questions increased response accuracy

(Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). The question order, item position, and rank position can affect the response reliability. For example, items appearing first are often ranked higher or endorsed more often. In order to avoid systematic bias, I randomized the order of presentation and rank so that the order effects would be randomized as well (Carpenter & Blackwood, 1979; Gall et al. 1996; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987).

Mail questionnaires, though impersonal, allow the researcher to gather descriptive data from a large number of people, in this case 28 kindergarten teachers, with minimal cost involved. An advantage of the mail questionnaire is that it reduces biasing errors that might result from personal interactions. The mail questionnaire also allows respondents time to consider their answers and to respond at their convenience.

Mail questionnaires are limited in that they are self-reports and may be inaccurate. They also require simple answers and do not allow for probing. I dealt with those issues by including a request on the questionnaire for further contact. When I received the questionnaires, I was able to call teachers whose answers were incomplete or needed to be clarified. Subsequent personal interviews with the six focus teachers gave me another chance to probe and verify information.

The most serious disadvantage of a mail questionnaire is its potential for a low response rate. The typical response rate for a mail questionnaire is between 20% and 40%. In an attempt to increase the response rate, I distributed the questionnaires through the principals or personal contacts at the schools. Further, I included a semi-personal cover letter explaining that I was a fellow teacher and discussing the importance of this study and included a self-addressed, stamped envelope to encourage timely responses. Using the list of teachers who received the questionnaires, I phoned those who did not

respond within a week and asked them again to complete and return the questionnaires. From personal experience I knew that teachers are busy and often burdened with paperwork, so I offered to send replacement questionnaires when necessary. Only two teachers needed a replacement questionnaire.

### **Read-Aloud Book Logs**

Qualitative researchers frequently use written documents or “quantitative records” as primary sources for numerical information (Gall et al. 1996, p.653). A few studies have collected information on the books that teachers read aloud, but I did not find a format that met the needs of this study (Sipe, 1999; Stone & Twardosz, 2001). In order to collect the information on the books read aloud from a fairly large group of teachers, I devised a log form that gave me the necessary information to later collect and analyze the book (Appendix A). The log included spaces for the date read, the title, the author and illustrator, and the date of publication. This information helped ensure that I would be able to find a copy of the same book the teacher read aloud.

Twenty-two teachers who returned the questionnaire agreed to keep a log of the books they over the course of three 1-week periods. The remaining six teachers said they were too busy to keep a log and did not want to try and keep track of the books they read each day.

After the first week, 16 teachers had returned the logs through the school truck mail or through the U.S. mail. I called the others and two more teachers returned the logs, for a total of 18. Four teachers elected not to participate.

A total of 18 teachers kept the logs for the entire data-collection period. The volunteer teacher participants (consisting of 17 females, two African-American, 15 White, and one White male) kept logs of books read aloud over three 1-week periods in

March, April, and May. I provided the logs and called to remind the teachers to list their books, but this type of self-reporting runs the risk of teachers providing inaccurate or incomplete information (Gall et al. 1996). During a pilot study, I found that shorter periods for reporting allowed teachers to check their plan books or the stack of books by their read-aloud areas to make sure they documented the books read aloud, decreasing the possibility of incorrect data and making the task more manageable for the teachers.

When evaluating documents, researchers engage in “external” and “internal” criticism (Gall et al. 1996, pps.657-659). “External criticism” involves making sure the document is legitimate. In this case, I spoke directly with the teachers who completed the documents and said that they listed all the books they read aloud. Because I collected the documents promptly, I was able to determine that the dates the books read aloud were fairly accurate. Using the public library, I found each book listed and was able to verify the title, author, illustrator, and date of publication. If I could not find the book, I called the teacher who had read it and arranged to borrow it.

“Internal criticism” deals with the accuracy and worth of the statements in the document (Gall et al. 1996). This was more difficult to determine, since I relied on self-report and my conversations with the teachers. However, whenever possible, I used their responses on the questionnaire to confirm their responses on the logs. For example, if a teacher had listed 10 books on the read-aloud log for the week, I checked the questionnaire response to see how many books she reported typically reading over a week’s time.

In qualitative studies, data collected often lead to “subsequent data-collection activities” (Gall et al. 1996, p. 559). After the logs were returned, I found that all 18

teachers read similar kinds books, even though the teachers were in classrooms and schools that varied a great deal with regard to race and socioeconomic demographics. Many of the kindergarten teams in this district devised their curriculum around social studies and science units, which meant that many of the books were informational or non-fiction. Perhaps as a result, teachers from mostly White, middle-income schools read many of the same books as the teachers from the mostly African-American, low-income schools. After discovering this, I elected to focus on two of the lowest income schools, with high minority African-American populations, conditions that are often absent from children's literature. Socioeconomic class, race, and culture have been linked to children's literary response and comprehension (Hancock, 1993; Hemphill, 1999; Sims, 1983). I wanted to explore the match between the read-aloud books used by teachers in these schools and the students in their classrooms. I selected these schools with the understanding that minority children often score lower on reading assessments than their White counterparts and that "long-standing and unacceptably large differences in reading performance related to student poverty levels" (Adler & Fisher, 2001, p. 616). I chose Jackson Elementary and Sunshine Elementary because all the teachers had completed the questionnaires and book logs, which afforded a clear picture of the books read aloud to emergent readers at these schools.

The six teachers in the focus group agreed to allow me to observe their read-aloud sessions and to interview them in-depth about their read aloud practices and their students. One teacher later became ill and I was unable to observe her read aloud. All six teachers were middle-class, female, and married; two were African-American. Their teaching experience ranged from three to 25 years.

### **Critical Content Analysis**

After I collected the logs from the 18 teacher volunteers, I gathered copies of the 428 books the teachers reported reading. I found 411 of the books using the public library. The other 17 books were either out of print or part of a purchased reading program (Success for All or Wright Group Sunshine Readers), but I was able to obtain the books directly from the teachers.

I noted the genre and themes of each book, sorting them by categories defined using Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson's (1999) Essentials of children's literature. I then researched authors and illustrators, noting their genders, cultures, and ethnicities. Using the Internet, I researched which books had won awards and searched for reviews. I examined the books for evidence of social class, race, ethnicity, and gender, compiling the data using Strauss & Corbin's (1990) selective coding, and Spradley's (1980) semantic relationships framework to organize domains and taxonomies (LeCompte, 2000).

I taught in a low socioeconomic school with a large African-American population for nearly seven years and taught children's literature at the local state university at a time when the school had established a social justice focus. However, I am a White, middle-class female from the mainstream culture. As such, I guarded as much as possible against "blind assumptions" that I might make when evaluating the books by recruiting four volunteer readers to examine the books as well (Fondrie, 2001; Helms, 1993; Hinchey, 1998). The volunteer readers included a White female children's literature professor; a female kindergarten teacher with Italian and Puerto Rican heritage; an African-American mother of three; and a White female teacher with 10 years experience at the elementary school level, a specialist degree in education, and adjunct



teaching experience in children's literature, reading, and language arts at the local university. The volunteer readers read selected books with an eye for theme, gender, ethnicity, social class, and stereotypes. First, I defined the genre, using the definitions provided by Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999). We analyzed the theme and content, and examined the text and illustrations, looking for issues of gender, ethnicity, race, and social class (Darigan et al. 2002; Nodelman, 1996). We discussed possible stereotypes and looked for evidence of stereotypes being countered.

After compiling a master list of books read-aloud, I split the list into parts and gave each volunteer reader books to read and analyze. I read and analyzed all the books, sending the readers my notes on many of the books, and asking them to examine my observations and add comments. I met with the children's literature professor at the public library and we spent several hours analyzing books from the list.

When a volunteer reader and I disagreed or were uncertain on a point, I got additional feedback from other volunteer evaluators. For example, in Mayer's (1968) There's a Nightmare in my closet, one volunteer noted that the toys included stereotypical "boy" toys such as an army helmet, a rifle, a cannon, and toy soldiers, but did not notice a particular social class. After review and discussion, we agreed that the book, although somewhat dated, was middle-class, as defined by the size of the room, the type of furniture, and the amount and kinds of toys.

### **Telephone interviews**

Telephone interviews can be used to collect sensitive data (Gall et al. 1996). Upon receipt of the first group of book logs from the 18 teachers, I examined them closely. If the teacher had left a space blank or answered a question vaguely, I called to clarify the

information. I was careful not to make any evaluative or judgmental comments during the conversation (Gall et al. 1996).

### **Nonscheduled semi-structured personal interviews**

After selecting Jackson and Sunshine Elementary schools, I contacted the six teachers and asked them if they would agree to meet with me for interviews. Personal interviews are face-to-face situations in which the interviewer asks respondents questions. Nonscheduled semi-structured interviews (those that take place when the respondents have participated in a known experience) allow the interviewer to probe for more depth. The semi-structured interview is a fluid guide that contains some close-ended questions, but also allows the interviewer to probe with questions that might be difficult to express or sensitive, such as beliefs or feelings (Gall et al. 1996). Using the questionnaire responses and books logs, I developed a basic interview guide for each teacher and then added or changed questions as the interview progressed (Appendix A).

I recorded the interview by taking notes with a laptop computer. As I typed the answers into the computer, the respondent often took time to think and to elaborate on their responses. Many times the respondent continued talking as I typed notes into the computer. When the responses were personal, I made eye contact with the respondent and delayed note taking until after the respondent had finished her statement. An advantage to the computer is that it facilitated my data-analysis, but I also found that the respondents extended their answers as I typed. I verified what they said after I completed the responses and made any necessary clarifications (Gall et al. 1996).

I used the information from the interviews to extend the questionnaire responses and to provide an in-depth description of the focus schools.

## **Observations**

The six focus teachers at both schools agreed to allow me to observe them read aloud to their students, although one teacher fell ill and I was unable to observe her. Observation is a common method of data-collection in qualitative research, enabling the researcher to notice what occurs (independent of the participants' responses) and allows for triangulation of the data. "The inclusion of selected observations in a researcher's report provides a more complete description of phenomena than would be possible by just referring to interview statements or documents" (Gall et al. 1996, p. 344).

I approached the observations from the role of "complete observer," meaning that I stayed in the background and did not interact with the event (Gall et al. 1996, p. 345). I had practiced observations in university courses, but I refreshed my skills by watching a fellow teacher who was not involved in the study read aloud. During the focus classroom observations, I arrived early, before the children were in the room, using the time to make note of the kinds of books present in the room. When the children arrived, they were initially curious about my presence, but soon seemed to forget about me and returned to what the teacher said was their typical behavior. During this time, I watched the student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions. When the teacher began the read -aloud session, I noted the "rules" of the event, such as hand raising or calling out. I watched the students' responses, both verbal and nonverbal, to the book, taking notes and listing questions I had. After the observation, I went to the car to flesh out my notes and to reflect (Gall et al. 1996).

When the school day was over and the children had left, I returned to talk with each teacher about the event and wrote down her perceptions of what had occurred, taking the opportunity to ask questions about the event or how children responded. During the

conversation, I was able to learn more about the teacher, the students, and their backgrounds, which added valuable insight to the classroom portrait. At the end of the observation and interview, I wrote about these events as cases for further examination as data to help answer my question about the books that teachers chose to read aloud.

### **Limitations**

This study was highly descriptive, using a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods, incorporating a questionnaire, interviews, observations and data-collection, and a content analysis. Such an array was necessitated by the exploratory nature of the questions. The schools in the study were those whose principals chose to participate and they were all in one school district. The schools were not randomly selected and were not a sample of a larger population. Rather, these schools fit within my study as I explored the cultural match between the books the teachers read aloud and the students in their classrooms. Twenty-eight of 36 kindergarten teachers completed the questionnaire and 18 teachers kept logs of the books they read aloud.

Limitations were noted with the questionnaires, the interviews, and the logs as well. The participants knew I was a teacher, which may have caused them to give what they thought was the “best” answer (Gall et al. 1996). The book-logs were self-report and may have had incorrect data. Furthermore, the teachers who agreed to keep the logs valued both reading and participating in my study, and therefore might have been more involved in reading aloud than the teachers who chose not to participate in the study.

Additional limitations are found in my definition of culture as it related to the students in the study. Culture is complex concept that includes the students’ background, race, ethnicity, social class, and family (Fox & Short, 2003). Moreover, the everyday

culture of children can include life in the classroom, on the playground, and other events that mark childhood, such as losing a tooth (Dyson, 1993; Heath, 1983). The nature of my study did not afford me access to these areas. In order to limit measurement error, I narrowed my definition of culture to data to which I had access: the gender, race, ethnicity, and social class as defined by free and reduced-price lunch status.

I was the primary person interpreting the data, which meant a certain level of subjectivity was unavoidable (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The trustworthiness of the data is increased through triangulation from the questionnaires, the interviews, the observations, and with the use of a diverse group of four volunteer readers who assisted in the content analysis section. The volunteer readers limited my personal assumptions of the content analysis and added another dimension through their perspectives.

My study was a descriptive snapshot of a small group of teachers and their read-aloud practices along with a detailed analysis of the books they and 12 of their peers selected to read aloud. Because little analysis has been done on the books that teachers read aloud to their students, this study was intended to add to the body of research (Pelligrini & Galda, 2003; Teale, 2003).

## CHAPTER 4

### WHAT AND WHY KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS READ ALOUD: FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES

#### **Participants**

After obtaining approval from the Institution Review Board, I submitted a request to do research in the county and was approved. I sent applications for research to the principals of the 24 public elementary schools (with kindergartens) in the county. I excluded the charter schools to limit the variables. Principals of 15 or 62% of the schools, agreed to allow their 36 kindergarten teachers to participate in the research.

I sent questionnaires to the kindergarten teachers at the approved schools to find out more about the teachers' read-aloud practices and why they read aloud to their students. In addition, I used the questionnaires to collect demographic and other descriptive data on the classroom students and to determine if the teachers would be willing to keep a log of the books they had read aloud over the course of several weeks, and if they would be willing to be interviewed further. Twenty-eight teachers, or nearly 78%, returned the questionnaires.

#### **Teacher, Student, and School Demographics**

After the questionnaires were returned, I sorted the data into groups and categories through open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The results of the questionnaires are first introduced in table format. The tables are then followed with explanation and discussion of the data presented.

Table 1. Number, gender, and race of teachers responding to questionnaire

Total number of teachers who were sent questionnaires	Number of teachers who completed questionnaires	Of those responding, number of White females	Of those responding, number of non-White females	Of those responding, number of White males
36	28	25	2	1
Percentage	78%	89%	7%	3.6%

I sent questionnaires to each teacher through the intercampus mail system and contacted by phone and email those teachers who had not responded by the requested date. Twenty-eight of the 36 teachers returned the questionnaires, which made a response rate of nearly 78%, a high rate for mail questionnaires (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1987). Twenty-four of those teachers responding, or 86%, agreed to be interviewed about their responses. Three teachers returned the questionnaires, but refused to be interviewed, stating that their schedules were too busy. Twenty-two of the 28 responding teachers, or 79%, agreed to keep a log of books they read aloud. Four teachers later dropped out of the study, stating that they were too busy to keep the logs. Eighteen teachers, or 50% of the kindergarten teachers originally participating in the study returned the three book logs for analysis.

Of the twenty-eight teachers who returned the questionnaire, 27 were females and one was male. The male was White. Two female teachers were African-American; the rest were White.

Table 2. Kindergarten teacher degrees held and early childhood certification

Number of Teachers	Bachelor Degree	Masters Degree	Specialist in Education	Early-Child Certification
28	13	13	2	28
Percentage	46%	46%	7%	100%

The education level included 13 teachers, or slightly more than 46%, with bachelor degrees; 13 teachers, again over 46% with master of education degrees; and two teachers,

or 7%, with specialist (Ed.S.) degrees. At the time of this study, Florida required that kindergarten teachers be certified in early-childhood education (age-3 to age-8) and all of the responding teachers held early-childhood certification.

Table 3. Years of teaching experience

Number of Teachers	Average number of years teaching	Average number of years teaching kindergarten
28	16.6 years	16.6 years

Total teaching experience ranged from less than a year to 34 years, with a mean of 16.6 years teaching experience and a median of 15 years, a figure in line with the county's average number of years of teaching experience, which was 14.8. Experience teaching kindergarten ranged from less than a year to 34 years, with a mean of 16.6 and a median of 15 years, indicating that many of these teachers elected to teach kindergarten through much of their career. Seven teachers, or 25%, from four Title I schools with a low socioeconomic status, which I defined as a higher than 70% free and reduced-price lunch population, were the least experienced, with four or fewer years teaching experience.

Table 4. Average class size and average number of male and female students

Average K Class Size	Average number of male students	Average number of female students
20.6	11	10

The kindergarten teachers reported that their class sizes ranged from 17 to 23 students with an average of 20.6 students, divided fairly evenly between males and females. The number of male students ranged from 7 to 14, with an average of 11 males in each classroom. The number of female students ranged from 7 to 13, with a slightly lower average of 10 females in each classroom.



Table 5. Ethnicity and race of students in seven rural classrooms

White/non-Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Biracial, multiracial American Indian or International
66%	2%	28%	2%	2%

Sixty-six percent of the students in seven classrooms located outside the city limits were White and 28% were African-American. The remaining 6% were Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, or other races or ethnicities.

Table 6. Ethnicity and race of students in twelve west side classrooms

White/non-Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Biracial, multiracial American Indian or International
76%	2.5%	18%	2%	3.5%

Although similar in class size and gender, the schools within the city limits were quite different along the lines of racial ethnicity, depending on the area of the city where the schools were located. The 12 kindergarten classes in schools on the west side of the county were made up of 76% White and 18% African-American students. Eight percent of the students were of other races or ethnicities.

Table 7. Ethnicity and race of students in nine east side classrooms

White/Non-Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Biracial, multiracial American Indian or International
4%	2%	85%	2%	7%

Despite the fact that some students were bused to schools on the west side of the city, a practice which contributed to a less than 25% ratio of minority students, a high number of African-American students both lived and attended schools on the east side of the city. In these schools, nine kindergarten teachers indicated that their classrooms had an average of 19 students. African-American students made up 85% of the total number

of students in each class. White students made up 4% of the classrooms. Finally, biracial, Hispanic, or students of other ethnicities made up the remaining 11%.

### Questionnaire Results

I used the questionnaire to gain information regarding how teachers obtained the books they read aloud and why, how much, and what they read aloud to their students. I then analyzed the results, looking for patterns and generalizations among the responses (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The results helped me design guided interview schedules and triangulate data obtained from the book logs and the personal interviews. In this section, the tables are again presented first, followed by discussion of the data in the table.

Table 8. Reading-aloud practices of teachers

Average number of books read aloud each day	Average time of reading aloud session	Average time of discussion or retelling activity	Number of teachers rereading at least 1 book a week	Average number of book-related activities done per day
3	14 minutes	5 minutes	4	2

One of the questions I wanted to answer was how much kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students. Although the research shows reading aloud is an important part of a literate classroom, and that most teachers read aloud to their students on a regular basis studies on how much reading aloud is done each day by teachers report varying amounts (Martinez & Roser, 1985; Galda & Cullinan, 1991; Klesius & Griffith, 1996). Langer et al. (1990) reported that just over half of teachers read aloud daily. Morrow (1992) found that pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers read an average of 12 stories over a four-week period. Hoffman et al. (1993) found that 84% of kindergarten teachers read aloud an average of once a day. The researchers noted that the books were unrelated to the current unit of study, that discussions of the books took less than 5

minutes, and response activities rarely followed the read-aloud session. The 28 teachers who returned the questionnaire reported reading from two to seven books a day, with the average teacher reading three books per day. Their average session lasted almost 14 minutes, for a total of about 41 minutes of reading aloud each day. The average discussion time lasted 5 minutes, similar to other studies (Jewell & Pratt, 1999). All 28 teachers indicated that curriculum and schedule demands affected their read-aloud events. Twenty-six teachers, or nearly 93%, reported doing book-related activities such as writing or drawing responses for an average of two books per day; a practice supported by research (Paley, 1981; Wollman-Bonilla & Werchadlo, 1999).

Table 9. Kindergarten children's access to school library

Number of teachers of 28 responding who said their students visited library at least once per week.	Number of classes allowed to check out books at least once per week
27	26

In the school setting, kindergarten children may have access to the school library or media center. Twenty-seven, or 96% of the teachers reported that their students visited the library for about half an hour each week. One teacher said she did not have time to take her students to the media center every week. During the library time, the teachers reported that the media specialist usually read at least one book aloud to the students, although 89% said that the media specialist sometimes showed a book-related video or taught library skills rather than reading aloud. Further, 26 teachers, or almost 93%, stated that their students were allowed to check out a library book each week, if they did not have any books overdue. This response indicates that although the amount varies, most of the students did have access to books in addition to what the teacher read aloud and what was provided in the classroom setting.

Table 10. Why teachers say they read aloud to their students

Most important reason for reading aloud	Number of teachers out of a total of 28 responding	Percentage of 28 teachers
To enjoy the literature	21	75%
To teach pre-reading skills	5	18%
To teach story conventions/ language	1	4%
To teach ethics/develop character	1	4%

Reading-aloud is widely accepted as a way to foster children's enjoyment of literature, their interest in reading, and their questioning and discussing behaviors (Anderson et al, 1985; May, 1995; McGillis, 1988; Morrow, 1983; Short et al. 1996). In surveying the kindergarten teachers, I wanted to find out what their most important reason was for reading aloud to their students. On the questionnaire, I asked them list the most important factor when reading aloud. I also asked them to rank nine choices by order of importance. The choices included "to teach pre-reading skills (phonemic awareness)"; "to teach story conventions"; "to teach information"; "to teach math"; "to teach cultural knowledge"; "to teach ethics and character"; "to enjoy the literature"; "to counter negative stereotypes"; and "to introduce discussion of complex topics". Teachers selected five of the nine as their first choices for most important reason to read aloud. Seventy-five percent of the teachers stated that reading to foster their students' enjoyment of literature was their primary reason for reading aloud supporting the research on beliefs about reading aloud. Five teachers, or almost 18%, reported that they read aloud to promote pre-reading skills. One teacher reported that teaching story conventions and language was most important, and one teacher reported that teaching ethics and character was most important. Research indicates that reading aloud supports children's learning to read as well as their developing understanding of story conventions (Clay, 1985;

Cohen, 1968; Huck, 1992; Lehr, 1988). The teachers' responses indicated they had similar beliefs.

Table 11. Teachers' least important reasons to read aloud

Least important reason to read aloud	Number of teachers listing it as a low priority out of a total of 28 teachers responding	Average
To Teach Ethics	22	79%
To Counter Negative Stereotypes	6	21%

Researchers have found that children use books to understand the world around them and to develop their values and attitudes (Cullingford, 1998; McElhoe, 1999; Short & Fox, 2003). Further, the content of books may shape children's behaviors and beliefs (Bandura, 1977; Herrera, 2000; Igoa, 1995; Lamme, 1996; Tway, 1989). Table 10 contains the items they ranked as most important reasons to read aloud. Table 11 ranks their least important reasons to read aloud. Twenty-two of the 28, or 79%, responded that reading aloud to teach ethics was a low priority, giving it a score of nine. Six of the 28, or 21%, stated that reading aloud to counter stereotypes was a low priority, giving that selection a score of nine. The teachers' responses were similar to a survey done of primary teachers, who stated that they read aloud to improve language ability rather than to provide cultural experiences (Poole, 1987)

Table 12. Factors impacting teachers' read-aloud decisions

Factor impacting teachers' read-aloud decisions	Number of teachers out of 28 responding	Percentage of teachers (More than one response was allowed so total equals more than 100%)
The book adds to curriculum	28	100%
Thinks students would like it	25	89%
Teacher likes it	26	93%

The responses of the teachers indicated that while the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status of the population of students differed greatly between the kindergarten classrooms in the city, the teachers' practices were quite similar. One of the questions I asked was to list what factors impact the read-aloud decisions. All the kindergarten teachers stated that they read books to teach or support curriculum, presented in the form of units such as oceans, plants, or seasonal events. Twenty-five teachers reported reading a book because they thought their students would like it and 26 teachers said they often read aloud a book they liked personally, findings consistent with other studies (Jipson & Paley, 1991).

Table 13. Student preferences for book according to teachers

Preference	Number of teachers out of 28 responding	Percentage (More than one response was allowed; total equals more than 100%)
Songs or books with repetitive phrases	28	100%
Television or movie characters (Barney)	27	96%
Science or information	27	96%
Colorful pictures	26	93%
Series (Curious George)	24	86%
Stories taking 5-15 minutes to read aloud	24	86%
Large illustrations	20	71%
Humor or exaggeration	18	64%
Detailed illustrations	2	7%

The 28 teachers reported that they took their student preferences and interests into consideration when selecting books to read aloud, indicating that they believed that student interest was important and that they felt they were aware of their students' interests. Interestingly, 24 teachers said their students preferred books that took less than 15 minutes to read aloud, suggesting that students might have shorter attention spans or that perhaps the teachers might underestimate their students' abilities to sit for lengthy

books that might deal with complex themes or subjects (Rothlein & Meinbach, 1996; Teale, 2003). Three teachers read aloud chapter books, but limited the session to one chapter. The teachers reported their students' attention spans were not developed enough to sit for longer books, and time constraints limited their time for reading aloud.

Table 14. Where teachers get the books they read aloud

Sources	Number of Teachers out of a total of 28	Average (More than one response was allowed so total equals more than 100%)
Rely primarily on personal collection	21	75%
Use school library to supplement	12	43%
Use fellow teachers or grade level collection	10	36%
Use public library	5	18%

Research suggests that children need to see themselves in books and that literature allows children to see themselves as well as others (Applebee, 1991; Greene, 1993; Liaw, 1995; Shannon, 1994; Sims Bishop, 2003; Wilhelm, 1997). In addition, studies indicate that students who have access to authentic multicultural literature understand more complex themes and perspectives than those children who do not have access (Martinez-Roldan & Lopez-Robertson, 1999; Medina, 2001). Further, the trend toward more culturally conscious literature is more apparent in very recently published books (Galda et al. 2000). Despite this, studies of teachers' read-aloud selections find that many teachers read aloud older books, and that diversity is scarce in the lists of authors and titles (Hoffman et al. 1993). Their findings indicate that little opportunity exists for children of ethnic or cultural minorities to see themselves or for children of the mainstream culture to see other ethnicities and cultures (Herrera, 2000). Knowing this, one question I asked was where the teachers obtained the books they read aloud and how

they found out about books. I listed 10 sources for books and left a blank space for the teachers to add their own sources if necessary. Seventy-five percent relied primarily on their personal collections for their read-aloud selections, suggesting that perhaps they do not have access to the most recently published books.

Forty-three percent of the teachers stated that they used the school libraries to supplement their collections, although school libraries often have few copies of recently published books (Nodelman, 2000). Ten teachers, or 36%, stated they used their fellow teachers' books or a collection kept in the kindergarten area. Five teachers, or about 18%, responded that they used the public library as a source for their read-aloud books, suggesting that these teachers might have access to more diverse and newer books than those teachers who did not use the public library (Nodelman, 2000).

Table 15. Books read aloud the first day of school

Book Title	Date of publication	Number of teachers (some teachers read aloud more than one book)
<u>Miss Bindergarten gets ready for Kindergarten</u>	1996	7
<u>The Kissing Hand</u>	1993	5
<u>Chicka, Chicka! Boom, Boom!</u>	1989	5
<u>Will I have a Friend?</u>	1971	4
<u>My first days of School</u>	1982	4
<u>The Little Engine that could</u>	1930	3
<u>We like Kindergarten</u>	1965	2
<u>Boomer goes to School</u>	1996	1
<u>Moose goes to School</u>	1970	1
<u>Leo the late bloomer</u>	1971	1
<u>Three Little Pigs</u>	1970	1
<u>'Twas the night before Kindergarten</u>	2001	1

I asked the teachers to list what book they read aloud on the first day of school.

Studies have shown that teachers read aloud books to help children understand school



culture and rules (Bandura, 1977; Gutmann, 1987; Heath, 1983) and I wondered if the teachers in this study would have similar responses. The teachers' answers supported the theorists' assertions, with most teachers reading a book designed to familiarize students with school and make them feel at ease in a school setting. Seven teachers, or 25%, of the teachers responded that they read aloud Slate and Wolff's (1996) Miss Bindergarten gets ready for Kindergarten, a rhyming picture book with animal characters representing students and a black and white "cow" teacher who is shown preparing the classroom for the children's arrival. Five teachers, or nearly 18%, read aloud The Kissing Hand (Penn et al. 1993) a book about a young raccoon nervous about his first "night" at school and how his mother helps him cope. Wiseman's (1970) Moose goes to School and Krauss and Dewey's (1971) Leo the late bloomer were other books read aloud. These books presented school-connected issues with anthropomorphized animals rather than people, a device often used to avoid dealing with ethnicity or race (Darigan, et al. 2002; Johnson, 1999). Despite this, race and socioeconomic class were evident. In Moose goes to School the story characters are White. In Leo the late bloomer, Leo, a male cub, appears to be considered a successful artist after he's drawn a stick figure of a White girl with curly, blond hair. Evidence of a middle-class culture appears in the illustrations as well; from the clothing worn to the television set in front of which Leo's father sits.

The other books about starting school were Hamilton-Merritt's (1982) My first days of school, Cohen and Hoben's (1971) Will I have a friend?, Cassidy's (1965) We like Kindergarten, McGeorge and Whyte's (1996) Boomer goes to School, and Wing's (2001) 'Twas the night before Kindergarten. These books contain people with very light or slightly different skin shades and simplified features, another device used to avoid

dealing with race (Darigan et al. 2002; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). In Cohen's and Cassidy's books (published more than 30 years ago), the illustrations appear quite dated with regard to such things as clothing fashions and contemporary kindergarten practices. The girls are in dresses or skirts and the boys are dressed in styles of the 1960s and 1970s. The illustrations in Boomer goes to school are more modern and suggest more diversity. The illustrations in the books depict a middle-class culture as evidenced by the clothing of the characters, the homes, and neighborhoods. In 'Twas the night before Kindergarten, several sets of parents drive cars, or walk their children to school for their first day. The parents and children are various shades of tan, but the features are generic.

Worth noting is that all the teachers depicted in these books were female, even the book read aloud by the one male in the study, a fact which, although it reflects reality, does perpetuate the stereotype that teachers are females (Gutmann, 1987). In two of the books using people, White females are the main characters. In the others, a variety of males and females share the story. Relevant is that although in the questionnaires and interviews the teachers state that their purpose for reading is to make the incoming students feel comfortable and happy, there are definite messages in the text and illustrations about what is and what is not acceptable school behavior (Greenway, 1993; Hildebrand, 1986).

Piper's (1930) The Little Engine that could contains White dolls and characters as well as a talking train and toys. A didactic book, the teachers who read it aloud said they wanted their students to know they can succeed if they try hard and don't give up. Similarly, Galdone's (1970) Three Little Pigs includes anthropomorphized animals, a

device common to folktales, and though it contains some repetitive phrases suitable for choral response, is a didactic book about work ethic.

Martin, Archambault, and Ehlert's (1989) Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, which won the Boston Globe Horn award, is a rhyming alphabet book with upper case letters as "mamas and papas" and lower case letters as "children." An alphabet book, it blends teaching letter recognition with rhythm and song.

One book was published in 2001; the others were published before 1996, before the kindergarten students in this study were born. More than half the books were over 20 years old. Further, all the authors and illustrators were White males or females, with the exception of Jose Aruego, who is originally from the Philippines.

Another item on the questionnaire involved whether or not the teachers took their students' races or ethnicities into account when selecting books to read aloud. None of the teachers responded that the author or illustrator's race, gender, or social class was an important factor in selecting books, and their book selections for the first day of school seemed to support this response.

### **Summary**

The teachers in this study were primarily female and Caucasian. Most were experienced kindergarten teachers who had collected children's books over the years to read aloud to their classes. They read aloud daily, at least once, but usually about three times, and chose older books with middle-class, White characters or books with animals that appeared to represent middle-class, White characters. As a whole, they did not appear to notice that books transmitted messages other than the ones overtly stated.

None of the teachers reported being concerned with gender or with social class and did not appear to notice social class, as evidenced in the books they read on the first day.

Further, the teachers reported that they did not feel that the identity of the author or illustrator affected the story and did not seem to make a strong effort to seek multicultural or diverse writers and illustrators. Authors, illustrators, and dates of publication did not seem to be primary concerns of the teachers in this study. They selected books that met their goals for behavior or academic areas and that dealt with content areas, such as science and social studies, as well as books that helped develop pre-reading skills, such as rhyming and letter sounds. The kindergarten teachers in this district appeared to teach using thematic social studies and science units, which may have accounted from the large number of informational and non-fiction books.

The teachers valued books that helped students acclimate to school and growing up and transmitted expectations and rules of behavior; particularly those involving emotions, dealing with others, and behaving at school. Most of the teachers responded that teaching ethics was not a priority, but several of the books read aloud the first day of school dealt with having a strong work ethic and treating others fairly and with kindness.

These teachers reported that reading aloud was important and that they read aloud primarily for their students' enjoyment, a statement supported by other research (Cambourne, 1988; Elley, 1998). However, from their statements and book choices, it appeared that they often read aloud for efferent reasons: for information, or to teach reading, or other academic skills.

The teachers' responses indicated that they were unconcerned about the date of publication, and that they often read aloud books from their personal collections and the schools' kindergarten collections, books published decades before. These were experienced teachers, who typically owned many books (often personal favorites)

collected during their years of teaching, which most likely contributed to their reading “older” books. Many of the teachers seemed to be content to read the same books year after year. Inconvenience or worry about losing books (and having to pay to replace them) seemed to be primary reasons most did not utilize the public library.

The responses from the questionnaires provided a good starting point on which to base my focus interview questions as I selected the six teachers from the two low socioeconomic schools, and developed semi-structured interview schedules to elicit the teachers’ ideas, beliefs, and interpretations in a constructivist fashion (Gall et al. 1996). After analyzing and examining all the answers, I designed a personal interview to probe the focus teachers’ responses and discuss the teachers’ personal literacy backgrounds, beliefs about children and reading, and the kinds of things that impacted their read-aloud selections and events (Appendix A).

## CHAPTER 5

### WHAT KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS READ ALOUD: FINDINGS FROM THE READ-ALOUD LOGS

#### **Book-Logs**

In order to find out what children's books the kindergarten teachers in this study read aloud to their students, I asked each teacher to keep a log of books they read aloud over the course of three 1-week periods. Initially, 22 of the 28 teachers returning the questionnaires agreed to keep the logs, but four later changed their minds, leaving a total of 18 kindergarten teachers who kept logs. After collecting the completed logs, I analyzed each book, noting the genre, themes, gender, race, ethnicity, and social class of the main characters in the book; and if the book had won any major awards.

Closely examining books that kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students is critical, because political, moral, social, and cultural ideologies are transmitted through the books (Hade, 2001; Hollindale, 1988). These ideologies, present in the text and the illustrations, may be obvious or quite elusive (Lurie, 1990; Shannon, 1986). In some children's books, the author or illustrator may deliberately transmit his or her personal values in a manner that is apparent to readers, such as his or her appreciation of diversity or a belief in conservation and taking care of the environment (Sutherland, 1985). A number of the values may be those that readers share as well (Russell, 2001). These values might not be plain, but rather unconsciously shared assumptions, such as celebrating Christmas or the cultural practice of listening quietly when another person is talking. These kinds of values are considered mainstream social norms; people from

other societies or cultures may not appreciate or hold the same values (Cai & Traw, 1997; Russell, 2001). In such cases, the author or illustrator and the reader may be unaware that these values are being transmitted and detection can be difficult, because it requires stepping out of one's cultural assumptions. Still another kind of message may be sent when the author or illustrator shares similar ideological "cultural worlds" to their readers. In this case it is highly difficult to expose the transmitted beliefs, because everyone is part of the same culture (Hollindale, 1988). "The discourses of power and dominance that have been written into the literature are sustained." (Fang, Fu & Lamme, 2003, p. 289). In this chapter, I introduce much of the data from the logs in table format followed with discussion of the information.

### **Books Read Aloud by the Teachers**

After receiving the completed book-logs, I created a master list of the books read aloud, along with the author, illustrator, and date of publication (Appendix B). I tallied the total number of books, read-aloud events, and authors. I then researched the authors and illustrators to determine who were non-White. I also noted the date of publication for each book read aloud.

Table 16. Books read aloud by the teachers

Books published since 1998	Books published before 1998	Total number of books	Total number of books by White authors or illustrators	Total number of books by non-White authors/illustrators	Total number of books by both White & non-White authors/illustrators
78	350	428	415	15	428
18%	82%	100%	97%	3%	100%

The teachers reported reading aloud 428 books a total of 520 times. Fifty-eight books were read aloud by more than one teacher. The most popular books were Joy Cowley's (1980) Mrs. Wishy-Washy, read by four teachers; Eric Carle's (1987) The tiny

seed, read by four teachers and Carle's (1969) The very hungry caterpillar, read by six teachers. Despite research showing that rereading books is beneficial for comprehension and children's self-selection of books (Martinez & Roser, 1985; Robinson et al. 1997), just four teachers of the 18 who kept logs, or 22% reported rereading the same books more than once, although they might have reread books at a different point during the school year.

### **Ethnicity and race of the authors and illustrators**

White males or females wrote and illustrated 415, or 97%, of the books. Thirteen books, a little more than 3% of the total number, were written and or illustrated by 15 minority authors or illustrators. This number supports Fondrie's (2001) finding that most authors and illustrators of children's books are White and from a middle-class culture. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, there were a total of 5,000 books written for children in 2002. African-Americans wrote 69, or a little over 1% of those books. Another 166, or about 3%, were about African-Americans by White authors. Two hundred and forty-nine, or nearly 5%, were by and about other people of color, including Latino, Native American Indian, and Asian Pacific Islander.

Three of the African-American authors, dancer and singer Debbie Allen and Deloris and Roslyn Jordan, mother and sister of Michael Jordan, are considered celebrity authors. Publishers often publish these authors in the hope that customers will buy the books after recognizing the names (Hade, 2002). Kadir Nelson, a noted African-American artist, illustrated both books. African-Americans Nikki Grimes, Floyd Cooper, Julius Lester, and Jerry Pinkney made up another four of the minority authors or illustrators. Native American Indians Charles Blood and Shonto Begay are from



Midwest tribes. Completing the list, Virginia Esquinaldo is Hispanic; Ed Young was born in China and now lives in America; Jose Aruego was raised in the Phillipines and lives in the United States; Taro Gomi and Mitsumaso Anno are Japanese.

### **Cultural authenticity of the children's books read aloud**

Cultural authenticity in books is a hotly debated term that has been described as a concept that cannot be captured or defined clearly, but is something that a reader recognizes instantly when he or she is part of the culture being depicted (Short & Fox, 2003). However, even within a culture, there are issues of variations and individual experiences. Noll (1995) noted that in Native American Indian culture, there are multiple tribes and within those groups, each person experiences life in a slightly different way. Similarly, Guevara (2003) argued that cultural authenticity varies for every individual; what is “true” for one may not be “true” for another.

When looking at the books read aloud, I was unable to determine how culturally authentic the books might have been for each student. Despite this, I had a fairly comprehensive picture of the students in the classrooms, particularly in the focus classrooms, so I was able to look at how the books appeared to match the students' gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. The authors of the books the teachers read aloud were primarily White and middle-class, which contrasted with the demographics in the schools studied.

### **Publication dates**

As I analyzed the books that the teachers reported reading aloud to their students, I looked at the date of publication for each book. I then tallied the total number of books published in each decade to get a general idea of the trend that appeared in the publication dates of the 428 books.

Table 17. Summary of the book publication dates

Decade book was published	1920s to 1940s	1950s to 1970s	1980s to 1997	1998 or later	Total number of books
Number of books read	11	53	286	78	428
Percentage of books	3%	12%	67%	18%	100%

In recent years, more multicultural books have been published and diversity is now a goal of publishers in response to the request of educators and others as the nation's population grows and the number of people of color and varying ethnicities increases (Hade, 2002; Short & Fox, 2003). Along with this, in response to the call for authenticity, authors and illustrators are researching their books and trying to portray cultures authentically. Moreover, an increasing number of books are written by and about people of color, although still far from reflecting the nation's population. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2002), in the year 2002, 5,000 children's books were published, with 484, or around 9%, featuring people of color in books written by both White and non-White authors. In contrast, 4,500 children's books were published in 1993, with less than 2 % featuring people of color. The book publication demographics do not match the nation's population of students. According to the Florida Department of Education, there are students from more than 250 countries who speak more than 100 languages in the schools in this state. More than half of these students were born in the United States or its territories (Managing Multicultural Learning Environments; 1998, CD-ROM 1).

One cause for concern is that older books are often more likely to have stereotypes or misinformation (Guevara, 2003; Harris, 1999). Most books read aloud by the teachers in this study were published decades earlier. According to the teachers' logs, 350, or

almost 82% of the total number of books read aloud, were published before 1998, making them 5-years old at the time of my study. One hundred and sixty two books, or nearly 38%, were written before 1990. Fifty-three books read aloud were published in the 1950s, the 1960s, or the 1970s. Eleven books were published in the 1920s, the 1930s, or the 1940s. Most teachers were experienced and had been collecting books for their personal collections for several years, which could account for this large number of older books. Further, due to lack of funding, many books in school libraries are often older (Nodelman, 1996). As a result, the teachers who used the school media center as a resource may have had a larger number of older books from which to select. The public library in this town has many recently published books, but just four, or a little more than 22% of the 18 teachers keeping logs, reported that they used the public library as a resource for books to read aloud to their students.

Research suggests that recently published books often feature more authentic and diverse characters (Lempke, 1999; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999), but only a small proportion of the books read aloud were published in recent years. Seventy-eight, or a little more than 18% of the books read aloud were published in 1998 or later. The fact that most books read aloud were published prior to 1998 suggests that the children in these teachers' classrooms were not exposed to a large number of diverse characters in the books the teachers read aloud.

### **Defining the Genres**

Researchers note that most books read aloud to young children are narrative, common in fantasy and fiction genres (De Temple & Snow, 1996; Phillips & McNaughton, 1990). However, studies suggest that listening to a large variety of genres enables students to learn the formula for each type of story; they become more

sophisticated listeners and readers as they become more experienced with different genres (Cai & Traw, 1997; Pappas, 1991). In a joint position statement, Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children (1998), the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children stated that kindergartners should be “exposed to vocabulary from a wide variety of genres....” (p.203). With this in mind, I examined the book logs to determine which genres were read aloud by the teachers and how often they read aloud each genre. Each genre has its own rules and conventions that define its parameters (Russell, 2001). The poetry genre has conventions such as patterns, symbolism, and rhythm. Literature from the traditional genre often contains flat characters representing good and evil and concepts like magic and the rule of three (Cai & Traw, 1997). These conventions may vary depending upon the author’s culture or the society in which the book is placed. For example, many Japanese stories have a continuous plot with no conflict or goals and does not fit smoothly into our culture’s accepted pattern of a problem and a resolution. Without knowing this pattern, a reader may be confused (Matsuyama, 1983).

Before beginning my content analysis, I defined the parameters and created categories for the various genres of books read aloud by the teachers in this study. I elected to use Lynch-Brown’s and Tomlinson’s (1999) Essentials of children’s literature, as a guide for creating the categories.

**Poetry.** Poetry, from lyrical to narrative, and poetry books can be presented in many different forms and can be anthologies, collections, or a single song or poem within a book (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, pp. 41-44). There may be few illustrations, particularly in the collections. For the purpose of this analysis, I put all poetry and song

books into one category. The other genres fall under the “picture book” umbrella. Picture books are those books in which the illustrations play a critical role in the telling of the story. The pictures “provide actual plot or concept information as well as clues to character traits, settings, and moods” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p.68).

**Concept books.** Concept books are those books that “explains an idea or concept” such as colors, shapes, numbers, time, or alphabet letters (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p.74). An example is Charles’ (1975) Calico Cat looks at shapes, one of the books read aloud by teachers in my study. Kindergarten teachers often use these types of books to introduce or reinforce concepts (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999).

**Modern fantasy.** Modern fantasy is the body of literature that revolves around story plots that could not happen in the real world. Sometimes these stories are retellings of traditional literature and sometimes they are new adventures (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p.112-114). A common device that children’s literature authors and illustrators use is to have animals representing humans, whether in “real” or “fantastic” situations (Kuznets, 1994). Some of the books in this study contained animals behaving as humans while dealing with issues such as starting school and going to bed. I included them as fantasy, but discussed the gender and socioeconomic class issues that were present in the books. For example, a book read by teachers in my study, Bourgeois and Clark’s series book (1996) Franklin and the Tooth Fairy, is a story of a young boy turtle losing a tooth. Franklin has a mother and a father, a bicycle, and a home with a comfortable bedroom complete with a pet fish, a bookcase full of books, and a play table. His friends include a bear, a rabbit, and a fox that play and attend school with him. Interestingly, Franklin is not called “Turtle” even though those around him are called

“Bear”, “Rabbit”, and “Fox.” Franklin’s teacher is a male owl, which blends the stereotype “wise owl” with the counter stereotype of a male teacher. The books suggest the author might be concerned with gender and uses animals to create an uncontroversial diversity (Lempke, 1999). She appears less concerned with social class or issues of anthropomorphized animals (Johnson, 1999).

A slightly different type of fantasy picture book included in this study was the “wordless picture book.” “Wordless picture books that tell a story visually also encourage sequential page-turning. Visual discrimination is likewise fostered by wordless books as well as books that play games with the pictures” (Lamme, 1981, p.49). Wiesner’s (1991) award-winning book Tuesday was on one read-aloud list. The book’s main characters are flying frogs that travel through town in the middle of the night, disturbing residents along the way. The human characters are White, middle-class, and portrayed in recognizably culturally mainstream late night scenarios: a man with insomnia is up eating a “midnight snack” while in his robe and slippers; another resident has fallen asleep in front of the television.

**Traditional.** Traditional literature includes the stories that began as oral traditions and later were written down (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). A subcategory of traditional literature, folktales often have similar versions across the world and “grew out of the lives and imaginations” of the common people (p. 99). Fairy tales are similar, except that they contain magic. Fables are stories with a moral or a lesson and usually include animal characters. Myths are stories that “recount and explain the origins of the world and the phenomena of nature” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 98). Finally, legends and tall tales are based on “real or supposedly real individuals and their deeds”

(Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 99). Kellogg's (1991) Jack and the beanstalk is an example of a book read aloud that falls under the traditional literature category.

**Realistic fiction.** Realistic fiction includes those books that reflect “real” life with humans as the characters and events that could actually happen, though often the events are exaggerated (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 130). Many of the books in this category addressed issues such as being home alone, going to school, and dealing with emotions. In order to determine what races and ethnicities were presented to the children in the teachers' classrooms, I restricted realistic fiction to that which included human characters. One book on the read-aloud logs was Polacco's (1990) Thunder Cake, a story of a girl and her grandmother dealing with an approaching thunderstorm; another was Bang's (1999) Caldecott winner When Sophie gets angry, the story of a young girl learning to control her anger. Though the illustrations vary from realistic to exaggerated, the situations are life-like and the characters are human.

**Informational books.** The term “informational books” can include biography and concept books and can overlap into the fantasy or realistic fiction genres when information is presented in narrative. For the purpose of this study, I defined informational books as those books that primarily impart science or social studies related facts and information with little fantasy. An exception on the list is Cole and Degen's (1990) The Magic Schoolbus: lost in the Solar System, in which a White female teacher takes her class, a group of students whose diversity is suggested through various soft shading and generic features, on a field trip through the solar system in a magic school bus. I kept this in the informational category because the book is filled with factual information and includes a disclaimer to readers that explains that school buses cannot

travel in space, that traveling to distant planets can take years, and that humans cannot land on every planet or fly too close to the sun.

Many informational books contain photographs or a combination of drawings and photographs. The kindergarten teachers in my study used units or topics to develop their instruction and often used children's literature, particularly informational books, to support the curriculum. The units included dinosaurs, space, insects, farms, oceans, patriotism, careers, spring and Easter, and Africa. Retan's (1994) Armies of ants is an example of an informational book read aloud that provided facts about ant colonies for an insect unit of study.

**Biographies and autobiographies.** Biographies and autobiographies are books about a real person's life (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 166-167). Sometimes these books may contain lessons such as the importance of working hard. One teacher read aloud Wilder's (1962) On the way home, the story of Laura Wilder's frontier life in the late 1800s.

**Historical fiction.** Historical fiction is "realistic fiction set in a time remote enough from the present to be considered history" (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 150). Historical fiction is set in a "significantly earlier time period" and should not only present a story, but also information about that time in history (Russell, 2001, p. 219). With the exception of Wilder's (1962) On the way home, Bjork's (1987) Linnea in Monet's garden was the only book read aloud that could be linked to the historical fiction genre, though it overlapped into informational and international genres as well.

**International literature.** The term "international literature" encompasses books from other countries that have been translated into English (Darigan et al. 2002; Lynch-



Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). Bjork's Linnea in Monet's garden is considered an excellent example of a translated children's book about Monet and his paintings (Mikkelsen, 2000). Oftentimes international books can become rather stilted in the translation into English. Pfister's (1992) The Rainbow Fish is an example of an international book whose translation resulted in a book with rather awkward text. The story revolves around a fish with beautiful scales. The fish has no friends until he reluctantly shares his scales, a somewhat confusing message about the importance of sharing and generosity, with perhaps an unintended message that it is not acceptable to be different. The popularity of the book could be partially due to the holographic paper used to create the shiny scales. Another book read aloud, Gomi's (1989) Spring is here, is an international book with simple, but lovely paintings of animals.

**Genre-blending books.** Children's literature, particularly in the narrative form, sometimes crosses or blends genres. "Genre-blending" is a technique that many authors use and requires a reader who has been exposed to and is comfortable with various genres (Mikkelsen, 2000, p. 46). Bjork and Anderson's (1987) Linnea in Monet's garden is one such example. It is the story of a young girl and her elderly friend's visit to Monet's gardens, which are depicted through photographs of Monet's paintings. This narrative is a blend of a biography and historical fiction, in addition to being an information book about art and art appreciation. I put this book in the international translated category, with a caveat that it was partially a biography, historical fiction, and, with its photographs of Monet's paintings, an informational book as well. After defining the genre guidelines, I sorted the books by genre.

### Books Read Aloud

As I analyzed the books read aloud, I created tables for the data, which are then followed by discussion and explanation. I first sorted the books by genre, using guidelines from Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson's (1999) Essentials of children's literature.

Table 18. Summary of the books and genres read aloud

Fantasy	Info	Poetry	Concept	Realist Fiction	Traditional	Int'l	Biography	Total number of books
214	105	36	29	22	18	3	1	428
50 %	25%	8%	7%	5%	4%	1%	Less than 1%	100%

The teachers read aloud 428 books over three 1-week periods, and conducted 520 read-aloud sessions, for a total of around three read-aloud events per teacher each day. Modern fantasy, including stories using animals as humans, made up a little more than 50% of the total books read aloud. Informational books, popular with young children, particularly books about animals accounted for nearly 25 % of the total number of books read aloud (Russell, 2001). The informational genre is often presented in a non-narrative format and gives emergent readers experience with a different structure of text (Pappas, 1991). Having such a large number of informational books read aloud is not consistent with most research done on what kindergarten teachers read aloud, but can be explained by the fact that many of the kindergarten teachers in this district used social studies and science themes to teach the curriculum. Poetry, rhyme, and song books, including anthologies, made up around 8% of the total. Frequently read to foster emergent reading skills such as rhyming and word play, this genre allows children to respond and interact through singing and choral response (Darigan et al. 2002). Concept books, including alphabet books and counting books, accounted for close to 7%. Concept books are often

information books created by artists and present an opportunity to learn more about illustrations. Use of alphabet books has been shown to increase emergent readers' understanding of letters and sounds (Murray et al. 1996). Close behind was realistic fiction, with a little more than 5%. Students learn that realistic fiction (though often narrative in structure) is different from fantasy and traditional literature in that the story could actually happen. Although both fantasy and realistic fiction can be narrative, research has suggested that students' responses to realistic fiction vary from their responses to fantasy (Galda & Cullinan, 1991). Traditional literature (including folk and fairy tales) made up around 4%. Traditional literature (usually narrative and repetitive) further increases children's understanding of motifs and patterns in literature (Stewig, 1987). Three books, or nearly 1%, were international or translated books. International books are from different cultures and may require more background knowledge, in addition to risk that the narrative becomes stilted in the translation (Darigan et al. 2002). Biography, a type of informational book, made up less than 1% of the total number of books read aloud.

Eight chapter books were read aloud. Chapter books often have few illustrations and can be read in chunks (Darigan et al. 2002). Three of the 18 teachers reported reading chapter books aloud to their students. The teachers said that they read aloud a chapter each day. Six of the chapter books were from the Junie B. Jones series by Barbara Park, a series depicting the adventures of a White, middle-class, 5-year-old girl. Other chapter books were Wilder's (1962) biography On the way home and Charlotte's web, the 1952 classic fantasy by E. B. White.

No books from the historical fiction genre or the international genre were read aloud, although Wilder's (1962) On the way home was set in an historical period.

In summary, most of the books read aloud by 18 teachers were modern fantasy or informational books, which fit the reading and content area (particularly social studies and science) curriculum. The book logs suggest that the students had not heard many books read aloud from the concept, realistic fiction, international, and historical fiction or biography genres. Comparing the genre information with the reasons the teachers gave for reading aloud on the questionnaire, I found that though teachers said their most important reason for reading aloud was for the students to enjoy the literature, their selections indicated that perhaps they read aloud primarily for instructional purposes.

### **Award-Winning Literature**

Since the inception of the children's literature publishing era, adults and children have judged children's books based on a variety of criteria including quality of writing, and authenticity of text and illustrations. Although some award-winning books, primarily ones published several years prior, have been criticized for the presence of stereotypes, in most recent cases, the books receiving current awards are studied for sensitivity and accuracy. As such, award-winning books provide a solid foundation when looking for high quality children's literature. Quality is difficult to define, but deals with well written, engaging stories that are authentic and ring "true" (Darigan et al. 2002).

Studies have revealed that children who were read quality literature were better able to engage in reflection and higher-order thinking skills such as inference and synthesis, and were better able to identify theme and other complex literary issues (Dressel, 1990; Sulzby, 1985).

Table 19. Summary of the major awards for the books read aloud

Award	Organization	Website	Total
Bologna Graphic Prize	International Children's Book Fair	<a href="http://www.bookfair.bologna.fi.re.it">http://www.bookfair.bologna.fi.re.it</a>	1
Boston Globe Horn Award	Boston Globe/Horn Book	<a href="http://www.hbook.com/bghb.shtml">www.hbook.com/bghb.shtml</a>	2
Caldecott Medal or Honor	American Library Association	<a href="http://www.ala.org/alsc.caldecott.html">www.ala.org/alsc.caldecott.html</a>	11
Children's Choice Award	International Reading Association	<a href="http://www.reading.org/choices/ccfacts.html">http://www.reading.org/choices/ccfacts.html</a>	0
Coretta Scott King	American Library Association	<a href="http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm/Section/Winner">http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm/Section/Winner</a>	1
Los Angeles 100 Best Books	International Reading Association/ Children's Literature Assembly/Los Angeles Libraries	<a href="http://www.csulb.edu/org/childrens-lit/proj/best100/intro100.html">http://www.csulb.edu/org/childrens-lit/proj/best100/intro100.html</a>	6
Notable Books for a Global Society	International Reading Association	<a href="http://www.readingonline.org/review/literature/notable/overview.html">http://www.readingonline.org/review/literature/notable/overview.html</a>	0
Notable Social Studies Trade Book	National Council for the Social Studies	<a href="http://www.ncss.org/resources/notable">http://www.ncss.org/resources/notable</a>	1
Orbis Pictus Award	National Council for Teachers of English	<a href="http://www.ncte.org/elements/pictus">www.ncte.org/elements/pictus</a>	0
Outstanding Science Trade Books	National Science Teachers Association	<a href="http://www.nsta.org/ostbc">http://www.nsta.org/ostbc</a>	1
Parents Choice	Parents Choice Found	<a href="http://www.parents-choice.org/">www.parents-choice.org/</a>	1
Pura Belpre	American Library Association	<a href="http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ALSC/Awards_and_Scholarships1/Literary">http://www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ALSC/Awards_and_Scholarships1/Literary</a>	0
Teacher Choice Award	International Reading Association	<a href="http://www.reading.org/choices/tcfacts.html">http://www.reading.org/choices/tcfacts.html</a>	0
Total			24

Further, children who were exposed to excellent children's literature were also able to transfer their learning to their writing and other curriculum areas (Eckoff, 1983; Lancia, 1997).

More than 100 awards and prizes are given for children's books, and several stand out as being well respected by educators and children's literature experts (Darigan et al. 2002). One, the Bologna Graphic Prize, is an annual international award given to illustrators of children's books. The Boston Globe Horn Award is an annual award given since 1967 by the Boston Globe and The Horn Book Magazine. The American Library Association has presented the Caldecott Honor since 1938 to excellent picture book artists. Another respected award is the American Library Association's Social Responsibility Round Table's Coretta Scott King award, which is given annually to African-American authors and illustrators. The Pura Belpre' Award (also an ALA award) is given biennially to a Latino author and illustrator who have created works that honor the Latino cultural experience. The International Reading Association presents awards for Notable Books for a Global Society; the Teachers' and Children's Choice Awards; and, in conjunction with the Children's Literature Assembly, the annual top 100 picture books as determined by the Los Angeles Library District. The National Council of Teachers of English presents the Orbis Pictus Award for outstanding nonfiction. The National Council for Social Studies gives an annual award for excellent social studies books, and the National Science Teachers Association awards the National Science Teachers Association award annually for excellent nonfiction books. Finally, a committee made up of parents, librarians, and teachers gives out the annual Parent's Choice Award.

### Books read aloud that received awards

Twenty books, or around 4% of the total number of books read aloud, won a total of 24 awards or prizes. The following table lists the awards that the books the teachers read aloud had won.

Table 20. Books on the read-aloud logs that received awards

Award	Titles of Books Read Aloud from the Book Logs	Author/Illustrator/Date of Publication
Bologna Graphic Prize	<u>Spring is here</u>	Gomi (1989)
Boston Globe Horn Award	<u>Anno's counting book</u> <u>Seven blind mice</u>	Anno (1977) Young (1992)
Caldecott	<u>A tree is nice</u> <u>Heckedy Peg</u> <u>Joseph had a little overcoat</u> <u>Swimmy</u> <u>The talking eggs</u> <u>Tuesday</u> <u>When Sophie gets angry</u> <u>Where butterflies grow</u> <u>Where the Wild Things are</u>	Udry (1956) Wood (1992) Tabak (1999)  Lionni (1963) San Souci (1989) Wiesner (1991) Bang (1999) Ryder (1989) Sendak (1963)
Coretta Scott King	<u>The talking eggs</u>	San Souci/Pinkney (1989)
Los Angeles Best 100 Books	<u>Butterfly alphabet</u> <u>How do dinosaurs say goodnight?</u> <u>I'm a caterpillar</u> <u>If You hopped like a frog</u> <u>Joseph had a little overcoat</u> <u>Waiting for wings</u>	Sanved (1996) Yolen (2002)  Marzollo (1997) Schwartz (1999) Tabak (1999)  Ehlert (2000)
Notable Social Studies Trade Book	<u>Verdi</u>	Cannon (1998)
Outstanding Science Trade Book	<u>Sea turtles</u>	Gibbons (1996)
Parent's Choice Award	<u>Fish eyes: A book you can count on</u>	Ehlert (1990)

Several respected awards and prizes were absent from the list of books read aloud.

No books received the Orbis Pictus award, the Notable Books for a Global Society, the

International Reading Association's Teachers' Choices or Children's Choices, or the Pure Belpre' Award. One book (less than 1% of the total number of books read aloud) both featured Black characters and received the Coretta Scott King award.

### **Themes and content**

The theme of a book is "its underlying meaning or significance," or the author's purpose in writing the story (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 30). Children's books can have multiple messages, but the theme is the "overall message the author/illustrator is trying to impart – the message that tells us something enduring about life" (Darigan et al. 2002, p. 99). The content can include the information presented, particularly in areas of science, social studies, nutrition and health, history, and math (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 8). In this study, I looked at the themes and content of the books read aloud to determine what type of access to messages and information the students in these classrooms had. Using the books as a guide, I developed categories through coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the categories emerged, certain trends appeared and a number of books were closely related. For the purposes of my study, I did not separate each book by every message, but instead looked for the main idea or main purpose for the book. For example, one book read aloud by a teacher, Lobel's (1972) Frog and Toad together contains adventures, but the stories are predominantly about friendship and the importance of relationships. Brown's (1982) Arthur goes to camp contains messages about friendship and relationships, too, but the primary message the author promotes is that new experiences (in this case, going to camp) are a part of growing up and a natural occurrence. Parkes' (1985) retelling of The Little Red Hen is a didactic story about the importance of working hard, although there are underlying messages about sharing, laziness, and selfishness. Several of the books, although in narrative formats, were



informational books and incorporated into a science or social studies theme, or an emergent literacy or mathematics lesson. For example, Cole's (1990) The Magic School Bus lost in the Solar System is presented in a story format with "speech bubbles" and inserts of information. The book contains messages of friendship and cooperation. However, the intention of the author is to give information about space and it was read during a unit study of space. As such, I put this book into the science and social studies content category. Calmenson's (1984) Ten furry monsters is presented in rhyme, but I put it in the mathematical concepts category because the counting sequence was an important part of the book. A few of the books contained both a theme and were about a holiday. In these cases, I separated the books out and put them all in a holiday category, since they were read aloud for that purpose (although a book's message may have also been about the value of sharing). For example, Korman's (1995) The grumpy Easter Bunny is about a rabbit that does not want to deliver eggs and candy; he learns why it is important to share and to be responsible. Since it was read for the Easter holiday, I positioned it in the holiday category rather than putting it with the other books about character development.

A few of the books appeared to be mostly about self-esteem and promoting individuality. Hubbard's (1996) The crayon box that talked is an excellent example of this type of book. Talking crayons argue about and then realize that each is different and special. Again, there are messages about getting along, but the main message is to promote self-esteem and acceptance of difference. Finally, a few books were seemed to be bedtime stories. They, too, contained messages about relationships. Rydell's (1994)

Wind says goodnight is an example of a book that fell into this category. The data from the books are presented below in a table format and followed by discussion and analysis.

Table 21. Content and themes of the books read aloud

Content of books	Number of books	Percentage
Character/relationships	155	36%
Science and social studies Content	116	27%
Growing up/maturity	47	11%
Rhyme/song (not related to a unit)	34	8%
Alphabet concepts	23	5%
Mathematical concepts	19	4%
Holidays	16	4%
Self-esteem	10	3%
Going to sleep	8	2%

### **Character or relationships**

The largest category related to character and moral development and relationships, common themes in children's books (Hall, 2000). Issues within this category included caring relationships, dealing with bad moods, following rules, and developing a strong work ethic. Several books were presented as cautionary tales; some seemed to glorify the idea that adventure lies in not following the accepted behaviors. One hundred and fifty five books, or 36%, were in this category. Often these issues were imbedded in books selected for unit studies, such as Dom DeLuise and Christopher Santoro's (1990) Charlie the caterpillar. DeLuise's book is the story about a caterpillar teased until he becomes a butterfly; he later befriends another caterpillar and helps her adjust to her change. This particular book was read aloud by four teachers and features celebrity author, actor, and comedian Dom DeLuise (Hade, 2001). The teachers reported reading the book because

their classes were studying insects, despite the lack of any factual information in the books.

Many of the books on the read-aloud logs contained themes of jealousy, selfishness, and anger. The books presented ways to deal with these concerns in a positive manner, and are common subjects for children's books according to Cullingford (1998). One example is Hearn's (1993) Dad's dinosaur day, with a White father who turns into a dinosaur when in a bad mood. By blending fantasy and realism, the author shows how people's moods can make them seem like they have changed in dramatic ways (Stewig, 1987). Similarly, Bang's (1999) When Sophie gets angry, shows a White, middle-class female who uses her inner resources for coping with her anger (Mikkelsen, 2000). Lester and Munsinger's (1992) Me first! contains pig characters to illustrate why being selfish and greedy are not virtuous traits. These books were all didactic in their message and "cute," with weak plots and characters.

San Souci and Pinkney's (1989) multiple award-winning The talking eggs is a Creole folk tale with African-American characters and was read aloud during the spring and Easter theme by two teachers. The talking eggs depicts a strong female character obtaining happiness by being kind and obedient (a typical portrayal of a female protagonists) particularly in traditional tales (Lehr, 1995). The mother and sister are portrayed as vain, selfish, greedy, and dishonest; all undesirable traits in our culture. The young girl gains the treasure and happiness because she is compassionate, caring, nonjudgmental, obedient, and respectful to her elders- qualities our culture values in females (Hollindale, 1988).

Another area addressed by authors and illustrators was the importance of following rules. These stories, while cautionary in nature, are highly appealing in their tales of adventure. Rey's (1952) Curious George rides a bike provides a humorous warning of what happens when monkeys don't obey their owners. Again, the implied message is that George, who is a boy monkey, has lots of fun and being "naughty" always turns out okay in the end. The man with the yellow hat who "rescued" George from the jungle is shown as a wise, father figure, not someone who took an animal from its natural habitat.

Beatrix Potter's The tale of Peter Rabbit illustrated by Hague (2001) depicts the bad events that can occur when rules are broken. Peter disobeys his mother and runs into trouble in Mr. McGregor's garden. However, the book also portrays Peter as a likeable, daring rabbit having fun when he takes control and makes decisions, even though he suffers a stomachache and must drink chamomile tea for his transgressions. While the book sends a conscious message that it is important to obey one's parents, it also sends an unwritten message that disobedience is adventuresome. Further, Peter is a boy, while his sisters, the "good" rabbits, are girls; this reveals the traditional gender roles of the author's time and perpetuates the gender stereotype of how males and females behave. Mr. McGregor, an older White farmer (in stereotypical garb), is presented (from the perspective of Peter and the mother) as a rather incompetent, rabbit-hating killer, not a frustrated farmer protecting his garden.

Sendak's classic (1963) Where the Wild Things are is the story of a young white boy who "runs away" to an island after being sent to his room for misbehavior and being rude. Sendak's character Max misbehaves and has great adventures when he is "punished;" he eventually returns home to a loving family after being made king of the

wild things. Our culture accepts the “child-rearing practice of sending a child to his room. . . . Readers from a foreign culture, without such a norm, might find the book puzzling or even repugnant” (Mikkelsen, 2000, p. 180). Max, with all his feistiness, reflects the male gender and cultural stereotype of the times, and perpetuates the contemporary one. Granted, books often represent the author or illustrator, which is true in this case. Sendak was a self-described difficult child whose experiences and love for music influenced his books (Sendak, 1988). Wood and Wood’s (1992) Heckedy Peg is the fairytale-like fantasy of children tricked into disobeying their mother’s orders; they must be rescued from an evil old witch before they are eaten. In this story, the mother (who is young and beautiful) outsmarts the ugly witch (who is old and decrepit). The intended messages are that a mother knows her children (and will risk all to save them) and that it is important for children to obey. The inadvertent message may be that youth and beauty represent good and old and ugly represent evil. The books with moral messages on the read-aloud logs were either folktales or didactic stories with little plot.

### **Science or social studies**

The second largest category dealt with science or social studies topics, including issues about protecting the environment. A total of 116 books, or 27% dealt with these concepts. This number was high compared to what other studies have found, but can be explained by the fact that the kindergarten teachers in this district taught using science and social studies thematic units (because the heavy emphasis on reading and mathematics took up a great portion of their instructional day). Exposure to informational books (which are often written in a non-narrative format) gives emergent readers experience with the properties of different types of texts (Pappas, 1991). An example of a science-related book is Gibbon’s (1993) Frogs, with facts and drawings of

frogs and their habitat. Spencer and Eagle's (1993) A flag for our country is a picture book filled with information about the history of the American flag. Even in information books, race and ethnicity were issues. For example, the illustrations in the Spencer and Eagle's book depict White characters. Most of the books were not award-winning books. In fact, just five of the 116 books, or a little more than 4%, won awards for content or illustrations.

### **Growing up**

The next largest category dealt with growing up, including losing teeth, going to school or camp for the first time, or learning to swim. Although related to some degree to the character development and relationship category, this category included being afforded responsibilities that come with maturity, such as getting a new pet. Forty-seven books, or nearly 11% related to these kinds of issues. London and Remkiewicz's (1995) Froggy learns to swim, is the story of a middle-class young male frog. The book comes from a series popular with the teachers in this study, who reported that their students liked the humor and the silliness. For example, the frogs eat flies in a bowl for breakfast (like cereal). Froggy represents a stereotypical mischievous male, and has a traditional, middle-class home with a father and mother. Bate and DeGroat's (1975) Little Rabbit's loose tooth deals with a girl rabbit losing her first tooth and includes the cultural tradition of leaving a tooth under one's pillow for the "tooth fairy" to exchange for money. In this story, the illustrations depict a rabbit mother, father, and child, all softly colored in shades of white.

### **Poems and songs**

Eight percent of the books read aloud were poems, songs, and rhymes, often read aloud for phonemic awareness and other emergent reading skills (Galda, 2001; Goodman,

1996). I separated them from the science and social studies books, because although they were selected with an overall unit, they typically had no factual information. One example is Bernal's (1993) The ants go marching; one of two versions read or sung by teachers in this study. The book was read aloud during a study of insects. An exception was Raffi and Westcott's (1987) book Down by the bay (a traditional folk song illustrated with humorous pictures) that did not appear to be connected to a theme.

### **Alphabet books**

Twenty-three books, or 5% of the books read aloud, were in the alphabet book category. These books included those books that were specifically for learning letters or sounds. Alphabet books are both informational and effective for teaching emergent literacy skills, and enjoyable to read aloud (Stahl, 2003; Stewig, 1984). Lear's (1928) The nonsense ABC and Sabuda's (1988) ABC Disney were included in this list. Many of the illustrations were colorful, as in Carter's (1995) Alphabugs, a pop-up book with fantastical "bugs."

### **Math concepts**

Over 4% of the books read aloud dealt with math concepts such as counting, sequencing, addition, shapes, and time. Math related books are popular with early childhood teachers because they invite participation and incorporate other content areas into the read-aloud experience (Schoenfield, 1982). These books were usually included in the unit study, although Charles' (1975) Calico Cat looks at shapes was read to review shapes, according to the teacher. Two books, Anno's (1977) Anno's counting book and Maestro's Around the clock with Harriet, were part of the math series collection and were read for the math program, which did not overlap the unit study. Gerth's (2000) Ten little ladybugs (a cut-out book with holes in which plastic ladybugs fit) was read during an

insect unit. Grossman and Long's (1991) Ten little rabbits was read aloud by the teacher because, "rabbits symbolize spring." Ten little rabbits (as mentioned in Chapter Two) has been criticized for its stereotypical portrayal of Native American Indians because the rabbits have feathers, headbands, and woven blankets (Noll, 1995).

As in other categories, most of the 19 books read aloud were non-award-winning books. Just one, Anno's (1977) Anno's counting book, won an award for its illustrations.

### **Holidays**

Holiday books dealt with cultural information about commonly celebrated holidays. Sixteen books, or nearly 4%, fit this description. Most's (1992) Happy holidaysaurus was included in a dinosaur unit because the holidays were illustrated with dinosaurs. Wing and Couri's (1999) The night before Easter, is a rhyming storybook showing variously shaded people preparing for Easter morning. Three teachers read aloud award-winning author and illustrator Patricia Polacco's (1988) Rechenka's eggs (with its depiction of the Ukrainian folk art of egg decorating), providing their kindergarten students with an authentic look at custom and heritage.

### **Self-esteem**

Ten books, or a little more than 2% featured self-esteem as a primary theme, sometimes imbedded in a study of another topic. Munsch and Martchenko's (1996) Stephanie's ponytail is a humorous depiction of a White girl who wants to be different, while being continuously imitated by everyone at school. The book presents a White, middle-class family and shows Stephanie's mom brushing Stephanie's hair in a comfortable kitchen. The protagonist is not the traditional female, following rules and wanting others to like her (Crabb & Bielawski, 1994). Although the story revolves around her hair (a common gender stereotype) the stereotype is countered. Unlike many



females in books, Stephanie is outspoken and a nonconformist who outwits her fellow students (and the adults) at the school.

### **Going to sleep**

Stories about going to sleep made up nearly 2% of the total number of books read aloud. These books specifically dealt with the coming of nightfall and going to sleep and contained restful illustrations. One teacher included Lindberg and Jeffer's (1987) The midnight farm in a study of farms. In this story, a White mother takes her young son out to the barn to see the animals settling to sleep before putting him to bed. Berger's (1984) Grandfather Twilight depicts an elderly White male as "Grandfather Twilight," closing down the day. Like many elderly males in children's books, he is presented as a warm, gentle, grandparent-type (Dellmann-Jenkins & Yang, 1992; Janelli, 1988).

There were no books on the read-aloud logs with content that might be considered substantial or perhaps controversial, such as issues of death, homelessness, different kinds of families, race relations, discrimination, or disabilities (Igoa, 1995; Teale, 2003,).

### **Characters in the books and the children in the classrooms**

Because of the nature of my study, I was unable to determine the cultures of each of the children in the classrooms where the books were read aloud. However, I did have access to the demographics of the students. In the six focus classrooms, I had detailed information about their family situations and their backgrounds. I compared the demographics of the students with the characters in the books, to see what kind of match there appeared to be between the children and the characters (particularly the protagonists) in the stories read aloud. Research has suggested that students may be more engaged with books to which they can connect in some way (Herrera, 2000; May, 1995; Short & Fox, 2003). To set the stage, I first include a table summarizing the various

types of characters in the books and discuss the categories. I then include a table with the gender, ethnicity, and race of the students in the classrooms of the teachers who read aloud the books. Finally, I discuss how well the books appeared to “match” the students with regard to gender, ethnicity, and race.

Characters are the “actors” in a book that enable the reader to better understand or enjoy the story (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 29). Characters are typically found in narrative books. For the purpose of this study, I divided the books into categories by characters, created after reviewing the book logs. Some categories were to assist in evaluating books with characters that are often depicted in a stereotypical manner as well as to track the kinds of diversity to which the students in these classrooms were exposed.

First, I established a category for books in which the animals acted like people, both through anthropomorphization (where animals represent humans) and personification (involving animals with human-like characteristics and traits) (Cullinan, 1989). In these stories, animals are literary symbols representing “human counterparts” and “exploring human emotions, values, and relationships” (Russell, 2001, p. 193). Within this category, I address the gender and cultural issues that seemed to arise. I then created categories for White, non-Hispanic boy and girl (human) protagonists. I eventually elected to put all minorities together because there were so few minority main characters in the list. Next, since some books had both White and non-White characters sharing equal billing, I built a category for any books that featured a minority as one of the main characters alongside a White character. Many of the students in the study (particularly in the focus classrooms) had grandparents, often as primary caretakers. As a result, I created a category for books that contained elderly characters and examined how

they were depicted. Because the books were read aloud by teachers, I studied the books that contained teachers as characters.

When I began looking at the characters, my intent was to build a category for characters with diverse or marginalized lifestyles or characters with disabilities, but I found none in any of the 428 books that were read aloud. I did note that a few books contained characters with glasses, which (although not technically a disability) could be an issue that arises in a classroom, particularly if children are teased (McGraw et al. 1989).

Finally, because many of the children in the six focus classrooms had brothers and sisters (and research has shown that children notice how siblings relate in children's literature), I included a section for siblings (Kramer & Radey, 1997).

Table 22. Types of characters in the books read aloud

Type of characters	Number of characters	Percentage of books out of 428 total
Animals as people	148	35%
White Male Protagonists	55	13%
White Female Protagonists	34	8%
Non-White Protagonists (male and female)	14	3%
Both White and Non-White Protagonists	7	2%
Elderly	10	2%
Teachers	10	2%
Siblings	10	2%

### **Animal as people**

According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1999), in many works of children's literature, animals are depicted as having the ability to talk and behave as humans. Anthropomorphism is the practice of "attributing human traits to plants or animals" (Cullinan, 1989, p.529). Although a common device, it has been criticized by animal rights activists who argue that animals should portray animals, not humans (Darrigan et al. 2002). Other critics have noted that rather than being neutral, animal characters that portray humans often have identifiable race, gender, cultural, and social class characteristics (Kuznets, 1994; Mikkelsen, 2000). Animals replaced humans in 148, or nearly 35% of the books read aloud. The books containing animal characters representing humans in various situations were typically set in a mainstream culture. For example, many of the characters were presented in a middle-class, traditional household, with two parents and one or two siblings. Bourgeois and Clark's book Franklin and the Tooth Fairy deals with a little boy turtle and his concerns about losing a tooth and is in a middle-class setting.

As in other books mentioned, messages about character and values permeated the stories. In Kirk's (2000) Little Miss Spider at Sunny Patch School, the main character brings an apple to her teacher and learns that being kind is an important virtue.

In many cases, animals portraying humans and humans themselves are depicted in books, requiring a more sophisticated reader who understands how the fantasy genre functions (Stewig, 1987). Gelman and Gurney's (1979) Hello, Cat: You need a hat is an example of this concept. The story is about a talking mouse trying to give a fancy hat to a cat. The book (which describes various types of head coverings) shows hats on a variety of animals and "real" people. Although teachers sometimes assume that books

with animal characters avoid the issues of stereotypes, in many instances cultural, sexual, and class stereotypes are perpetuated, particularly in books published decades ago (Stewig, 1987). In Gelman's book, a Halloween scene shows witches and ghosts trick-or-treating (and includes the line, "firemen hats are best of all,") perpetuating the stereotype that firefighters are male. Another illustration shows a male groom holding a female bride as he steps over a threshold; other drawings show males and females in traditional occupations (Kolbe & LaVoi, 1981). The teacher who read the book stated that she did so to help her students master rhyming and because they enjoyed the rhythm and "silly" illustrations; she did not notice any potential issues with the text and the illustrations.

### **White main characters**

Content analyses have shown that most human characters in picture books are White (Darigan et al. 2002). Since most of the children in the focus schools were of color, I examined the books for race and ethnicity. Eighty-nine or nearly 21% of the 428 books from the logs contained White protagonists, a finding consistent with other studies (Fondrie, 2001; Lempke, 1999; Ramsey, 1995; Sims, 1983). Fifty-five White main characters were male, about 62%, similar to other studies of gender in children's books (Ernst, 1995; Lempke, 1999; Poarch & Monk-Turner, 2001; Engle, 1981). In contrast, White female main characters were present in nearly 10% of the 428 books read aloud. White males were often the main characters in seemingly neutral informational or non-fiction books. For example, in Pfeffer and Keller's (1996) What's it like to be a fish?, the main character is a White boy. Books with human characters typically portrayed White children with simplified features, all in middle-class (though sometimes fantastical) settings. Hey, little ant, by Hoose and Tilley (1998) contains a dialogue between a

young, White boy and a talking ant in a middle-class neighborhood. Numeroff and Bond's (1991) If you give a moose a muffin is a story of a young, White boy and a moose, set in a middle-class home.

Many of the male and female characters are drawn with vague features, but their hair and eye shapes clearly delineate them as being White. Heiligman and Weissman's (1996) informational book From caterpillar to butterfly depicts a White female protagonist drawn with simple lines. Park's Junie B. Jones books show a White female main character, also drawn with simple features. A third, Joy Cowley's Mrs. Wishy Washy (one of the most frequently read books) contains an overweight woman with fuzzy slippers, and simple lines representing her mouth, eyes, and nose. Generic features were not always the case, however. McGee and Banfill's (1994) Forest child, the Woods' (1992) Heckedy Peg and (1984) The napping house contain White characters with softly detailed features. Similarly, Polacco's (1990) Thunder Cake shows White characters with realistic features. Tabak's (1999) Joseph had a little overcoat features photographs of his family members in the collages.

### **Non-White protagonists**

Fourteen books, or about 3% of the 428 of books read aloud, featured non-White main characters. Eight books featured male protagonists, while six featured females, showing a slight unevenness in gender depiction (Hall, 1994; Harris, 1999).

Like the White main characters, the non-White characters were frequently depicted with simple features and sometimes appeared to be of nebulous race. Often they were "culturally generic . . . containing people of color, but no culturally specific details" (Darigan et al. 2002, p. 302). For example, in Calemenson and Roche's (1998) The teeny tiny teacher, the female teacher has tan skin and white hair. Carle's (1987) The tiny seed

shows a dark skinned boy giving a flower to a White girl. Again, the features are just suggested and only the shading suggests race. Similarly, Kalan and Barton's (1981) Jump, frog, jump shows tan-skinned boys looking at frogs in a pond. Bunting and Hewitt's (1996) The sunflower house depicts a family with shaded skin color, who appear to be a race other than White, although the features make it difficult to tell what race or ethnicity. Eisenberg's (1992) You're my Nikki is a story about a young African-American girl's adjustment to her mother's new job. In each of these books, the characters could have been replaced with any number of races or ethnicities, without affecting the stories. Two books were "culturally specific" books with details that defined characters and their cultures (Darigan et al. 2002, p.305). Blood's (1976) The goat in the rug is the story of a Navaho woman and the traditional weaving of rugs. Cohen's (1988) The mud pony is the coming-of-age story of a young Pawnee plains tribesman. Both books were researched in-depth and created with sensitive and accurate details. Although accurate, these books depict the past; young Native American Indians do not see themselves in these stories (Reese, 1996).

### **Non-White protagonists with detailed features**

Because I focused on six classrooms where the majority of children were African-American, I studied the books to see if any depicted African-American or non-White main characters with realistic features. I found 10 books, or a little more than 2% of the 428 books read aloud, had non-White protagonists with detailed facial features. White author Pringle and white illustrator Palmer's (1993) Octopus hug depicts a Black father and his children engaged in horseplay while the mother is out. Many of the children in the focus classrooms did not have fathers living at home, but many of them did have a father figure or male in their lives and the family in the story was non-White. Jordan,

Jordan, and Nelson's (2000) Salt in his shoes presents an intact family and a young Black male protagonist in a story of basketball star Michael Jordan. Five books, or about 1% of the total number of books read aloud, showed African-American female protagonists with realistic features. Allen and Kadir's (2000) Dancing in the wings and White author San Souci and African-American illustrator Pinkney's (1989) The talking eggs contain medium to dark-skinned female protagonists all with detailed (though somewhat exaggerated) features. Kroll and Cooper's (1998) Faraway drums is the story of two sisters who wait anxiously for their mother to arrive home. White author Eisenberg and White illustrator Kastner's (1986) You're my Nikki presents a female main character worrying that she will be forgotten when her mother starts a new job. Grimes' (1993) Cinderella retells the traditional story with a Black main character.

### **Minority characters sharing equal billing with White characters**

In seven of the books (making up nearly 2% of the 428 books read aloud) minority or non-White characters were featured alongside white main characters, receiving equal billing. Yolen and Teague's (2000) How do dinosaurs say goodnight? contains ethnically diverse families dealing with their children's bedtimes. The children are shown as colorful dinosaurs (arguing and grumbling) as they learn how to follow routine without disagreement. In some illustrations both parents are depicted, in others a mother or a father is depicted (although clearly presented in middle-class settings) with good-sized bedrooms in comfortable homes. Again relevant is that the teacher read the book during a study of dinosaurs, yet it has nothing to do with dinosaurs.

Another book featuring various ethnicities is Shannon's (2000) The rain came down. Known for his humorous illustrations, Shannon tells the story of a group of working-class people dealing with the approaching rainstorm on a city street. Despite the



recent publication date, Shannon refers to a male police officer as a “policeman” in the text (rather than a “police officer”), and presents many of the characters stereotypically. For example, the owner of the beauty parlor is a gaudily dressed, loud, White female with teased hair and long, painted fingernails. The grocer is an Asian male and the pizza guy is an olive skinned male, apparently representing an Italian. The barber is a Black male; the truck driver is a White male (with a flannel shirt); and the cab driver and house painter are both White males. The characters appear stereotypical in nature and might lead to misperceptions or generalizations (Barnes, 1991; Iwamoto, 1996). The lady in the cab is clearly a wealthy woman upset about being caught in the elements and stranded among the working-class. As the rain comes down and “equalizes” the group with water, she becomes friendlier and elects to stay awhile.

Table 23. Race of students in 18 classrooms and protagonists in 110 books

Race	Students	Human Protagonists
Number White	162	89
Percent White	43%	81%
Number Non-White	213	14
Percent Non-White	57%	13%
Number White & Non-White	375 (Total number of students)	7
Percentage White & Non-White	100%	6%

A total of 375 students were in the classrooms where the teachers kept read-aloud logs. Of those, 162, or 43%, were White and 213, or 57%, were non-White. However, 89 books (or 81% of 110 books with human characters) featured White protagonists. When included with the other books featuring animals as people or other kinds of characters, White humans were protagonists in 21% of the 428 books. Only 14 books, or

13% of the 110 books with human characters, featured non-White protagonists. Non-White protagonists were in 3% of the total of 428 books read aloud. Seven of the books, or about 6% of the 110 books, featured both White and non-White main characters. As part of the total number of books read aloud, White and non-White protagonists were depicted in just 1% of the total of 428 books on the read-aloud logs. According to their logs, the teachers read a significantly smaller number of books featuring non-White protagonists. Although the majority of children's books published do feature White protagonists (when the characters are human) these numbers suggest that the children in these classrooms did not see themselves in the books read aloud and as a result may not have been as engaged in the stories (Cai, 2003; Harris, 2003; Liaw, 1995).

### **Elderly characters**

Ten books, or about 2% of the 428 books read aloud, contained elderly characters. In six of the books, the elderly characters were portrayed as caring and friendly, similar to findings of other children's literature research (Dellmann-Jenkins & Yang, 1992). The most unflattering elderly characters were the ones in traditional literature or the fantasy genre. Scary, White female witches cause trouble in Woods' (1992) Heckedy Peg, and in Scieszka and Johnson's (1991) The Frog Prince cont'd. San Souci and Pinkney's (1989) The talking eggs has a very wrinkled and kindly (but still frightening looking) Black witch. Another negative depiction of an elderly female is Bonn and Graboff's (1961) retelling of the folksong, I know an old lady. The "old lady" is large, wrinkled, and eats everything in sight. Gentler-looking older characters are in Polacco's (1990) Thunder Cake and Williams and Cooper's (1991) When Africa was home. Both books depict White and Black grandmotherly-types.

Elderly males were featured four times, in a seemingly more flattering light than the females. Berger's (1984) Grandfather Twilight and Steig's (1977) Caleb and Kate show men who are strong and caring, similar to other research done on the portrayal of older men in books (Dellmann-Jenkins & Yang, 1992).

### **Teachers in books**

The books were read aloud by teachers in school settings, therefore I studied how teachers were portrayed in the literature. Female teachers far outnumber male teachers (while males are more often administrators), which may lead girls and boys to believe that all teachers are women and all administrators are men (Gutmann, 1987; Tognoli et al. 1994; Tuner-Bowker, 1998; Weitzman et al. 1971). Ten books featured teachers; all were female and nine were White. One teacher was a tan shade, but could not be identified as being of any particular ethnicity. In three of the books, White male principals were depicted in the illustrations. The depictions of the teachers were fairly maternal and stereotypical with the exception of Munsch's humorous (1996) Stephanie's ponytail, in which the teacher copies the young female protagonist (to the point of shaving her own head). Cole's Ms. Frizzle of The Magic School Bus series is a slightly ditzy teacher, but she is highly knowledgeable and adventurous. She gets her students back to safety after putting them in apparent danger for the sake of learning.

### **Siblings in books**

According to the teachers, many of the children in the focus group classrooms had siblings; therefore, I studied the books to see how siblings were portrayed. Research has shown that children often model the behavior that they see exhibited in books and positive examples can elicit positive behavior (Bandura, 1977; Merenda & White-Williams, 2001). Seven books, or about 6% of the 110 books with human characters (or

fewer than 2 % of the 428 books read aloud) dealt with sibling issues or featured siblings in close proximity to the main character. Jordan's (2000) Salt in his shoes shows Michael Jordan's big brothers playing basketball with him even though he is not as good as they. His sisters are depicted in the background (at the dinner table for instance) but do not play a major part in the story. The story is a biographical account of Michael Jordan, and shows his relationships with his brothers and parents as close and caring ones. Kroll and Cooper's (1998) Faraway drums depicts an African-American girl comforting her younger sister by imagining about their ancestors as a frightening banging goes on outside the apartment. San Souci and Pinkney's (1989) The talking eggs shows an African-American girl dealing with a cruel sister. Bang's (1999) When Sophie gets angry is the story of a White girl who deals with her anger at her family (including her sister) in a positive manner. Dale's (1997) Big brother, little brother shares the loving relationship between two White brothers. Woods' (1992) Heckedy Peg depicts brothers and sisters cleaning house while the mother is out. Rather stereotypically, the boys in the illustrations are rambunctious (fighting with sticks atop pillars), while the sisters cover their heads and laugh. The napping house, a fantasy rhyming book by the Woods (1984), presents a White family sleeping in layers on each other in a humorous, sequential tale.

## Gender

Table 24. Gender of human protagonists in books read aloud

Gender	Males	Females	Both	Total
Number of books	62	40	8	110
Percentage of books	56%	37%	7%	100%

Books balanced between male and female characters help children both see themselves in books and empathize with the opposite sex (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson,

1999, p. 38; Miller, 2001). Moreover, children's books define gender roles and expected behaviors, though they often perpetuate stereotypes (Fox, 1993; Kolbe & LaVoie, 1981; Lash, 1979; Nodelman, 2001; Thomas, 1992). Males were main characters in 62, or 56% of the 110 books with human characters. Females were main characters in 40, or 37%. Both male and females were protagonists in eight, or 7% of the books. Despite the increase of gay and lesbian issues in the media, none of the books portrayed gay, lesbian, or transgendered characters (Harris, 2003).

Among the books with female characters, most females behaved in expected ways, such as tending to others or being kind (Lehr, 1995; Mowder, 1992). Auch's (1992) The Easter egg farm is the story of a White female who tends her family of chickens. She lives alone and supports herself, but has a job that is nurturing in nature. She is quietly assertive. Other female characters displayed similar traits or interests that would be labeled as feminine. Little Miss Spider cannot climb (or fly or spin well), but she has a kind heart, which (according to the male bug principal) is the "finest gift of all" (Kirk, 2000, p. 32). She is not athletic, but nice (which is more important) and a message artist Kirk intentionally sends. Allen's (2000) Dancing in the wings tells the story of a young African-American female dancer. Examining the book, it was clear that Allen knows dance, as evidenced by her use of the vocabulary and description of the rivalries among dancers. However, one might question the use of so much "trendy" dialogue (such as "talk to the hand" and "see ya', wouldn't want to be ya'), since this type of jargon might cause the book to have a "short shelf life" when more current colloquialisms come into vogue. Assertive females were present in other books as well. For example, in Stephanie's ponytail, (Munsch, 1996), Stephanie is determined to be her own unique

person, doing battle by changing her hairstyle. Certainly girls concerned with their hair could be considered a gender stereotype. In a few cases, such as the Junie B. Jones (Park, 1995) character, the girl is rambunctious and adventuresome, but still wants to be “good” and liked by her mother and her teacher, desires associated with being feminine (Hollindale, 1988; Lehr, 1995). In contrast, the boy characters are decisive and often have great adventures without worrying about rules or acceptable behavior. Kirk’s (2000) Moondogs contains a White boy heading into space to find a dog. Mayer’s White male main character in There’s a Nightmare in my closet (1976) uses his popgun to bring down a scary monster from his closet. In Martin’s (1986) Barn dance!, a young White boy sneaks out of the house to dance the night away with the scarecrows and livestock. Hoose’s (1998) Hey, little ant! is the story of a White male who decides whether or not to let an ant live. In Brown’s (1982) Arthur goes to camp, the counselors treat the boys and girls in stereotypical fashion; the boys’ counselor creates a “boot-camp-like” atmosphere while the girls’ counselor is smiling and promising a “wonderful summer.”

When comparing the number of boys and girls in the classrooms to the number of books with male and female protagonists, the teachers read more books with male protagonists despite the fact that their classes were fairly evenly divided. This suggests that perhaps the girls might not have seen themselves as main characters as often as the boys. Further, both boys and girls were presented with primarily stereotypical versions of themselves in the books read aloud by their teachers.

### Social class

Table 25. Summary of social class in 428 books read aloud

Books depicting Middle-Class	Books depicting Upper-class or Wealthy	Books depicting Lower-class or Poverty	Books depicting no obvious social class
260	7	10	151
61%	2%	2%	35%

Children's literature not only provides direction on gender roles, it also provides information on how society functions and what is "normal" and accepted (Crabb & Bielawski, 1994; Rodman, 1994). The teachers who kept the book logs were all middle-class; their students were a combination of social classes, primarily middle and lower or working-class. Research has shown that teachers sometimes practice "selective tradition" when selecting books to read aloud, a term which means choosing books that reflect their personal culture, rather than their students' (Jipson & Paley, 1991; Many et al. 1998; Sleeter, 1992). I studied the books for evidence of social class and compared the results to the apparent social class of the children in the classrooms, particularly in the 6 focus classrooms.

I found that 260 books, or 61% of the total number of books contained middle-class images. Some images were in books with animals as humans. For example, Brown's (1982) Arthur goes to camp shows Arthur's comfortable bedroom in a home that he shares with his mother, father, and sister. Even the storyline is middle-class; a boy goes to summer camp. Maccarone's (1992) Itchy, itchy chicken pox is a rhyming story of a young White boy who stays home with chicken pox. His mother feeds him soup, bathes him, and tucks him into bed, while his father and dog are nearby. Rathman's (1994) Goodnight, Gorilla is the story of a gorilla that follows his zookeeper (a White male) home, and hops into bed with the zookeeper and his wife. Van Allsburg's (1988) Two

bad ants is a tale of two ants' foray into a White male's middle-class kitchen. Brett's (1996) Comet's nine lives, the story of a cat who goes through his "nine lives," is set in a beautiful seaside village. Freeman's (1978) A pocket for Corduroy shows a working-class or middle-class home with a "tan" mother sewing a pocket on her daughter's stuffed bear. Still another, Yolen's (2000) How do dinosaurs say goodnight? features children "dinosaurs" in snug beds surrounded by nice furniture and toys. Wiesner's (1991) Tuesday follows frogs' adventures in a town with neatly manicured lawns and well-equipped homes. Finally, Pringle's (1993) Octopus hug and Jordan's (2000) Salt in his shoes portray two African-American intact families living in comfortable houses in the suburbs.

Seven books, or fewer than 2%, presented an upper-class or wealthy image. Duncan Edwards (1997) Dinorella is the fantasy Cinderella story with dinosaurs as main characters. Dinorella lives in a castle surrounded by wealth. Three more versions of Cinderella contain more mansions and fancy balls. Scieszka's (1991) The Frog Prince cont'd. shows the prince and princess in a mansion. DePaola's (1978) Bill and Pete follows the adventures of two friends as they travel to Egypt in a story full of British upper-class references, including a butler and mansions. Mahy's (1987) 17 kings and 42 elephants portrays a royal lifestyle. All the books were either traditional or fantasy books, or set in a period of time long ago. There are no contemporary books on this list with obviously upper-class story characters.

Ten books, or about 2%, appeared to depict poverty in some manner, whether through illustrations or the mention of hunger or discomfort. For example, Slobodkina's (1940) Caps for sale depicts a hungry White male who stops for a nap after failing to sell



his wares. The four Cinderella tales featured some evidence of poverty amidst the wealth of the kingdom. Kellogg's (1991) Jack and the beanstalk depicts a poor boy and his mother. Aylesworth and Gammell's (1992) Old black fly is a rhyming alphabet book with pictures of a happy, but raggedly-dressed family dealing with a fly on the loose. Williams (1991)'s When Africa was home shows the culturally different surroundings and an implied poverty of a country in Africa combined with a child's comfortable lifestyle (Lamme, 2000). The illustrations show the culturally different surroundings of a White boy living in a comfortable house with his parents in Africa. The family has a plenty of food, a car and an African woman nanny for the child. The boy moves to a nicely furnished American city apartment before returning to Africa and his friends. Again, the lower-class portrayals are from fantasy and traditional literature, with the exception of one book set primarily in Africa.

Although I was unable to determine the exact social class or free and reduced-priced lunch status of the children in the classrooms of the teachers who participated in this study, nearly 23% of the county's population lived in poverty and the schools represented in the study had at least a 30% free and reduced-price lunch population. Seven schools had more than a free and reduced-price lunch population of more than 50%. The two focus schools had an 85% and a 94% free and reduced-price lunch population, respectively. These statistics suggest that many of the kindergarten students might have had experiences different from the ones they saw portrayed in the children's literature read aloud by the teachers.

### **Summary**

The books logs of the eighteen teachers were remarkably similar in many ways, despite the fact that the teachers taught in schools that varied vastly in terms of race,

ethnicity, and social class. The teachers read books that were connected to a recognizable social studies or science unit (such as oceans, plants, and space), and books connected to a seasonal event or holiday (such as Spring or Easter), a finding that differed from the Hoffman et al. (1993) study (which noted that few books related to the unit being studied were read aloud), but which was similar to findings from Jipson and Paley's (1991) study (that noted that most teachers choose a book because of unit content or a skill). The teachers also read aloud books with rhymes and songs that were both enjoyable and would supplement a reading program.

Children exposed to a wide variety of genres develop more fully as readers, as they explore the types of genre they prefer. More than half of the books read aloud were fantasy genre, all narrative in nature, which fosters enjoyment and develops children's concepts of story while increasing their knowledge, vocabulary, and imagination (Applebee, 1978; Nodelman, 1996; Wells, 1986). Very few books from the realistic fiction, biography, or traditional literature genres were read aloud, suggesting that the children in the classrooms were not exposed to a balanced variety of genres. Just three international books were read and no historical fiction picture books were read aloud.

Kindergarten children, as emergent readers, rely on their teachers for access to a variety of genres as they develop personal preferences, learn new information, critical-thinking skills, and form strategies for becoming good readers (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Lehr, 1988; Pappas, 1991; Shine & Roser, 1999). Multicultural literature allows children to see themselves and others as they develop their attitudes and perceptions (Darigan et al. 2002). Most multicultural literature involves stories about the past or the current culture and typically fall within such genres as traditional literature, realistic fiction, or

international literature (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). Since more than 50% of the books fell within the modern animal fantasy genre, the children experienced little if any multicultural literature.

Awards are a way of identifying quality children's books and specific awards highlight excellent multicultural books. Few books read aloud had won accolades for their quality and only one book received an award for its portrayal of culturally diverse characters. This finding, along with the questionnaire results, suggests that the teachers in this study, though they knew how to find award-winning books in their media centers, were not concerned with whether the books they read aloud had won awards, and that a prize was not a factor in their decision to read aloud.

While it is true that books by minority authors are fewer in number than those by mainstream authors, teachers who seek a cultural match between their students and the curriculum often seek out books by minority authors (Asch, 2000; Au, 1998; Cianciolo, 1995). The teachers in my study did not follow that pattern. The small percentage of minority authors and illustrators included in the read-aloud logs suggests that the children in the classrooms in this study were not exposed to a diverse group of authors and illustrators, which may have limited the ideas transmitted and devalued other cultures outside the mainstream (Hinchey, 1998). Ethnic identification is often fluid in young children, yet research indicates that children need to see themselves in books in order to connect or become fully engaged (Aboud, 1987; Fondrie, 2001; Igoa, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Langer, 1995; Lempke, 1999; Rosenblatt, 1994). Many of the children in these classrooms were minority children who did not see themselves in either the authors, the illustrators, or the books that the teachers selected to read aloud.

Gender preference in the read-aloud books was evident in that the majority of books with humans featured White male main characters. The fewer number of female main characters suggests that the females in the classrooms might not see themselves as often as males in books read aloud. Stereotypes were prevalent in many of the books. The “witches” and teachers were female; the principals were male. Most of the girl characters were well behaved and followed the rules. In the several of the books, the girls who didn’t follow the rules still rebelled with perceived feminine behaviors, including changing a hairstyle to be unique. The boys, for the most part, were able to behave with more abandon. They could run away without repercussion and become a ruler on an island inhabited by monsters. They could have a pet dinosaur, or sneak out to dance at midnight. Hollindale (1988) suggested that the prevalence of male characters and apparent lack of strong female characters might be due to our society’s unconscious acceptance of a “patriarchal culture.” He posits that “unconscious ideologies” play a powerful role in “reinforcing status quo values” (Hollindale, 1988, p. 13). Further, the images that both the boys and girls see perpetuates the notion of how girls and boys are “supposed” to behave (Ernst, 1995). The books selected by the teachers in my study fell into these ideologies.

Most of the books represented a middle-class perspective, which was expected since most authors of children’s books come from a middle-class, mainstream culture, and the vast majority of children’s books contain middle-class orientations (Nodelman, 2000; Darigan et al. 2002). Many of the students came from a lower social class background, particularly in the two focus schools; this suggests that these children might

have had difficulty relating and connecting to the books that were read aloud (Fondrie, 2001; Langer, 1995).

Though few award winners were present on the logs, there were illustrators considered to be fine artists. On the questionnaire, the teachers had stated that illustrations were important to the read-aloud selections, and this appeared to be reflected in some of their choices as they read aloud books featuring well-known children book illustrators including Anno; Byron Barton; Eric Carle; Lois Ehlert; Leo Lionni; Maurice Sendak; Kadir Nelson; Jerry Pinkney; Peter Sis; and Chris Van Allsburg.

In summary, while these teachers read aloud to their students rather often, their book selections were limited to:

- older books they had collected
- fantasy stories often with animal characters
- books to support content area instruction
- books to reinforce emergent reading skills
- books with mainstream cultures
- books that did not match their students' cultures
- books with stereotypical gender depictions
- simple books that required no critical thought

Teachers who seek social justice cannot rely on the books that are readily available.

They need knowledge of children's literature to diversify their books selections, particularly since there are far fewer books available with minority cultures and social class issues (Short & Fox, 2003).

## CHAPTER 6

### WHAT AND WHY KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS READ ALOUD: FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

#### **Introduction**

Although the student populations were vastly different in the schools on the west and east side of the district, the books and questionnaire responses were remarkably similar. Statistics have shown a wide achievement gap in reading scores between different ethnic groups, particularly between White students and their non-White counterparts. In the year 2000, 40% of white fourth graders scored at or above proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment. In contrast, only 12% of the African-Americans fourth graders scored at or above proficient. Sixteen percent of Hispanic or Latino fourth graders and 17% of Native American Indian fourth graders scored at or above the proficient reading level (National Report Card, 2004). With this stark difference in mind, I felt it important to examine more closely the schools with a higher population of minority students. I elected to focus on two of the lowest socioeconomic schools in the county, choosing them because all the kindergarten teachers agreed to participate, giving me richer and more complete data. I described the schools, the teachers, their classrooms, schedules, students, and the read-aloud observations in great detail to provide a comprehensive portrait.

Jackson Elementary had a free and reduced-price lunch population of 94% and a 94% minority student population, primarily African-American. Sunshine Elementary had a free and reduced-price lunch population of 84% and an 85% population of minority

students, also primarily African-American. Both schools were struggling with the reading curriculum to raise their students' scores on standardized tests. Each school had three kindergarten classes. All the teachers were female; four were White and two were African-American. Interviews with these teachers provided a better picture of the kind of reading-aloud programs that existed in the struggling schools as well as a more in-depth look at the students and the cultural match of the read-alouds. Before discussing the teachers, it was helpful to set the stage by providing a description of the schools I elected to focus on in this study.

### **Descriptions of Setting and Participants**

#### **Schools**

The two schools in this study, Jackson Elementary and Sunshine Elementary, were located on the east side within the city limits of a medium-sized southern town. The city had clearly delineated west and east sides, with the west side home to rapid growth and development (including entertainment and shopping areas) and numerous new subdivisions geared toward middle to upper-income residents. The town's movie theaters and mall were all on this side of town, in addition to multiple chain restaurants. The public library's headquarters branch was located on a street that divided east from west and other branches were located on the west side or more than 15 miles away in three neighboring small towns.

In sharp contrast to the west side, the east side of town was home to mostly industrial parks and car lots. Two grocery stores, a few chain drugstores, one restaurant, and several fast food stops dotted the main roads. Check cashing stores and pawnshops denoted the poverty-related issues in the area. A bait and tackle shop and local fish

market signaled the presence of nearby lakes and some of the local residents' occupations and diversions.

Beautification efforts could be seen in small, flowering trees and benches scattered up the road leading from the airport into the downtown area. A bike and walking path lined one street, with dirt paths and trails leading off into wooded areas around a health clinic and food stamp office. Just off the road were run-down mobile home parks, while federally subsidized housing butted up against a living center for disabled adults. The houses in the area dated back several decades; many nestled among overgrown, weedy lots down both paved and dirt roads. A few Habitat for Humanity volunteer-built homes with well-groomed yards were scattered throughout the area. After complaints from neighborhood residents, city officials agreed to work to attract more business to this area of town, hoping to encourage new growth that did not include more of the same low-income housing that has become the primary type of construction. A local businessman was working to attract a middle-income housing development and efforts were being made to upgrade a city-owned golf course just north of this area.

### **Jackson Elementary School**

Jackson Elementary, originally built in the 1960s and remodeled a decade earlier, was located near what used to be one of the main thoroughfares through the city. On the way to the school, just across the railroad tracks, a takeout restaurant operated out of a concrete block building. Two daycare businesses, several small churches, and two large subsidized apartment complexes spanned the roads surrounding the school.

Five hundred children from local neighborhoods attended Jackson. The average class size was 21 students and 46% of the teachers had a masters degree or higher, a common occurrence in schools in this university town. The average teaching experience



at Jackson Elementary was 6.8 years, significantly lower than the 14.7 years average of all teachers in the county's elementary schools.

The Florida Department of Education assigns annual grades to elementary schools based in part on student achievement as determined by their performance on a state assessment test administered to students annually. Jackson Elementary received a failing grade for 2002 and had received funds to improve the students' scores. The school also used federal Title I money to implement Success for All, a structured reading program designed for high-poverty students by researchers led by Dr. Robert Slavin, the Co-director of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At-Risk at Johns Hopkins University and the chairman of the Success for All Foundation (Success For All, 2003). The program provided teachers a structured format of reading instruction (including daily phonemic and phonological awareness), comprehension instruction (including literature read-alouds), story telling and retelling, and daily guided and independent reading using controlled vocabulary readers. Students were taught management signals, and common terms, which were then used throughout the school. At the kindergarten level, the program provided guidance and suggestions for thematic learning, in which the children were engaged in literacy and mathematical activities related to pre-selected themes throughout the day. Children's literature selected for the program and unit ideas and guides were available for the teachers to use while teaching a unit of study in the curriculum. Although the program contains a required daily read-aloud segment, the book-logs from the teachers at Jackson were not significantly different in the quantity of books read aloud than the book-logs from teachers at other schools.

Jackson Elementary kindergarten teachers had access to the county's newly adopted reading series, Harcourt Brace Trophies, selected from the state's list of approved scientific-research-based programs, but the kindergarten teachers at Jackson used it as a supplement rather than a primary program. The teachers also had access to the adopted math program, Math Advantage, which contained several books connecting math concepts (like shapes and money) to literature. Each teacher also had the Harcourt Science program, which contained a set of decodable books addressing concepts such as how water changes and seeds grow (Harcourt, 2000). The kindergarten teachers selected monthly units: special me; dinosaurs; harvest/pilgrims/Native Americans; winter holidays; plants and creepy crawlies; presidents and African-American history; African safari; and oceans.

### **Jackson's library media specialist**

The library media specialist at Jackson Elementary worked collaboratively with the teachers. Each morning Tracy ran a daily news show. She kept a list of the units studied by kindergarten and made an effort to help teachers find resources. Depending on the teachers' needs, Tracy said that she searched for books, videos, magazines, and other materials. According to inventory done around the time of this study, there were 10,450 books in the library's collection. Of those, 2,715 were "Easy" books, 4,869 were nonfiction books, and 100 were "big books." Nearly half of the total collection was published in the last 10 years. The long-time media aide kept a vertical file of information on a wide variety of subjects and was able to assist with Internet searches or technology questions. The kindergarten children visited the library once a week for 40 minutes, a visit that included a read-aloud to complement the unit, to introduce new award winners, or to feature seasonal literature. During the read-aloud time, she taught a

reading skill (from a list provided by the curriculum resource teacher) such as main idea or author's purpose. In addition, she showed the students how to use the library's Dewey Decimal System and where to find different genres. Although she did not run a structured check out reading program, Tracy encouraged the children to come in and check out books as often as they liked. Tracy noted that she had a lot of books "lost" each year, and she was working to help the children become used to "returning the books and learning responsibility." Her policy was to allow two lost books from the regular collection. After a child failed to return two books, she restricted the child's privileges and allowed the child to only check out books from a special area where she kept duplicates and older books. She tried to keep the special collection filled with books that she felt would be interesting, but explained that she could not afford to continually lose expensive, high-quality books. The child was still allowed to read the books in the main collection, but was not allowed to take those books home for the rest of the year or until the lost books were replaced. She mentioned that her policy was more lenient than the previous media specialist, who did not allow any kindergarten student to check out books.

Tracy stated that the classroom teachers needed most of the school's money. As a result, her principal allotted her just \$300 for book purchases and no money was generated through other traditional fund-raising endeavors (since the parent-teacher association was fairly nonexistent). She noted that she received some state funds because of the school's low socioeconomic status, around \$1,200. She mentioned that the money did not go far when buying books, even though she searched for the lowest prices. Tracy selected books based on teacher input for curriculum units, and book replacement for lost

books. In addition, she tried to update a different section each year in order to get more recently published books into the collection. Tracy's focus was two-fold: integrating the arts in academics and seeking books with African-American authors, illustrators, and quality characters.

### **Sunshine Elementary School**

Sunshine Elementary, remodeled about 15 years ago, was also in the eastern part of town. The school's 235 students came from the surrounding neighborhood and nearby subsidized housing complexes. The school was designated as a Title I school, with 84% of the students on free or reduced-price lunch. The average class size was 19 students; the kindergarten teachers had an average class size of 15. Forty-two percent of the teachers had a masters degree or higher. In contrast to Jackson, the average teacher at Sunshine had 14.7 years experience, more in line with the county's average of 14.6 years.

Sunshine Elementary received state grades of "D" for both 2002 and 2001 and was implementing the county's newly adopted reading program, Harcourt Brace Trophies. The program provided music, songs, and a small collection of trade books. In addition, the program supplied sets of controlled vocabulary books for daily read-alouds, guided, and independent reading. Phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, and shared and independent writing lessons were included in the program. The lessons were based on twelve three-week kindergarten themes (Trophies Lesson Planner for Kindergarten, 2002).

In addition to the Harcourt Brace Trophies program, the kindergarten teachers were required to teach 30 minutes of daily instruction using Language for Learning, an SRA/McGraw-Hill direct instruction program designed to teach children "who have less than adequate language knowledge for their age" the "words, concepts, and statements

important to both oral and written language” (Englemann & Osborn, 1999, pp. 4-6).

Along with these two programs, the teachers used both the Math Advantage program and had access to the Harcourt Science series and a copy of the more recent Harcourt Social Studies teacher’s guide. Several years prior, Sunshine Elementary purchased a large quantity of big books and several sets of easy readers. With these materials, the kindergarten teachers selected and incorporated, to varying degrees, unit studies to address science and social studies topics while focusing primarily on reading, writing, and math skills.

### **Sunshine’s library media specialist**

Lisa, the media specialist at Sunshine Elementary, offered to search for books related to the topics and units the kindergarten teachers were studying with their students. To complement the units, she ran a daily Reading Rainbow video each morning over the closed circuit televisions and provided teachers with summaries of the videos, including a summary of the featured book and information about the author. Lisa created displays of topical books, seasonal books, and current award winners, including the Caldecott, Coretta Scott King, and IRA’s Children’s Choice books. The kindergarten students came for story time once a week for half an hour. During this time, Lisa read aloud topic-related books, seasonal books, and award- winners, and showed children how to use the library to find books about subjects in which they were interested. In addition, Lisa ran a “Kindergarten Overnights Club”, a home reading program. The program encouraged children to check out a book daily to read at home or to have a parent or guardian read aloud. She noted that some children had an older sibling do the reading, but that most of the children did have an adult who read aloud to them. After reading a book, an adult signed a form, which the child then returned to Lisa. As the forms accumulated, the

students earned rewards such as ribbons or popcorn parties to recognize their achievement. Lisa estimated that an average of 90% of the kindergarten children participated on a regular basis. She stated that another benefit of the program was teaching responsibility. Lisa said more than 480 books were “lost” or not returned in her first year as media specialist. In her second year, she had 250 books “lost” by students. In the past year, she had 110 books “lost.” She was pleased with the decreasing number of “lost” books and hoped that even fewer would be missing by the end of the current year.

Lisa said that her first two years as media specialist at Sunshine were spent “exclusively replacing a rather depleted ‘Easy’ section of mostly fiction books.” She currently had a total collection of 14,000 books with about a quarter of those being “Easy” or picture books. She also had a large collection of nonfiction books, which she mentioned were a big draw for children in all grades. Her state budget for books, based on the number of students in the school, was about \$1,000, but she supplemented that amount by writing grants to focus on African-American related books, nonfiction, and fairy and folk tales. In fact, this year, the school received federal money from a literacy grant totaling about \$25,000. She planned to spend the money on books related to Reading Rainbow, the Accelerated Reader program, and books that teachers requested. She intended to buy Accelerated Reader quizzes and Reading Rainbow videos, which she found helped “provide the extra prior knowledge needed to help our kids understand the nonfiction and featured books.”

### **The Teachers**

The teachers at Jackson and Sunshine Elementary Schools completed the questionnaire and volunteered to participate in keeping the read-aloud logs. They agreed

to allow me to interview them and observed them reading aloud to their students. All the teachers were female; two teachers (one from each school) were African-American; the remaining four were White. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 25 years. My purpose for interviewing these teachers was to explore in greater depth the reasons behind the decisions they made regarding what they read aloud to their students.

The six teachers agreed to provide me, through personal interviews, information about their professional background, student demographics, classroom organization, teaching schedule, literacy materials, and daily schedule; in addition to the books they read aloud. At the same time, they spoke with me about their philosophy of teaching and their perspective on reading aloud to children.

After conducting the interviews, I arranged to observe each teacher read aloud to her class. Before the observation, I met with the teacher, who shared with me the book that she planned to read aloud and her purpose for reading. I then observed the read-aloud event and analyzed how the students interacted with the teacher and the text. During the observation I was able to gain anecdotal information about the teacher's read-aloud practices, including the kinds of questions the teacher asked and the students' apparent engagement or lack of engagement with the book. After the observation, I met with the teacher and she discussed her view of the event, including how successful it was at meeting her goals and purpose and how engaged she felt the children were during the session.

### **Jackson Elementary Teachers, Students, Classrooms, and Observations**

#### **Susie**

Susie was in her third year of teaching, having earned her masters degree from an early childhood education program at a public university. She recalled that her children's

literature professor required her to read and complete projects such as bringing in a version of a common fairy tale. Susie remembered finding a version of Cinderella that she loved because it was about a country that she wanted to visit. She stated that many of the students felt the course was “busy work” and didn’t believe that her course impacted her teaching in any significant manner.

A member of the state teachers union, Susie was not a member of any other professional educational organization, but said she planned to join the local reading council when she had time to go to the meetings. Susie considered herself a reader and had fond memories of her grandmother reading books aloud to her as a child. Susie vividly recalled her kindergarten teacher as a “wonderful” person who read aloud often and praised Susie’s reading ability. Susie learned to read in kindergarten and read voraciously as she grew older. As an adult, Susie continued to read for pleasure and sought novels about suspense and legal intrigue. She stated that she loved to read aloud to her students so that they would love reading and learn about things outside of their neighborhood, stipulating that the most important reason for reading aloud was to teach children how to read.

### **Susie’s students and classroom**

Susie had 23 students in her class, 16 boys and seven girls. Of those, 16 were African-American, five were multiracial, one was Hispanic, and one was White/non Hispanic. Seven of the children, or 30%, lived with both a mother and a father. Twelve of the children, or 52%, lived with their mother only and one child lived with just a father. Two of the children, or 12%, had grandmothers as their guardians and one lived with a foster mother. Eight of the 23 children shared their home with other relatives such as aunts or cousins; 18 children had at least one sibling living with them. Six of the



children had brothers and sisters who lived apart from them in the care of another relative.

Susie's classroom was decorated with an alphabet line and rules pasted along the top of the windows. Hand-lettered charts related to the current unit were taped from the windows and a three-computer workstation stood along one wall. Above the station was a hand-printed chart of computer rules and directions beside a birthday graph and colorful number and color charts. Five tables clustered on one side of the room designated assigned student work areas, while the perimeter was divided into several work areas. A dramatic play center set up as a paleontologist's dig site had a brown sheet draped over two chairs while a large poster of a dinosaur hung from the ceiling above. Ten school library nonfiction books on dinosaurs, including Alik's (1988) Digging up dinosaurs, clipboards with paper and pencils, and a sand box filled with toy dinosaurs were in the area.

Next to the dramatic play area was a small block area stocked with connecting cubes, wooden blocks, seven nonfiction dinosaur books, paper, and pencils. Shelves in the writing center held 10 dinosaur books checked out from the school library, unlined paper, and teacher-made journals. Baskets of pencils, crayons, and markers filled one shelf and another held newspapers and magazines. An alphabet line was stapled to the shelf along with sight words, such as "the" and "and" and unit-related words including "dinosaur" and "paleontologist."

The large group area was marked with a colorful rug. To the left of the rug area was the calendar area, designated by a calendar, days of the week and months of the year signs, and a number chart. An adult-sized rocking chair and a shelf with two big books

and a copy of Cole's (1995) The Magic Schoolbus in the time of the dinosaurs were near the rug.

The classroom library, two low bookshelves flanking a small brown rug and a couch, held 12 dinosaur books, 100 decodable readers, and 25 assorted paperback children's books from Susie's personal collection.

The art center was stocked with white paper, glue, scissors, crayons, and markers. Eight dinosaur books were stacked on top of the supply shelf near a small table with four chairs. Children's art projects hung from two clotheslines strung up across the room.

### **Susie's schedule**

Susie's schedule began with the students arriving and sitting at their tables writing in their journals or reading. She followed the Success for All reading schedule, which included about 40 minutes of phonemic awareness games, phonics practice, and reading aloud. The read-aloud event was often poetry or a rhyming book for phonemic awareness or a big book for phonics lessons. On the day I interviewed Susie, she had read Calmenson's (1998) The teeny, tiny teacher for the letter sound /t/. She told me that most of the children began kindergarten knowing very few letters and letter sounds. As part of her unit teaching, Susie read a fiction or nonfiction book, followed by a writing or art activity. She said that she read aloud at least once more during the day for about 15 minutes, usually a book connected with the unit, and taught a math lesson from the Math Advantage program. In addition, she taught a daily science or social studies lesson, connected in some way to the unit, and often read aloud a related nonfiction book. Center time (during which the children rotated to the art, dramatic play, building, computer, writing, and library areas) lasted for about 45 minutes to an hour. The children attended a daily resource (music, art, physical education, or media) for 40 minutes.

Twice a week, Susie and her team members met with the principal, SFA facilitator, reading coach, and curriculum teachers regarding the units and student progress. The remainder of the schedule was taken up with lunch and a short recess. After the students left, Susie used the time to attend meetings or to clean up. She said that she usually stayed until after six o'clock in order to prepare for the next day.

Susie had begun her teaching career at Jackson, so was unfamiliar with any other published curriculum. She said that she liked Success for All initially because it gave a firm foundation to her day and helped her to plan more effectively. However, as she became more confident in her teaching ability, she noted that she sometimes adjusted the schedule to meet the needs of her students. She mentioned that she sometimes allotted extra time for phonemic awareness or for centers because the children “needed the time to socialize and work together.” Susie said that she often used the center time to assess the children and noted that the assessments required by the administration were time-consuming and impractical for her students. In particular, she noted that the children were required to do a “paper and pencil” math assessment after every chapter and expressed her frustration with the demands. As we ended the interview, she made a final comment, “I’ve taught for three years and it seems like the paperwork gets more and more and we have less time to teach.”

### **Susie’s book logs**

Over the course of three 1-week periods, Susie read a book each day (in addition to reading aloud a poem from an anthology) for a total of 16 books. Fifteen books related to three units of study: Africa, dinosaurs, and space.

Similar to the logs of the other teachers in the study, the highest percentage of books read aloud, nine or more than 56%, were in the fantasy genre. Three books, nearly

19%, were unit-related informational books and two, almost 13%, were concept books related to the units. One book, or about 6% of the total, was realistic fiction and another was a collection of poetry related to the dinosaur unit.

Five books contained animals as people; one, Duncan Edwards' (1997) Dinorella, was a retelling of Cinderella with dinosaurs as main characters. Four of her books contained White male main characters; one contained a White female main character. Two books, Cole's (1990) Magic School Bus lost in the Solar System and Yolen's (2000) How do dinosaurs say goodnight, contained non-White characters who shared the storyline with others. Teachers were primary characters in two of the books; one was a "culturally generic" tan with white hair and simple features; the other character White with frizzy yellow hair.

Nine books, or 56%, had evidence of a middle-class culture in the illustrations. Just one, Williams (1991) When Africa was home, showed a diverse culture (but with a White male protagonist) and a suggestion of poverty in the illustrations.

During the book-log collection period, Susie read books from all genres except historical fiction, with the majority of books categorized in the fantasy genre. Most of the human characters were White; non-White characters were present in three of the books, but none were main characters. More than 95% of Susie's students were non-White and more than 91% were on free lunch. The bulk of the books were set in a White, middle-class culture.

### **Susie's read-aloud session**

I met with Susie before observing her read aloud. When we met, she explained that the class was studying Africa and that she planned to read aloud Williams (1991) When Africa was home because she felt that the book would give her students information

about Africa. She noted that most of the children had never been out of the state and that some of them had never been across town to the mall. She felt that by studying Africa, she could ‘help them learn more about other cultures and that since most of her students were African-American, they would appreciate learning their heritage.’ Susie mentioned that the kindergarten teachers had taught “African safari” for several years and that because this was her third year teaching, she only owned a few books on Africa and African animals. She noted that she had gotten most of the books for the unit from the school’s media center and had not had time to go the public library for any books.

I observed Susie read aloud when 18 students, 14 boys and four girls, were present. Ninety-four percent of the students were non-White. Fourteen children were African-American, two children were multiracial (African-American and white), one child was Hispanic, and one child was White.

Before reading Williams’ (1991) When Africa was home, Susie (T) activated the students’ (S) prior knowledge about Africa:

T: Okay boys and girls, this book is called When Africa was home. Does anyone know why we’re reading it?

S: ‘Cause it’s about Africa.

T: Right. We’re studying about Africa and this is about a little boy who lived in Africa. It’s by Karen Williams.

During the reading, Susie draws her students’ attention to the illustrations.

T: See the boy is wearing a hat. Why did the boy have to wear a hat?

(The students are silent.)

T: What kind of weather is it like in Africa?

S: Hot.

T: Right. It's hot. He has to wear a hat or he'll get sunburned. That's what we do here, too. He'll get all red.

(The students are silent.)

Susie continues reading, stopping when a child calls out a question.

S: Why don't they got shoes on?

T: That's a good question. Why don't they wear shoes?

(The students are silent.)

T: Why don't they wear shoes?

S: They have to make their shoes.

S: Cause their feet hurt.

T: Well, they may have to make their shoes, but they are going without shoes because it's hot in Africa. Don't you go without shoes when it's hot?

Four students nod.

S: I'm not allowed to have no shoes. I will cut my feet, my mama says.

Susie nods in affirmation and turns the page. She points to the illustration.

T: Look at this picture. Where does Peter live?

(The class is silent.)

T: Where does Peter live? Think.

S: Africa?

T: Right, it's Africa, but where? We talked about the savannah and the jungle. Where do you think this is?

S: The savannah!

S: The savannah!

T: Right. Now is this a village or a city?

Several students call out simultaneously.

S: A city.

S: Village.

S: City.

T: Stop. Remember to raise your hand so we can hear you. Jamar (one of students who called out “city”), it’s a village. See a city would have tall buildings, but this has huts. Can you see the picture?

(Jamar silently nods in affirmation.)

Susie stops to reprimand a student who has been pulling his shirt over his head. She then holds up the book again and points to an illustration in the book.

T: Look at this picture. What do you see?

S: Why do they have a net?

T: Good question! Why do you think they have a net?

S: Hey, there’s skin on them! (referring to the animal skins on the sides of the huts)

When this last comment is made, all the students lean forward to look closer at the illustration.

T: The skins are animals they caught and the net is to keep them from getting bit by mosquitoes. Have you been bitten by a mosquito?

Several of the students start talking in unison, affirming that they had seen and been bitten by mosquitoes.

S: One time there was a mosquito in my house and it....

T: Stop and let’s finish this book. You can tell us later.

Susie continues to read. When she gets to the phrase “Popcicles cold as ice” one student gasps, “OOH!” Several students then lean forward to look at the illustration.

T: Why doesn’t Peter understand what they are talking about? Why doesn’t He know about ice?

(The students are silent.)

T: Do they have ice in Africa?

S: No, because it's cold.

T: Right, it's ice. Do they have refrigerators or freezers in Africa?

S: NO!

T: Not in the villages, but in the cities they do. Peter's never been to the city, so he doesn't know what ice is.

A student who has been studying the illustrations calls out, "What is that?"

T: That's the village.

S: They made it out of wood.

S: No, it's got mud in it.

T: Remember you have to raise your hand. Listen, he is saying a Swahili word for "I will come back." I can't pronounce it very well. That's the language they speak in Africa. In America we speak English. (The phrase is **not** Swahili.)

She repeats the phrase and eight of the students repeat it after her.

T: Okay, let's get back to this book. Peter's in America now and it's icy.

Susie reads some more and stops.

T: Do you think Peter likes Africa or America?

Ten students yell out "Africa" and "America" in unison.

T: Don't yell out; raise your hand. Linda?

S: He likes Africa.

T: Right. He misses his home.

Susie continues to read, stopping after she reads "box with people inside that talk."

T: What's he talking about?



(The students are silent.)

T: We have one in here. We turn it on and people come on.

S: A robot?

T: No, we have one here in the room. We watch it every morning.

S: Oh, yeah! The T.V.!

T: Do they have T.V. in Africa?

S: No!

S: They got a robot.

Susie does not respond to the last comment and begins to read again. As she reads about Peter's return to Africa, she stops, pointing to the picture.

T: Are they happy to see him?

(The students are silent.)

T: Look. What did they do when they see him?

(The students are silent.)

T: Okay, look at the picture. What do the children do?

S: I know! They waved at him; that shows they are happy.

S: They ran by the car!

T: Right! They call him fat. Is that nice to say to someone in America?

(Several students shake their heads no.)

T: No, it's not. But in Africa it's very polite and nice. They tell him his feet are soft. Is that nice?

S: NO!

T: No, it's because he's been wearing shoes. They think it's better to have hard feet so your feet won't hurt when you walk barefoot. Let's finish this.

She gets to the last page and the students yell out in unison, “The end!” After reading, she tells the students that they are going to write in their journals.

T: You can write about Peter’s home in Africa or his home in America.

Susie first made the connection between the book and the unit they were studying, then asked them questions (i.e., Why did the boy have to wear a hat?). She later moved them toward more personal questions (i.e., Don’t you go with out shoes when it’s hot? Have you been bitten by a mosquito?). At several points she gave incorrect or misleading information, implying that all of Africa is hot, that all children in Africa go barefoot, and that only English is spoken in America. For the most part the event was composed of IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) sessions (Cazden, 1988) with little discussion.

When we spoke after the read-aloud, Susie noted that the students did not enjoy the book. She said that she had read it because it was about Africa, but that it was “complex” for the students and that they were not able to sit still for the event.

### **Diane**

Diane was a teacher at Jackson Elementary, having earned her masters degree 13 years earlier. She recalled her children’s literature course as being “full of projects and book lists” but that it did not influence her view of children’s literature and teaching. She noted, “I just got around to throwing some of that stuff away. I figured if I haven’t used it by now, I won’t.” She began her career at Jackson Elementary, teaching first grade and kindergarten. Diane was a member of the local reading council and other literacy organizations in years past, but let her membership and participation lapse due to her increased teaching demands. “We are constantly having to do something; I never get caught up. I just don’t have time to do anything other than teach and get ready to teach.”

She mentioned that she was often at school until late in the evening in order to get everything done. Diane considered herself a reader, preferring magazines such as the New Yorker and Vanity Fair to books during the school year, when she said she didn't have much time to read. She liked reading "any kind" of book during the summers when she had more free time and mentioned Mary Higgins Clark as a favorite author. Diane came from a family of readers, whom she credited for her love of reading and recalled unpleasant memories of school, particularly a kindergarten teacher who "washed my mouth out with soap for some reason, which I still don't know to this day." Her experiences provided an impetus to become an early childhood teacher and to ensure that those children in her class enjoyed school and books. "I want them to love books and love being read to."

### **Diane's students and classroom**

Diane had 23 children in her class, 14 boys and nine girls. Twenty-one of her students were African-American and two were White. Eight children, or 35%, lived with both a mother and a father, while nine children, or 39%, lived with a mother only. One child lived with a father; four children lived with grandmothers, and one lived with an aunt. Four of the children had extended family members living with them and 17 had siblings in the same household. Four were "only" children and two children had one or more siblings living in a separate household.

Diane's classroom walls were adorned with hand-lettered songs and poems about dinosaurs. A computer workstation was nearby, with a closed-circuit television above.

Four student tables created a whole group working area in the center of the room. The writing area was on one side, stocked with paper, pencils, and a container with student writing journals. Nearby was an art table with construction paper scraps, scissors,

glue, and crayons. Near the art table was the classroom library, a large 6-foot long and 6-foot high bookcase designed to showcase books with covers facing forward. About fifty books filled the case, including Chicka Chicka Boom Boom (Martin, 1989) and Heckedy Peg (Wood & Wood, 1992). Diane said that these books were two of her favorites because they were fun and the kids loved them. “I’m not much of a singer, but we sing a lot in here. I love to change my voice. I have a great “witchy” voice that I’ll use and the kids just will be enthralled.” On the rug by the bookcase was Pilkey’s (1993) Kat Kong, a book that Diane said the children checked out from the library often because they knew she didn’t like it and they enjoyed teasing her with it. “It’s awful! There are mean cats and they kill these mice and it’s just disgusting! But they love it and so I’ll read it every once in awhile.” Against the windows, a large group area was marked with a rocking chair and a chart. On the wall behind the rug area was a calendar area, with the days of the week and months of the year. Another board designated the area for shared writing. Children’s work hung from two clotheslines spanning the room.

### **Diane’s schedule**

Diane managed the classroom instruction primarily whole group. The day began with announcements, followed by daily calendar activities (discussing the day, month, and year) and shared-reading. She mentioned that a lot of the children missed the calendar time and shared-reading because they were pulled out for Exceptional Student Education. She read a story before the children went to a 40-minute resource. Her selections typically connected with the unit currently being studied, but she frequently read books aloud “just for pure fun.” She said, “I read what I like; I want the kids to think reading is fun.” During rug time, the class, usually led by a student, read and sang the words on the charts around the room. Diane used big books, such as Gelman’s (1976)

Why can't I fly? to model literacy concepts (such as directionality, review letter recognition or punctuation) and to give the children a chance to read chorally. She followed the Success for All schedule, including phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading aloud, and had a daily time for writing. She said that it was a “great” program for her students, who she said had little exposure to the concepts before kindergarten. Science and social studies instruction was included in the units of study. Diane taught a math lesson from the Math Advantage program, usually tying it to the unit, for about half an hour each day. A block of time was devoted each day to centers, a time when the children could choose to work in any of the areas such as building, dramatic play, or art. Diane’s class attended art or music twice a day two times each week, allowing her time to plan and work with colleagues and talk with her principal. Lunch and recess made up the rest of the day. Diane said that her day often ended about 5 pm.

Diane believed that her primary task as a teacher was to teach the students that school is fun and that reading is a pleasurable activity. She said that once the students believed that, then the learning would be much easier and more meaningful for them. Diane noted that she had confidence in her teaching ability and that she enjoyed working at the school because “the kids need someone like me, who cares.” She mentioned that she was very outspoken about some things, such as her opposition to the increased number of assessments, which she felt made her unpopular with the administration. She closed by saying with a laugh, ‘But I am a good teacher, and I love these kids and want them to learn, so I do what I think is right.’

### **Diane’s book-logs**

One of the four teachers who reported rereading books aloud, Diane said she read aloud 22 books in 32 reading-aloud sessions, for a total of a little more than two books

per day. She read 15 books related to dinosaurs and the Africa safari unit; the other seven books were those the students had requested or ones she personally wanted to read, including Wood's (1992) Heckedy Peg, Pilkey's (1993) Kat Kong, a revision of "King Kong" with cats and dogs instead of an ape and humans, Eisenberg's (1992) You're my Nikki, Jordan's (1991) What kind of babysitter is this?, Cooper's (1998) Faraway drums, Schmidt's (1985) The Gingerbread Man, and Gelman's (1976) Why can't I fly?

Eight of the books, or slightly more than 36%, were in the informational or non-fiction genre and most were about dinosaurs. Diane read seven books, 3%, from the fantasy genre. One book, or almost 5%, was in the traditional literature genre. Two of the books, or 11%, were poetry or song books and three, nearly 14%, were realistic fiction.

Four books, or around 18%, contained animals as people or animals interacting with humans, including Huff's (1978) Danny and the dinosaur and Schmidt's (1985) The Gingerbread Man. Five of the books, or nearly 23%, contained White children as main characters and three of the books, or almost 14%, contained African-American children as main characters. Two books were clearly middle-class; the three books with African-American characters were set in middle or working class settings. Two of the books, Eisenberg's (1992) You're my Nikki and Jordan's (1991) What kind of babysitter is this? were culturally generic or neutral (Darigan et al. 2002); Cooper's (1998) Faraway drums contained some connection to African-American culture.

During the read-aloud log collection period, Diane read books from all genres except historical fiction. She mentioned that it was difficult to find historical fiction that was easy to read aloud and kept the students' interest. Eight books on her list, or 36%,

contained White or African-American characters. Three of the books, or almost 14%, were set in a lower middle or working-class environment, with African-American characters and strong female caregivers. Ninety-one percent of Diane's students were African-American; 39% lived with their mother and 96% were on free or reduced price lunch.

### **Diane's read-aloud session**

When I met with Diane before observing her read aloud, she explained that she would be reading a big book, Gelman's (1976) Why can't I fly? to review concepts of print. The children were familiar with the story and would interact with the book by reading aloud chorally. After reading this book, Diane planned to read Jordan's (1991) What kind of babysitter is this? She selected the book as her StaR, or story telling and retelling story, because it had a plot, a theme, and defined characters. She noted that she felt the children would enjoy it because they would be able to relate to having a babysitter.

Diane read aloud on a day when 23 children were present. One child immediately left to go to a tutoring class leaving 11 boys and 11 girls. Twenty of the children were African-American; two were White.

Before reading Gelman's (1976) Why can't I fly?, Diane (T) activates the students' (S) recollection of the book.

T: Okay, I am getting my pointer and the book. What do you think it's going to be?

S: It's Minnie! (the main character, a monkey in a polka-dotted hat)

T: That's right! Let's read it together!

Diane and the students read the book aloud chorally. Occasionally she stops and lets the students finish a line. At several points in the story, she stops to draw the students' attention to punctuation or concepts of print.

T: All right now. Raise your hand and let me see which one of you readers can tell me what this little thing is right here (points to a period with her pointer).

S: A period!

T: Yep, that's it. Now somebody else tell me why on earth would we need one of these things. La'Shequain?

S: It's to tell you to stop.

T: You're absolutely right. If we had no periods, we would just go on and on and on and on and on and on.

(Several students giggle and smile.)

Diane continues to read the book with the students. When she is finished, she puts the book down by her chair and picks up Jordan's (1991) What kind of babysitter is this?

T: Okay, we're moving on to another book. This book is one you haven't heard before, but I think you are going to like it. It's called What kind of babysitter is this? I chose it because I know a lot of you go babysitters after school. As she starts to lift the book up, a student calls out:

S: I think she got that hat from Texas.

T: From Texas? What do you mean? Oh, you are talking about Minnie! (from the book they had just completed). Minnie's hat. Yes, you are right. That looks like a cowboy hat with its big brim. (She reaches down and lifts Why can't I fly? so that the students can see the cover.

S: Them cowboys wear big hats with holes.

T: Yes, sometimes cowboys do wear hats and sometimes they wear hats like that in Texas. It also looks a little like a sombrero from Mexico, doesn't it?

(Several students nod in affirmation.)

T: Okay, now back to this. This book is titled What kind of babysitter is this? and it's by Deloris Jordan. What do you notice on the cover?



S: Man, that boy is sad!

T: He does look sad. Why is he sad?

S: I think he's mad.

T: Okay, why is he mad?

S: He's mad because he wants to play soccer.

T: Okay, why do you think that?

S: No, that's not soccer. That's something else. I can't remember. (the boy in the illustration is wearing a baseball cap)

S: That boy got that hat from baseball.

S: Right. Not soccer. He wants to play baseball.

T: You think he wants to go play baseball?

S: I think he wants to watch T.V. (there is a television in the illustration)

T: Okay. The title of the book is What kind of babysitter is this? Why do you think that's the title? Do you think that has anything do with why he is mad?

S: I think she (the babysitter) is going to be mean and he wants to play and she won't let him.

T: Okay. Who thinks she is going to be mean?

(Nineteen students raise their hands).

T: Okay, who thinks she is going to be nice?

(Ten students raise their hands).

T: Okay, some of you think mean and some of you think nice and some think both. Let's see.

Diane opens the book to the first page and shows the students the illustration of an attractive African-American woman at her dressing table and the young boy nearby.

T: Someone new in the story already. Who do you think this is?

S: His mama.

T: You might be right. What is she doing?

S: Putting on lipstick.

S: That's her makeup.

T: Where do you think she's going?

S: I think to work.

S: I think she's on a date.

T: Good guesses. Let's find out.

Diane begins to read and reads aloud the boy's name, "Kevin." A student interrupts.

S: Ooh! Kevin!

T: Hey, that's like our Kevin. He doesn't look much like our Kevin, though, does he?

(Several students shake their head and murmur "no".)

She continues reading, then stops to ask a student a question.

T: Kyle, does Kevin like his babysitters?

Kyle: Nuh-uh.

T: Why? Why don't you think he likes them?

Kyle: Maybe he doesn't want one.

S: Maybe because they don't let him play and they not his grandmother.

T: This babysitter does look like a grandmother, doesn't she?

(Several students nod in affirmation).

T: Tisha, you have your hand up, what do you think?

Tisha: He wants to watch T.V. and she won't let him.

T: Maybe that is why he doesn't like babysitters.

A student who has been staring intently at the page calls out.

S: That looks like "baby."

T: What?

S: That looks like what she said is "baby."

T: Oh, the words on the page?

S: Yeah, that's baby.

T: You're right. That's where it says "babysitter." That's the words to the story. (She points to the text above the illustration.)

(Six students have their arms raised; three are waving them frantically).

T: What do you have to say? (pointing to another student).

S: He wants to go with his mom.

T: You might be right.

S: He looks like you!

T: What? He looks like me? What do you mean?

S: He looks like you!

T: Oh, he's crabby. You mean he looks like me when I'm crabby? (She Laughs.)

S: Yeah! He looks like you! (The student crosses his arms and makes a face like the boy in the illustration.)

T: Goodness, you're right! (She laughs again.)

Several students laugh and two students cross their arms and make grouchy faces.

T: Oh, your poor teacher. Let's get back to this story.

Diane continues to read, stopping to ask a question.

T: What do you think this babysitter is going to do that is so bad?

S: She's going to paint her toenails and talk on the phone.

T: (laughing) Kevin's had some bad babysitters, huh?

S: No, they are mean.

S: She's not painting her toenails; she's watching T.V.

T: You're right. She's not painting her toenails like the other babysitters did. I wonder what's going to happen now.

Diane continues to read.

S: Hey, she [the babysitter] got on a baseball hat!

(The students laugh at the illustration, which shows the older woman babysitter wearing a baseball cap and waving a pennant as she watches a baseball game on television).

T: She seems to like baseball, doesn't she?

S: Yeah.

T: So, do you think she's nice?

S: No.

S: Yeah, I do.

T: Do you think she might be mean in disguise?

S: I think she might be mean.

S: Her nice!

T: Okay, raise your hand if you think she is nice.

(Fifteen students raise their hands.)

T: Okay, raise your hand if you think she is going to be mean.

(Twelve children raise their hands.)

T: Whew, you are a tough crowd to convince.

Diane continues to read, coming to an illustration showing the boy sitting by the babysitter.

S: She is nice!

T: She seems to be nice, doesn't she?

Diane finishes the book, which ends with the boy calling the babysitter his friend.

T: What do you think?

S: Her wasn't mean.

S: He is going to like her for a babysitter.

S: Yeah.

T: Did they like the same things?

S: Yeah, they like baseball.

S: She was nice.

T: Yeah, sounds like Kevin won't mind her being his babysitter, doesn't it?

(Several children nod their heads yes.)

T: Okay, we'll talk more about the book later. Now it's time for P.E., so I'll just leave the book here by the chair.

Diane approached the reading of the first book in both a manner that appeared to be both instructional and enjoyable for the students. She said her intention was to give the students an opportunity to chorally read aloud and to foster their comprehension of concepts of print. When the reading was complete, Diane returned to the book when a student, who was clearly still thinking about the book, made a statement about the character's hat. When the students responded to her questions, it was clear they enjoyed the experience.

Diane read aloud the second book in a “whole, part, whole” approach, reading and stopping to discuss the literature (Trachtenburg, 1990). She introduced the story by stating that her purpose for reading was because she knew the students had experiences with babysitters. She asked the students to make predictions about the story by using the clues in the illustrations. She then built on the students’ responses and encouraged the students to clarify and extend their thinking. She stopped frequently to allow the students’ to comment on the story, doing so without interrupting the flow of the storyline.

During our discussion after the observation, Diane said that she felt that the books were a success and that she and the students would revisit the books at a later time. “The kids didn’t get a chance to talk about their experiences with babysitters; I think that’s going to be a good discussion opportunity.”

### **Janine**

Janine was an African-American female in her third year of teaching. Janine earned a bachelors degree from a public university, stayed home with her children several years, and then returned to school to earn her teaching credentials. She recalled her children’s literature course as being “enlightening” and caused her to recognize the “importance of using really good, high quality books.” She noted that having children helped her see books in a different way. In her course, she learned about award winners and children’s literature web sites.

Janine belonged to the International Reading Association and subscribed to professional and practitioner magazines, mentioning Teaching K-8, Instructor, and The Reading Teacher. She said she actively kept up with new literature and teaching strategies through the Internet, watching news programs and reading book reviews in

newspapers and journals. She mentioned recent purchases of professional books and said that she was always looking for ways to teach more effectively.

Janine considered herself a reader and recalled her kindergarten teacher reading lots of books, stating, “I think she’s the reason I really like books.” She remembered loving one book in particular and still looked for it in used bookstores. Janine listed authors and titles of books that she loved while growing up, her favorites being Judy Blume’s books. As an adult, she preferred mysteries and eagerly talked about a book by Mary Higgins Clark that she was currently reading. In addition to mysteries, she read what she termed “family and women’s magazines,” such as Family Circle.

#### **Janine’s students and classroom**

When I observed Janine, she had 21 students in her class for the read-aloud event. Ten were male and 11 were female. Of the 21, 19 were Black, one was Hispanic, and one was multiracial. Seven children, or 33%, lived with both a mother and a father. Nine children, or nearly 43%, lived with their mother only; one child lived with a foster mother. Three children, or 14%, lived with a grandmother and one lived with an aunt. Sixteen of the children, or 76%, had siblings either at home or living nearby. Five of the children had no siblings.

Janine displayed her students’ work was displayed on the bulletin board. Several colorful motivational posters adorned the walls of the room. Success for All posters were taped up above the dry erase board along one wall and an alphabet line was taped along the top. The whole group area was in one corner. A calendar and the days of the week and months of the year were stapled to a small corkboard on one side. A larger chair sat next to a chart stand and children’s names printed on masking tape marked their spots lined up in two semi-circles on the rug. Behind the chair was a pocket chart with

sentences strips for retelling stories. Vocabulary from the latest story was pasted to the wall.

A three-computer workstation took up one corner of the room. Writing materials, including a stack of journals, and art materials (such as blank paper, glue, scissors, markers and crayons) were stacked along shelves with tables and chairs nearby. Four student tables took up the middle of the room.

### **Janine's schedule**

Janine started her day at about 7:15 am. The students came in around 7:35, selecting a book to read until the morning announcements. Like the rest of the school, Janine followed the Success for All schedule. "I am working on linking math with literature as much as I can," she said. Character education and personal responsibility were important issues for Janine, and she often incorporated books that provided platforms for discussion. "I want them to know that if they work hard, they can be successful." She said one of her favorite books was The Little Engine that could (Piper, 1930), because it emphasized the importance of working hard and not giving up. Daily writing in journals and in response to literature frequently followed read-aloud events. She mentioned that the class was planning to send author Marc Brown a letter because the kids loved his books so much.

Like Susie, Janine had begun her teaching career at Jackson, so Success for All was her only experience with a published curriculum. She said that she liked it tremendously and that it was "wonderful for teaching the children to read." She noted that she fleshed out the reading curriculum by doing author studies and writing to the authors. "I want the students to know as much about books and authors as possible. That gives them power."



Janine felt that her job as a teacher was both to teach the students to read and to teach them “that they can reach their goals if they try.”

### **Janine’s book-logs**

Janine reported reading aloud fifteen books. One of the four teachers who reread books, she reread two books, for a total of 17 read-aloud events. Janine read six animal fantasy books or 40% of the total number. Five of the six animal fantasies contained male main characters, though no humans. Two of the books, Pfister’s (1992) The Rainbow Fish and (1987) Penguin Pete, were about sharing and friendship. With the exceptions of Marc Brown’s (1991) Arthur goes to camp, and Piper’s (1930) The Little Engine that could, all of the books were about fish or ocean-related stories. Janine noted that she read the Arthur book because Marc Brown was a favorite author of the students’ and that she read The Little Engine that could because she liked the message of “keep trying and don’t give up.” Four books, or almost 27%, were informational books on seashells, fish and other animals at the seashore. Two books, or 13%, were rhyming books, both were by Dr. Seuss. Dr. Seuss’ (1963) Hop on Pop! was a class favorite and Janine noted that she planned to keep it in the classroom library to reread again in the near future. She said that the books were excellent for teaching rhyming skills and word play (Trachtenburg, 1990). One book, Ehler’s (1990) Fish eyes, was a concept book on counting and color, but went along with the ocean unit. Another book, Jordan’s (2000), Salt in his shoes was a realistic biographical story about basketball star Michael Jordan’s childhood attempts to become a good basketball player. It was the one book that featured an African-American character, in this case, the main character. None of the other books featured human characters, though The Little Engine that could featured White female

dolls in dresses. A middle-class perspective was evident in six of the books, or 40% of the total; no clear social class could be determined from the remaining books.

Seventy-six percent of the students had siblings; Janine read aloud three books, or 20%, that contained siblings who interacted with the main character. In one book, the characters were human.

Similar to most of the other teachers in the study, Janine read primarily animal fantasy books, followed by informational books. She read no traditional literature or historical fiction during the period of book log reporting. Salt in his shoes was the only book that featured real people in realistic situations. Most of her students were non-White and on free or reduced-price lunch. Forty-three percent of the students lived with just a mother and 19% lived with a grandmother or and aunt, while one child lived with a foster mother.

### **Janie's read-aloud session**

Janine and I met before the observation and she explained that she would be reading Jordan's (2000) Salt in his shoes. "I found this book in the media center and I think it would be perfect for the kids. There is a great message about trying hard and the importance of practice. Plus it's Michael Jordan and basketball." She explained that she would be conducting the read-aloud session using the Success for All format.

"We talk about the cover and I talk about the author and illustrator. I show them where the publishing information is, because I like them to know they can write the authors if they want to. This is going to be my STaR (story telling and retelling) book this week, so I will be asking recall questions and inference questions. I put sticky notes on the pages to remind me where to stop. I read this book last night and put the notes on the pages. The students sit with their partners to 'buddy buzz' which is when they talk about the book or a question before they share with the group. It's pretty structured and usually goes well."

I observed Janine read aloud with 16 children were present. Before reading the story, Janine reviewed the rules for the session.

Janine (T) held Jordan's (2000) Salt in his shoes in her lap and activated the students' (S) prior knowledge (Langer, 1995).

T: Before we start, I want you to think of a favorite sport and share it with your partner. Then we'll share with the group. Think of a favorite sport and "buddy buzz."

(The students lean toward their partners and whisper to each other). On cue, they stop and raise their hands.

T: Okay, Terrell. You go first.

S: Basketball.

T: Remember to answer in a complete sentence.

S: My favorite sport is basketball.

T: Good. Now you.

S: My favorite sport is soccer.

T: That's my son's favorite sport, too.

Janine continues to call on students, giving each a turn.

T: Thumbs up if you are good at your sport.

(Fourteen students hold their thumbs up.)

T: Thumbs up if you have a sport you really like, but that you aren't good at.

(Ten students hold their thumbs up.)

T: I have a sport that I really like. My sport is tennis, but I'm not good at it. Think about a way you could become better at a sport you like. How could you become better? "Buddy buzz" with your partner and let me know when you're ready.

(The students whisper to their partners and then join hands to show they are ready).

T: What's something that you like but that you are not good at?

S: I like basketball, but I'm not good at it. My sister helps me and plays with me.

T: Okay, good. You are trying and you are working at it. How about you? (pointing to another student)

S: I like soccer.

T: Are you good at it?

S: (Nods yes).

T: Okay, is there something that you like that you're not good at?

S: Basketball.

T: Okay, you're like Terrell. What about you?

(Janine continues until all children have a turn. She then holds up the book.)

T: This story is called Salt in his shoes. Who can tell me what is salt?

S: It's white stuff you put on carrots.

T: Good. What do you think?

S: I put salt in my shoes and it tickled.

T: You did? Hmm. I think you've heard this book. The authors of this book are Delores and Roslyn Jordan. They are the mom and sister of somebody. Do you know who?

(The students are silent).

T: Do you know Michael Jordan?

S: Michael Jordan, yeah!

S: That's him on the front!

S: Michael Jordan played with cartoon characters.

S: Oh yeah, I saw that.

S: Yes, me too.

T: Yes, he was in a movie, Space Jam, where he was with cartoons, you're right. Yes, this is a picture of him when he was a little boy. The illustrator is Kadir Nelson. What does the illustrator do?

S: He does the pictures.

T: Right. He does the illustrations. Let's look at the cover. We want to preview a book. Why do we preview a book?

S: I have him on my shoes! (he has Michael Jordan's name on his shoes)

T: You sure do have Michael Jordan shoes. We see his name and picture on a lot of things, don't we? Shanteria, what were you going to say about why we preview?

S: Because to find out about.

T: Right, we always preview when we are choosing a book. Whenever you are reading and selecting a book, you look at it, which is previewing, and make predictions about what you think it's about and decide if it's one you want. You should always preview, even at home. This says "Michael Jordan, in pursuit of a dream." That's a really long, big word, "pursuit" – it means to chase. What dream is he trying to chase?

(Students are silent).

T: What dream is Michael Jordan trying to chase? He might be chasing a dream of trying to shoot better.

S: He wants to get good at basketball.

T: You might be right. Here is the inside with the copyright date. It says it was made in 2000. Here's the address if you want to write to the authors. They work for a big company, but you can write to them in New York or London if you want. You might have something to tell them, like if you like the book. Here is the dedication page.

Without talking, Janine flips through four pages, pausing to allow the students time to look at the illustrations. When she turns to the page where Michael is high in the air, the students laugh.

T: Do you like this picture?

S: It's like he's on clouds.

S: He's tall!

S: He's spinning the ball.

S: He can't walk on air.

T: It does look like he is walking on air. The illustrator did a good job of making it look as if he was jumping high. Now let's make predictions.

Janine allows several of the students to make predictions about the book and begins to read. Yellow post-it notes with questions written on them are attached to the bottom of each page.

T: Okay, when he started to play basketball, what's the problem?

S: He wanted to put salt in his shoes.

T: We are not to that part yet. What is the problem now? What's happening?

S: He looks mean (pointing to a boy in the illustration). He's not nice.

T: Why?

S: Because he isn't good.

T: Right. He's (Michael) not making baskets, is he?

S: My sister played basketball with some boys and I asked if I could play And a big boy took the ball and gave it to another boy.

T: Sounds like you have the same problem as Michael.

She continues to read.

T: What does Michael think his problem is?

(Students are silent).

T: Well, he just said he's not tall enough. Why does he want to get taller?

S: So he can shoot better!

S: He gonna shoot crazy!

T: Now how is he going to solve his problem?

S: He gonna put salt in his shoes.

T: Is salt going to make him taller? Thumbs up if you think yes.

(Most of the students raise their thumbs.)

T: Let's find out.

Janine continues to read.

T: What two things does his mom say he has to do?

S: Pray.

T: Right. Pray.

S: Salt in his shoes.

T: Thumbs up if you think the salt is going to work.

(Ten students put thumbs up.)

S: I believe it. I am going to try it.

T: Thumbs down if you don't think it will work.

(Four students put thumbs down.)

S: (laughing) I don't know if praying will help for that.

Janine continues to read, pausing to ask questions on each page. She ends the session by connecting back to her introduction.

T: The author wants us to know that practice is what helps you become better. Think back to sports you aren't good at. It's like reading. The best readers practice. Think about a sport that you are not good at and that you'd like to practice and get better at. That is what we are going to write about today.

The students get their journals and begin drawing and writing.

Janine said that she selected the book because it both matched her goal of instruction—to teach the students that it is important to try hard and practice and because

it matched her students' race and interests, though not the social class or family structure of most of the students. Janine initially made the connection between the book and the students' lives, asking them to think of a favorite sport (Rosenblatt, 1994). As she began reading, she asked them why they should preview a book and explained how to contact the author or illustrator. She mentioned the authors' connection to the story and shows them the photograph of the illustrator. Janine read the book using IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) sessions (Cazden, 1988). After the read-aloud event, she noted that the read-aloud was a success and that she would probably reread the book at a later date.

### **Sunshine Elementary Teachers, Students, Classrooms, and Schedules**

#### **Loretta**

Loretta was an African-American female with 25 years teaching experience, the past four in kindergarten. She recalled reading the Caldecott and Newbery Award winners in her children's literature course, and noticed that she had not read them when she was young. She continued to look for award-winners when the media specialist put them on display, and if she came across them in passing. She mentioned that the media specialist was good about putting out books that had won awards. Professionally, Loretta was a member of the local reading council and considered herself a reader. She noted that she read Ebony, Family Circle, and home decorating magazines.

#### **Loretta's students and classroom**

Loretta had 14 students in her classroom, seven boys and seven girls. Twelve of the students were African-American, one was White and one was multiracial (White and African-American). Three of her students, or 25%, lived in homes with a mother and a father and eight children, or 57%, lived with just a mother. Two of the children were living with their grandparents and one lived in a home with an aunt and other family



members. Eight of the children lived with siblings, three had siblings in other homes, and two were “only” children.

Loretta’s classroom held three tables for students to sit. The walls were filled with posters. When entering the room, a four-computer station was directly on the left. Behind Loretta’s desk was a bookcase with about 200 of her personal children’s books, including Steptoe’s (1987) Mufaro’s beautiful daughters. She mentioned that she was not able to read her books this year, “except for a few. I am trying to stay with just the reading program books.” A listening center and a writing center, stocked with paper, pencils, and markers, took up one corner. Art materials were also stored in this area. A brightly colored rug designated the whole group area. In front of the rug sat the teacher’s chair, a big book holder, and a chart stand with “kindergarten news” printed on the top piece of paper. Next to the stand was a hanging chart stand, with a poem hanging from it. The months of the year, days of the week, season, and number of days in school were stapled above the sink next to the current calendar month and a sight word chart. Math materials were on a nearby shelf.

In the middle of the room, a small bookcase held 10 books, facing outward so their front covers showed. The books were from the Harcourt Brace Trophies program and included a few decodable readers. She explained, ‘Our principal is very specific that we only use the books in the program, so that is what I have on display in the reading area.’

### **Loretta’s schedule**

The students began the day with a Reading Rainbow video selected by the media specialist using videos that connected with kindergarten themes, seasons, holidays, and other events. Loretta’s schedule included daily Language for Learning lessons and the Harcourt Brace Trophies reading program lessons, which she was required to teach

exactly from the manuals and which took about an hour and a half to two hours total. Her book selections came almost exclusively from books provided or suggested by the reading program. She had read aloud Kraus' (1971) Leo the late bloomer, which was not in the program but which she felt was important to setting up her classroom as a community. "I want them to treat each other nicely and to know that everybody is different." She infrequently read her personal books or books from the library. Although she taught using the team's original units the year before, this year she stayed close to the twelve themes provided by the reading program because her principal required them to do so. She mentioned again that she usually did not read any books that were not listed in the reading program because the principal did not allow it. In addition to the read aloud books, the program provided instruction in shared reading and writing, phonemic awareness and phonics, and independent reading and writing. The rest of the schedule included reading and writing activities for two hours, math using the Harcourt Math Advantage program, the Title I computer lab for 30 minutes, music, art, media or physical education for 35 minutes, and science. During the reading block, Loretta pulled small groups of children and allowed the children to choose a literacy center (listening, library, writing, or puzzles) after they had finished their seatwork. She put baskets of decodable readers at the children's tables so they could "practice their reading skills" when they were done with their work.

Loretta's students participated in the media specialist's Overnights Club on a regular basis and nearly all of her students participated, bringing their books and signed papers back daily. She estimated that about 90% of the students brought their books and papers back at least three times a week.

Loretta believed that her most important job was to teach the students that they were special and to teach them as many literacy skills as possible. She noted that the students began kindergarten with very few tools for school success and that she tried to address their needs. She said that she followed the curriculum as closely as possible because the administration demanded that she do so to assist in goal of increasing the students' academic progress and raising the school's grade.

### **Loretta's book-logs**

Loretta's book-log listed eight books, with all but one connected to the reading or math programs. Four of the books that Loretta read aloud were concept or math books, including Gerth's (2000) Ten little ladybugs and Maetro's (1994) Around the clock with Harriet. Two of the books were written in a rhyming pattern, including Harter's (1994) Walking through the jungle and Walter's (2000) Are you there, Baby Bear? One book, Glaser's (1994) Wonderful worms, is an informational book that she used for a science activity with worms. Another book, Krauss' (1971) Leo the late bloomer was an animal fantasy about a little boy lion slow to develop.

Three books contained animals as people and two books contained White females. In Harter's book, the white female is the main character; in Krauss' book, Leo is considered an artist after he draws the stick figure of a White female with curly blonde hair. No books contained minority characters, despite the fact that nearly 86% of her students were African-American and one was multiracial.

A middle-class perspective is evident in four, or 50% of the books read aloud. For example in Krauss' book, the father is watching television and the mother is cleaning the house. In Harter's book the animals are gathered around a table in a dining room with a mother serving food.

### **Loretta's read-aloud session**

I met with Loretta before the observation and she explained that she would be reading the big book, Walking through the jungle (Harter, 1994). The book was part of the daily lesson and she planned to incorporate instruction about the various parts of the book and other concepts of print.

I observed Loretta read aloud to 13 children in her class, seven boys and six girls. One girl was White; the other children were African-American or multiracial.

Loretta (T) began the read-aloud event by drawing her students' (S) attention to the parts of the book.

T: Okay, boys and girls. Tell me what part is this? (pointing to the top)

S: The top!

T: Remember to use your inside voices and to raise your hands. What part is this?

S: The bottom!

T: Bottom. Can you come up and point to the middle, Jania?

(The student stands and points to the middle of the cover).

T: Good job. Now what is this called? (pointing to the cover).

S: The cover!

T: Right, this is the cover. What is this? (She opens to the title page).

S: Title page.

T: Good job. When we read, we start here and go from left to right. We turn the pages like this. (She demonstrates page-turning). Now, let's look at the cover. What do you see?

S: Birds.

S: Worms. (pointing to a snake)

S: Spiders.

S: Bugs.

S: A girl.

T: Good job. We see birds and that thing that looks like an earthworm is really a snake. We see spiders and bugs and a girl. I want you to pay particular attention to the girl. Where do you think she is going?

S: Jungle!

T: I heard someone say jungle. What other things do you see in a jungle?

S: Animals.

S: Tigers!

T: Raise your hands. What else?

S: Snakes.

S: A girl.

T: I hear you say animals and a girl. Good. What else? (She points at the vegetation in the illustration)

S: Trees!

S: Plants!

T: Good. The title of this story is Walking through the jungle. It's by Debbie Harter. Let's do a picture walk. We are going to look at the page first.

S: Ooh! A lion's mouth!

S: Oooh! Them's some ugly teeth!

S: Roar! Roar!

S: Hey, I see a period!

T: Yes, you're right! Okay, let's turn the page. What do you see?

S: Ocean!

S: Whale!

S: That's a killer whale.

S: What is that? What's that black and white thing?

S: That's the killer whale.

S: A gator! A gator! She's swimming!

S: That gator is gonna get her!

T: That's an alligator.

S: Ooh, a camel.

S: Hey, I know how a camel got humps. They drink water, that's how they get their humps.

S: Hey, a polar bear!

S: Growl, growl, growl.

S: Phew! He's got stink old breath! (The students laugh at this)

(Loretta continues turning the pages in the book and allowing the children to call out what they see).

T: Where do you think the girl is going in this picture?

S: Back home.

S: So all that stuff won't get her.

S: She's never going back.

S: I would!

S: Me, too!

T: Okay, let's go back to the front. I am pointing to the words as I read them, then you say them. I'll read the first time and then you after. Walking through the jungle, what do you see?

(The students repeat the text after Loretta. When they get to the illustration of the lion a student shouts out:

S: Roar!

S: I'm not scared of no lion.

S: Hey, the monkey's touching his ears and he's scared.

S: My mama said back in the old days there was lions.

Loretta waits for the students to make comments, then continues without responding.

S: Ooh, a killer whale!

S: I'll bite you if I was a killer whale! (bares his teeth)

S: Oh, I saw one of those!

T: Okay, we've seen two animals so far. What was first?

S: Lion!

T: Where was it?

S: Jungle!

T: Did you notice that there are two lines on every page? It's the same sentence two times. I'll read the first and you read the second.

Loretta continues to read and the students respond similarly, repeating the text calling out observations. Most of them are leaning forward and eagerly looking at the illustrations. After reading, Loretta asks the students for a personal response.

T: What was your favorite animal?

S: A whale!

T: Why is the whale your favorite?

S: 'Cause he was chasing her.

T: Well, they were all chasing her, weren't they?

S: The wolf!

T: Why is that your favorite?

S: 'Cause he hollered the loudest! The student flings his head back and howls Loudly.

S: Back in the old day I went in the wood with my daddy and he killed a turtle and I saw a snake.

S: We got some worms.

Loretta continues asking for the student's favorite animals, without acknowledging the student who made the statement about going into the wood.

T: Okay. We talked about the animals chasing the girl. It's time to go to computer lab, so we'll leave this book here.

In this typical shared book experience (Holdaway, 1982) Loretta began the read-aloud event by activating the students' prior knowledge about books and how to hold books properly. She then demonstrated the importance of illustrations by doing a picture walk through the book. Finally she read the book aloud, encouraging the children to respond chorally and allowing them to make comments and respond to the story (Sulzby, 1985). The students' responses were enthusiastic and they clearly enjoyed the story.

Loretta felt that the read-aloud event was a success, although she was concerned that the students had not mastered the skill of waiting to respond until they raised their hands and were acknowledged. She did mention that it was clear the students loved the book and that she would read it again in the near future if she had time.

### **Karen**

Karen had taught for 25 years, teaching kindergarten for 23 of those years. She earned her bachelors degree from a small private college in the southern part of the state and remembered little about the children's literature course she took, other than that she still possessed the required text, The Arbuthnot anthology (Arbuthnot, 1961). Karen was



not a member of any professional organizations, although the summer before school started she attended a workshop on teaching science.

Karen enjoyed crosswords, the newspaper, and magazines such as Money and Family Circle. She confessed that she did not enjoy reading a lot and said, “if it’s too long of a book, it turns me off.” She liked mysteries and liked Nancy Drew as a child, but didn’t really like reading things that required a lot of time. She could not remember any other books from her childhood and couldn’t recall anyone reading aloud to her.

When asked about her teachers, Karen could not remember anything about her kindergarten teacher, but loved her third grade teacher. She remembered her grandmother as a powerful influence in her life, inspiring her to become a teacher.

‘I loved my Mamama, that’s what I called her; we’d play canasta and eat spinach and boiled eggs and drink ginger ale. I wanted to become a teacher because she was a teacher and I wanted to be like her. It’s funny, because she had my father as a student and then he ended up marrying her daughter, my mother. She was my dad’s teacher; he had a hard time learning. He was the youngest of six and his family was poor. But she helped him, even though he never did like to read much. Then he married my mother and worked a lot and didn’t have time to read. I can’t say I remember my momma or daddy reading at all.’

Karen said she did not use computers and did not visit the public library, explaining that she didn’t go because it was too far from her home and because she commuted with her husband, who was anxious to get home after working all day. She noted that it was too inconvenient to try and keep up with books from the public library and that she worried that she or the students would lose them. Instead, she relied on the school’s library collection; the Harcourt Brace Trophies books; her personal collection, numbering more than 500; and the school’s large collection of big books and easy readers. She mentioned that she read the books that the media specialist puts out and recommends. “If it looks good, I will get it.”

**Karen's students and classroom**

Karen had 17 students in her class, 10 male and seven female. Fifteen of the children were African-American and two were White. During the study, Karen was forced to take a leave of absence due to health reasons and was unable to give specifics on the students' families. However, she did note that two of the children lived in homes with both a mother and a father, although one child's father traveled as a truck driver and was gone much of the time. She recalled that most of the children lived with a mother and that one child lived with his grandmother.

Karen's classroom had four tables and a rug area with about 20 big books in a large case. On the wall in front of the rug was a calendar and another shelf with big books hanging from a large plastic pocket. A library area was marked with a beanbag and 20 books with the spines facing outward were stacked on a small shelf. An alphabet line ran along one wall and posters with number and color words hung on another wall. No children's work was displayed, although a stack of completed worksheets and papers sat on her desk in one corner. A writing center with paper and markers was near the children's cubbies. An art table with glue, scissors, markers, and paper was along another wall.

**Karen's schedule**

Karen arrived early, usually around 5:30 am, to get ready for the students, who arrived at 7:45. Her schedule began with a Reading Rainbow video over the closed circuit television and included a 30-minute Language for Learning lesson and the Harcourt Brace Trophies lesson, which typically took from 45 minutes to an hour, not including the writing, each day. She noted that, at her principal's direction, she followed the lessons verbatim, although she said, "It's hard to get through the lessons because they

are so involved.” She stated that she had the children stay on the group rug area until the entire lesson was done, because she didn’t have time to split it up and do part of it later in the day. She said, “I just go straight through it, even if they are antsy. I’m not sure if they all get it, but it’s what we are supposed to do.”

After the required lessons, Karen tried to read as much as she can, typically getting in a total of six to seven books each day. She said that she loved to read to the students, because everyone gets quiet and listens, even the “wild” ones. She preferred reading big books because they were “fun and the kids like them and they can see the pictures really good.” In addition to reading aloud, Karen taught the Math Advantage program and taught science and social studies using the units developed by kindergarten years earlier, including the current unit, holidays around the world, and versions of The Gingerbread Man. Karen said that she felt comfortable with the same units, because she had the materials to teach them and knew the books to use. She didn’t limit her reading aloud to the themes and the reading program and said that she read aloud other books just for fun. She noted that reading aloud calmed her students down and helped take up the time between transitions. A daily half hour computer session on reading skills in the Title I lab along with a 35-minute period of art, music, media, or physical education, and a short recess, usually 15 minutes, was also part of the children’s daily schedule.

Karen’s children participated in the media specialist’s Overnights’ Club and she noted that at least half of her students regularly participated and returned their books and papers three times a week. She often read the whole class the books that the students had selected and enjoyed ending the day with a read-aloud event.

Karen said that she felt a great deal of pressure to follow the curriculum, but tried to read as many books aloud as possible. She noted again that she relied on the media specialist, her personal collection, and the kindergarten collection for her read-aloud choices.

### **Karen's book-logs**

Karen read aloud 26 books over the course of three 1-week periods, or an average of two books per day. None of the books listed in her log were from the published reading program. She explained that she enjoyed these books and felt the students learned more from them; because her time was limited, she replaced the books in the curriculum with the books on the logs.

Fifteen, or nearly 58% of the books were in the fantasy genre, with 12 of the books having animals as humans. In two books, Hoose's (1998) Hey, little ant! and Numeroff's (1991) If you give a moose a muffin, a White male talks and interacts with an animal. Both contained illustrations that suggested a middle-class culture. Four, or 15% of the books, were rhyming or song books and three were concept books. One of the concept books, Gomi's (1989) Spring is here was an international book and had won an award for the illustrations. Two books were traditional literature and one was an informational book, Kunhardt's (1995) I'm going to be a police officer. One book was realistic fiction. White males were main characters in seven, or almost 27% of the books she reported reading aloud and White females were main characters in two, or less than 1%. One book, a retelling of Cinderella by Nikki Grimes (1993), featured a Black female main character and contained both upper and lower-class references. Bang's When Sophie gets angry portrays a White middle-class family and contains a White female main character.

Eighty-eight percent of Karen's students were African-American students, while most of her books contained White characters. Kalan and Barton's (1981) Jump, frog, jump!, depicted tan boys who could be described as non-White. Taback's (1999) Caldecott medal winning book, Joseph had a little overcoat contains references to a diverse culture.

### **Karen's read-aloud session**

Karen became ill and left during the school year, so I was unable to observe her read aloud to her class.

### **Jessica**

Jessica had taught for 24 years, 23 of them in kindergarten and all at Sunshine Elementary. She earned a bachelors degree in early childhood and elementary education at a public university. She was a member of the local reading council.. Jessica recalled her children's literature course with great enthusiasm, mentioning that her professor exposed her to a lot of quality children's books.

Jessica considered herself a reader and regretfully revealed that she was so tired from implementing the new reading program that she rarely had time to read during the week. She had a friend in another state and they shared books, each of them sending the others their favorites. She was currently reading a spiritual tract and enjoyed reading about horses and cats. She credited her love of reading to her parents, who "sold most of their land to put all seven of us kids through college." She recalled her kindergarten teacher fondly. "She made me feel like I was the smartest kid in the world. I think she was the one who started me out loving school and loving to learn. That's what I'd like my kids to get from me."

Because she lived out of town, Jessica said that she rarely made it to the public library for books and used the computer primarily for email. When selecting books to read aloud, she depended on the Harcourt Brace Trophies program, her personal collection of about 300 books and the school's large big book collection as well as the media specialist's displays of award winners and unit or holiday-related books.

### **Jessica's students and classroom**

Jessica had 18 students in her class. Twelve students were male and seven were female. Seventeen, or 89%, were African-American; one was White. Eight, or 44%, lived with both a father and a mother; five, or 28%, lived with a mother only. Two, or 11%, lived with grandparents, and one lived with a foster mother. Sixteen of the children lived with siblings, one child had siblings who lived in another household, and two children were "only" children.

Jessica's classroom walls were filled with children's work, a large word wall of sight words and posters. Behind her desk, a bookcase held about 300 children's books and several teacher manuals. "I've got my children's books back there because I don't have time to read them much," Jessica said. The center of the room was taken up with desks and a rug area was near the east side of the room. A big book, Effie, by Beverly Alls (1991) leaned against the chair sitting in front of the large White dry erase board covered with rules for listening, school rules, and the daily schedule. Just under the schedule was a table with a dozen math-related children's books, including Fish eyes. On the opposite side of the room, a puzzle and class library area (with about 20 pieces of children's literature and 15 big books) was situated under the word wall. The writing and art center held spiral journals, markers, scissors, and glue. Near the puzzles was a

science exploration area with a microscope and several children's books. A two-computer station was against one wall.

Like the other teachers, Jessica's schedule began with a Reading Rainbow video connected with the unit, the season, or special events. She then did the Harcourt Brace Trophies lesson "verbatim—we have to" and noted that because of it she did not get to read what she'd rather read aloud. She mentioned that the program did not always have a daily read-aloud, and as a result, she substituted what she wanted to read. She said that she read about five books per day and kept books, mostly decodable readers, near the students' seats so that they were able to read when they were done with seatwork. She noted that she enjoyed reading big books and pointed to a large version of Lionni's (1963) Swimmy and Don and Audrey Wood's (1984) The napping house. She said, "Those are some of their favorites. I like the big books because they are a way to lap read, without them actually being in my lap. I love to read and I want them to have that gift, too."

The students wrote every day, both independently and as a group. She incorporated literature into her math and science lessons and pointed out her current display of Gail Gibbons' books about farms, and math books. She said that she tried to get in as much literature as possible, bringing in books for math and science to make connections. She mentioned that she preferred books with real pictures and photographs, particularly for science. She showed me one of the children's favorites, a newsprint farm machinery catalog that she'd brought from home to show the children different kinds of farm equipment to go along with a story that was in their reading program. She speculated that

they loved the catalog because it was new to most of them and showed pictures of things they'd never seen.

The children had about 15 minutes of recess on most days and attended a daily 35-minute session of art, music, physical education or media.

Jessica said that she felt overwhelmed by the curriculum demands, but she still maintained a positive outlook and worked in what she believed was important.

### **Jessica's book-logs**

Jessica read a total of 44 books aloud over the course of three 1-week periods, or about 3 books per day. Sixteen books, or 36%, were in the fantasy genre. Seven books, or 16%, were poetry or song books, including traditional nursery rhymes such as Powell's (1989) Three bags full and Melser's (1990) To market, to market. Jessica read two Cinderella versions (both with White characters) and the traditional fable The lion and the mouse retold by Davidson (1990). In addition, she read two Native American Indian legends, Blood's (1976) The goat in the rug and Cohen's (1988) The mud pony. Seven books were from the informational genre, including Barton's (1981) Building a house.

Although 94% of Jessica's class was African-American, there was little evidence of non-White characters in the books she selected during the book-log collection period. Eleven books featured White male characters. Shower's (1992) How many teeth? showed children with various shades of skin but similar features throughout the book. Carle's (1987) The tiny seed depicted a dark-skinned male giving a flower to a White female. Two books featured Native American Indian characters; no other books featured another race or ethnicity.



Eight, or 44% of the children lived in single-family homes and all of the students were on free or reduced-price lunch. The Cinderella versions and Slobodkina's (1940) Caps for sale were the only books that suggested poverty or hunger. A middle-class, traditional family setting and culture was evident in six of the books, including Bourgeois' (1996) Franklin and the Tooth Fairy, a story which featured a family of turtles. Bate's (1975) Little Rabbit's loose tooth showed a white-colored girl rabbit and her parents in a middle-class home. McClanahan's (1992) The little policeman was another example of a middle-class setting, with the addition of the gender career stereotype in the title "policeman." While reading about careers, she read aloud Greene's (1958) I want to be a postman, another book with a gender stereotype in the title.

### **Jessica's read-aloud session**

I met with Jessica the day before observing her read aloud. She explained that her schedule was very busy and that she would not be able to read aloud until the end of the school day. She worried that the students would be tired and said that she would select a book that would be "fun" for them to hear, but that did not relate to the curriculum. She selected Alls' (1991) big book Effie, the story of an ant that talks in a big voice.

I observed Jessica read aloud with fourteen children, all African-Americans, present. Jessica (T) began the read-aloud session by drawing the students' (S) attention to the cover.

T: This book is called Effie. The author is Beverly Alls. Who can tell me what the author does?

(The students are silent)

T: Julie, what does the author do? Girls, stop the hair (talking to two girls who are swinging their beaded braids back and forth loudly).

S: The words.

T: Right. The words. The author writes the story.

Jessica begins reading, making her voice louder or softer depending on the character.

S: Hey, she's got eyes on her shoes! (several students lean forward to look).

T: No, those are spots. That's the illustrations. It says that Effie "boomed". What does that mean?

(The students are silent)

T: When someone booms, is that quiet?

S: No, loud.

S: Hey, are those spiders? (leaning forward to look at the illustration)

Jessica does not acknowledge the student and continues reading.

T: What's a chat?

(The students are silent).

T: What's a chat? Does anyone want to talk with Effie?

S: No.

T: A chat is a talk and no one wants to talk with her. Why not?

S: They might be scared of him 'cause he black.

S: Hey, there's something behind him, maybe that's it.

T: Maybe there is something behind him. Let's see. What do you think the shadow is?

(The students are silent)

T: Can you guess?

S: Something big.

T: A human! (when she raises her voice dramatically, several students lean forward)

T: What does “bellowed” mean?

S: Yell.

T: Who yelled stop?

S: A person?

T: Do you think it was a person? Why yell stop?

S: Probably her children were going to get stepped on.

T: It wasn't a person; it was an elephant. Why did the elephant hear Effie?

S: She was loud.

Jessica begins reading again.

T: What does enormously mean?

(The students are silent)

T: Enormously. Is that a little or a lot?

S: A little?

T: No, it means a lot. They like each other now, right?

S: Hey, do they like, like each other?

S: Yeah, like they gonna get married.

T: I don't know, but they are friends. Who made a new friend in this story?

S: The ant did.

T: So can ants and elephants be friends, even if they are very different?

S: Yeah. They like each other now.

T: Yep. Friends can be different and still be friends. Effie finally found a friend. It's about time to go. Get your backpacks and meet me on the rug.

Jessica drew the students into the read-aloud event by discussing the book cover. Although she initially said the book would be read for pleasure, she asked primarily efferent questions (Rosenblatt, 1994). She conducted the event by engaging in IRE (initiation-response-evaluation) sessions (Cazden, 1988), quizzing the students about the vocabulary and asking them to guess what is going on in the story, such as when she asked them what they thought caused the shadow. It was evident that the students were unfamiliar with much of the vocabulary in the story.

After the event, Jessica told me that she didn't think the read-aloud event went well because the students were tired and the bell was about to ring. "I wish they'd liked the book, because it's really a cute story about friendship." She noted that the illustrations were probably not interesting enough for the students.

### **Summary**

The two schools highlighted in this study were similar in many ways and the teachers had similar student populations. According to the interviews of the library media specialists and the teachers, the library media specialists at both schools appeared to be very involved in providing assistance to the teachers' requests and needs. Each school had various children's literature resources, including books and videos. From the interviews, it was clear that both library media specialists tried hard to obtain as much multicultural and diverse literature as possible and tried to expose the teachers and students to a wide variety of literature.

The teachers' teaching experience varied greatly, but all seemed to be comfortable in the classroom, although some appeared to be under greater stress than others. It was

clear from the interviews that some of the teachers considered themselves readers and that some enjoyed reading less, which may have impacted their read-aloud events (Zancanella, 1991).

The teachers' classrooms were similar and reflected their desires to make the classroom welcoming to the students. The students in each classroom had access to at least some children's literature, although the amount varied greatly depending upon the teacher. Although Jackson had a structured reading curriculum program, the teachers' logs were very similar to the teachers at other schools. The students at both schools were allowed access to the school libraries and students at Sunshine had the opportunity to participate in a take-home reading program. All the teachers had books from the published curriculum, the school library, and their personal collections available to read aloud. From their logs, the teachers seem to rely primarily on these sources for their books. None read books from the public libraries during the read-aloud book log periods.

The teachers at Jackson and Sunshine read aloud daily and most read more than once a day. Teachers at both schools were constrained by mandated reading curriculum and assessment requirements. The Jackson teachers, although following a specific program, seemed to have leeway in their book selections and from their comments, felt some autonomy in their read-aloud and curriculum decisions. The Sunshine teachers, according to their statements, were required to teach directly from a program, leaving relatively little time for teacher-choice of a reading aloud curriculum. The principals were highly involved in the instructional decisions at both schools; the principal of Jackson met weekly with the teachers and there were weekly faculty and team meetings

at Sunshine as well. Because of increased teaching and assessment demands, the teachers spent a great deal of time “off the clock” preparing for their students.

Overall, though the teachers stated that they wanted their students to enjoy the read-aloud experience, the teachers used their reading aloud times primarily for instruction in the content areas (particularly science and social studies); or reading and mathematics; or to teach morals, character, and ethics. Within these parameters, however, they appeared to take into consideration their students’ interests. Two teachers mentioned that they thought their students would like the books they selected and later noted that the students did not enjoy the books. The other three teachers read books that were engaging and which their students seemed to enjoy a great deal, suggesting that the books were good matches for their students.

The teachers’ read-aloud events varied greatly, as evidenced in the transcripts. Three teachers felt that they had successful read-aloud events, in that their students both enjoyed the book and learned something. Two teachers felt less satisfied with their read-aloud events and noted that neither they nor their students enjoyed or learned much from the events. The transcripts suggest that teachers, during their read-aloud events, can dispense both vague and outright inaccurate information (even to the point of perpetuating stereotypes), which might have been due to the teacher reading about a culture unfamiliar to her. In addition, research shows that questioning behaviors can influence the stances that students take during a read-aloud event; the teachers’ questions and comments appeared to affect the students’ responses and engagement in the events (Elley, 1998). Many of the questions were information-seeking, which may have made the read-aloud experience less enjoyable (Rosenblatt, 1994). When the teachers made

certain the children understood the vocabulary and connected to the story, the students appeared to be more engaged and seemed to enjoy the read-aloud event.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the kinds of books that kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students and to explore the reasons they gave for book selection. Research indicates that reading aloud can vastly impact students' literacy development. It has been well-documented that reading aloud facilitates children's understanding of language elements, story structure, and pattern. In addition, the practice can build richer vocabularies and result in an increased awareness of features of print (Bus, 2003; de Jong & Bus, 2002; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Elley, 1998; Elster, 1994; Goodman & Alterwerger, 1981; Lehr, 1988; Sulzby, 1985; Trachtenburg, 1990; Wells, 1985). Moreover, research suggests that teachers, through their selections of read-aloud books, can affect the complexity of their students' verbal and written responses (Creighton, 1997; Eckoff, 1983; Kiefer, 1982; Kosanovich, 1996; Lancia, 1997; Lehr, 1995; Lurie, 1990; Many et al. 1996). Perhaps even more interesting, researchers have found that the books that teachers choose can influence their students' preferences about books in general as well as these children's values, morals, and character. Studies reveal that books teachers read aloud can impact children's attitudes and beliefs about themselves, other cultures, races, ethnicities, siblings, the elderly, and a myriad of other topics (Barnes, 1991; Darigan, 1991; Fry, 1994; Hall, 2000; Jantz et al. 1976; Kramer & Radey, 1997; Merenda & White-Williams, 2001; Smith, 1993). Along with this, children's responses to books are affected by the context of the read-aloud event and their



own ethnicities and cultures, including their primary home language, their background knowledge, and their personal interests (Altieri, 1993; Barrera & Bauer, 2003; Delpit, 1992; Myrick, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1994; Strickland, 1994; Sulzby et al. 1993; Tyson, 1999).

Researchers note that the reading aloud event can impact emergent readers in both positive and negative ways. While studies have been done on the read-aloud interactions, few have been done on the books that teachers actually select to read aloud (Barrera & Bauer, 2003; Teale, 2003). Elster (1998) observed that researchers have not examined closely the particular books that are read aloud and how they might influence emergent reading patterns (p. 44). Researchers agree that book “quality” is difficult to determine, but that there is a need to examine the specific books that adults select to read aloud to their students (Barrera & Bauer, 2003; Darigan et al. 2002; Pellegrini & Galda, 2003; Teale, 2003; van Kleeck, 2003).

With the increasing diversity in our society’s classrooms and the continued lack of diversity in the teacher population, it is requisite that researchers examine books read aloud to children and the cultural representations within (Galda & Beach, 2001; Fox & Short, 2003). In the case of emergent readers, it is even more needed, as teachers control to a large extent the access that these children have to books and information (Wells, 1985).

To discover what books teachers read aloud to their students, I administered a questionnaire and asked teachers to keep logs of the books they read aloud for one week in three different months of the spring semester. I conducted six interviews and observed read-aloud events in five classrooms to further explore the reasons why teachers selected

the books and their purposes for reading aloud. As I analyzed the questionnaires, book logs, interviews, and observations, I kept my original research questions in mind to act as a framework and guide. First, I focused on questions about access.

### **Access**

The teachers in this study reported reading aloud at least once each day and an average of three times a day, a finding supported by other research (Hoffman et al. 1993). Each read-aloud event lasted from 5 to 15 minutes, with an average of almost 14 minutes. Teachers indicated that they usually allotted an additional five minutes for discussion and response. Four teachers responded that they reread books on a regular basis, a practice that increases comprehension and story knowledge (Bus et al. 1995; Cai & Traw, 1997; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Elster, 1994; Martinez & Roser, 1985). All teachers stated they visited the school media center with their students for half an hour each week and all but one teacher allowed their students to check out a book on a weekly basis. From their answers, it was evident that reading aloud was an important part of the daily classroom life.

The teachers read aloud 428 different book titles a total of 520 times during the book-log collection period. After receiving each set of read-aloud logs, I sorted the books by genre and analyzed each. The genres of books read aloud were: fantasy (including animal fantasy), 50%; informational or nonfiction, nearly 25%; poetry and song books 8%; concept books (color, shape, alphabet, counting), 7%; realistic fiction, 5%; traditional literature, 4%; and international books, less than 1%. Biography was less than half a percent of the total.

Exposing children to a wide variety of genres can foster their development of language fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension, in addition to developing

their personal preferences and interests (Dulthie, 1994; IRA & NAEYC, 1998). From the book-log responses, it appeared that the teachers had a limited view of the purposes for reading aloud and the opportunities for learning through exposure to a wide variety of types of literature.

The teachers gave multiple reasons for reading aloud. The two most important factors were to enjoy the literature and to teach pre-reading skills, responses supported by other research (Poole, 1987). Twenty-one teachers, or 75%, reported the top reason they read aloud was for their students to enjoy the literature. Five teachers said they read aloud to teach pre-reading skills. When asked to list their lowest priority for reading aloud, 22 teachers, or almost 79%, said teaching ethics was not an important issue for book selection. Nineteen teachers, or nearly 68%, responded that countering negative stereotypes was a low priority.

Although more than 75% of the teachers said they took their students' enjoyment into account, 27% of the books listed in the read-aloud logs were connected to the science or social studies curriculum, indicating that curriculum issues played heavily on the teachers' decisions about what to read aloud. Alphabet books, typically used for pre-reading instruction, made up another 5% and mathematical concept books were 4% of the total. The teachers stated that the curriculum impacted what they selected, and it is important to note that the state had required curriculum mandates in addition to the district having an adopted reading curriculum. The children may have enjoyed many of the books read aloud, but it seems apparent that the students' personal interests could not have been a primary concern for book selection.

One of the questions dealing with access was how the teachers obtained the books they read aloud. Multiple answers were allowed if the teachers used more than one source. Of the 28 teachers responding, 21, or 75%, said they relied primarily on their personal book collections. Twelve teachers, or about 43%, said they used the school library to supplement their personal books and 10 teachers, or 36%, borrowed books from fellow teachers or grade level libraries. Just five teachers, or nearly 18%, said they checked out books from the public libraries. Book sources highly impacted the literature read aloud to these kindergarten children. They listened to very few recently published multicultural books. Nearly 82% of the books read aloud were published in 1997 or earlier and nearly 15% of the books were published during the 1920s through the 1970s. The teachers would have found it easier to match books to their students' individual cultures and interests had they used the public library, which had a far more extensive collection of recently published books. Further, reading newer books might have provided the students with less stereotypical images of gender and ethnicity. In addition, current books might have better matched contemporary culture and experiences and exposed the children to more accurate depictions of other cultures and traditions (Aronson, 2003; Yakota, 1993).

### **Content and Themes**

I approached the content analysis of the books using a critical theory perspective. A broad umbrella term, critical theory as I incorporated it involved studying the texts with a wondering eye, uncovering any implicit or explicit cultural, political, and moral messages (Banks, 1991; Shannon, 1986). With the help of trained volunteer readers, I attempted to limit my assumptions as we examined the books (Apol, 1998; Delpit, 1988; Hinchey, 1998; Sutherland, 1985). I looked at the social and political perspective as well

as what assumptions the authors or illustrators seemed to make (Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Shannon, 1986; Sutherland, 1985). Using the Internet, I researched the authors and illustrators to determine if they were insiders or outsiders to the culture about which they wrote and if that seemed to affect the books (Seto, 2003; Sipe, 1999). I noted which books had won awards, since award-winning books are typically judged by experts to be well-written or beautifully illustrated and are often culturally sensitive (Darigan et al. 2002). Because older books are more likely to have stereotypes, I noted the publication dates (Stewig, 1987). After sorting the books by genre, I examined the themes and content of the books and, with the help of the volunteer readers, classified them by subject and main idea (Shine & Roser, 1999). I studied the gender identities of the characters, counting the number of protagonists who were male and the number female, and noting their behavior (Singh, 1998). As part of the content analysis, I analyzed the racial and ethnic identities of the characters and searched for evidence of social class (Rodman, 1994). As I did this, I examined the books for indications that stereotypes were perpetuated or countered.

Books about character development and relationships made up slightly more than 36% of the books read aloud. These books ranged from dealing with sharing and friendship to having a strong work ethic and all had a strong lesson about what the mainstream culture deems acceptable behavior. This finding contrasts with the questionnaire responses, in which 22 of the 28 teachers stated that teaching ethics, character, and morals was a low priority for read-aloud selections.

Nearly a third of the books read aloud could be classified as fitting within science or social studies topics. Researchers have noted that most science and social studies

books are written in a non-narrative, expository format, which facilitates students' emergent reading and writing growth (Lancia, 1997; Many et al. 1996; Pappas, 1991). Most kindergarten studies have not shown a wide use of informational texts. However, this district's kindergarten teachers used a thematic approach to teach science and social studies while focusing on reading, writing, and mathematics. As a result, they appeared to have a higher percentage of informational or non-fiction books on their read-aloud logs.

Issues encompassing growing up were in nearly 11% of the books read aloud. Twenty-five of the teachers said they took their students' interests into account when selecting books to read aloud; their responses seemed to support their read-aloud selections in this category. Children's literature experts have noted that subjects such as going to school, going to camp, or losing teeth are generally interesting for young children and the teachers' choices seemed to suggest that they recognized this as well (Cullinan, 1989; Greenway, 1993; Stewig, 1987).

Eight percent were rhyming and song books. Researchers have found that teachers of young children use these types of books in their read-aloud events (Cambourne, 1988; Teale, 2003). While these books were part of science or social studies units, they had very little factual content and seemed to be read in response to the fact that children enjoy music and that rhymes and songs support phonemic awareness instruction and can transmit cultural knowledge (Barnes, 1991; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999; Trachtenburg, 1990).

Alphabet books were 5% of the total. Reading these kinds of books can direct emergent readers' attention to features of print as they begin to make the connection that

letters and sounds are related (Stewig, 1987; Teale, 2003). Four percent of the books presented mathematical concepts, including counting books and shapes or colors.

Concept books are typically presented in a format that includes little text (often rhyming) and can be used for instruction in pre-reading skills and mathematical concepts (Pappas, 1991; Teale, 2003). Holiday books accounted for almost 4% of those read aloud. One book presented several holidays; the rest dealt with Easter or St. Patrick's Day. Books dealing with self-esteem comprised a little more than 2% of the books the teachers reported reading aloud. Finally, almost 2% of the books were bedtime stories that might have been read aloud during a quiet time or may have been more appropriate for a bedtime story (Bus et al. 1995; Lamme, 1981).

The content of books read aloud is important in children's developing moral behavior and defining what our society deems acceptable (Hall, 2000; Lamme, 1996; McCadden, 1998). Many of the books teachers read dealt with moral development, but what is evident is the lack of serious issues, such as death, homelessness, or divorce, topics that require thought and provoke discussion (Bettelheim, 1976; Lehr, 1995; Teale, 2003). Researchers argue that early childhood teachers may underestimate their students' ability to deal with complicated issues and may avoid uncomfortable topics in an attempt to shelter their students from disturbing ideas. However, most children have experienced the death of a pet or a grandparent, and a large number of young children experience divorce, abuse, foster care, hunger, and homelessness. Books allow them an opportunity to deal with fears and resolve issues in a non-threatening way (Bettelheim, 1976; Leland & Harste, 1999; Nodelman, 1996). With the increase in media coverage, many young children have and will witness upsetting events (Leland & Harste, 1999). Incorporated

carefully and in a non-frightening manner, literature that addresses troubling circumstances can be beneficial as children develop coping mechanisms (Bettelheim, 1976; Leland & Harste, 1999; Marshall, 1998; Nodelman, 1996). Many studies have shown that young children are capable of understanding sophisticated and complex issues, of asking and answering higher-level questions, and making comparisons and connections to other concepts, particularly if the learning is scaffolded and supported by an understanding of their prior knowledge and personal experiences (Leland & Harste, 1999; Teale, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978).

As mentioned previously, in addition to meeting the emotional needs of the students, research suggests that using more sophisticated books with children may facilitate their comprehension and vocabulary development (Elley, 1998; Teale, 2003). More study is needed, but from the analysis of books read aloud in this study, it appears that the kindergarten teachers may not have taken the opportunity to use complex literature to foster their students' cognitive growth.

The authors and illustrators of children's literature are overwhelmingly from White, middle-class backgrounds, a fact apparent in the books chosen (Nodelman, 1996). The students in these classrooms were from a variety of cultures and backgrounds, yet the authors and illustrators more closely reflected the backgrounds of the teachers. People of color wrote or illustrated only about 3% of the 428 books read aloud. Germane is the fact that students in this district were from 82 countries and spoke 47 different languages, which, along with the demographics of society overall, suggests that the student population in these classrooms will continue to increase in diversity and non-White cultures (Florida Department of Education, 2003). As the population becomes more



diverse, it is essential that teachers take into account their students' changing backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as the different cultures and ethnicities that are infusing the classrooms (West et al. 2000). By doing so, teachers can select literature that will connect with their students and increase a sense of community (Fry, 1994; Gale & Densmore, 2000; Herrera, 2000; McGlinn, 2001).

Research indicates that multicultural and multiethnic children's literature is valuable as children develop their personal identities and their perceptions of others (Elley, 1998; Karolides, 1997; May, 1995). With this in mind, I examined the gender in the books. Studies have found that young children identify themselves by gender first and often enter kindergarten with preconceived ideas of gender behavior and expectations (McGraw, Durnam & Durnam, 1989; Ramsey, 1991). As so few books had human characters, males were protagonists in only 14% of the books and females in 9%.

Very little racial or ethnic diversity was present in the books read aloud. Of the 428 books, 148, or almost 35%, contained animals behaving as humans and are considered "melting pot" books dealing with universal themes (Sims, 1982). While animals can be interpreted as any race, in no cases did they speak in dialect or wear clothes of a tradition other than Caucasian; they were "generic" characters (Darigan et al. 2002). Another thirty-two of the books, or 7%, contained humans, but were also "melting pot" books with universal themes. Often the illustrators incorporated varying shades of brown or pink and vague facial features to suggest diversity (Darigan et al. 2002). For example, O'Brian's (1996) My name is Johari features a brown female protagonist who is meant to be African-American, but whose features could represent any race. Less than 3% of the books actually featured non-White protagonists with detailed

features, all of them either African-American or Native American Indians. There were no books with Asian, Hispanic, or Latino people as protagonists. African-American author Deloris Jordan wrote two books featuring African-American characters. Her books, What kind of babysitter is this? and Salt in his shoes could be classified as “culturally conscious” because the characters deal with universal themes of growing up and family relationships. However, What kind of babysitter is this? features self-sufficient African-American women as primary caregivers and contains elements of cultural authenticity. Additionally, with its strong message of the importance of the middle-class values of hard work, Salt in his shoes blends into the melting pot category. Nonetheless, the book also contains more culturally relevant content as evidenced by the emphasis on faith and prayer. Other books featuring non-White characters included three “social conscience” books portraying African-Americans in family situations, Octopus hug, Faraway drums, and You’re my Nikki. White authors wrote all three, although Faraway drums is illustrated by an African-American. In addition to being a “social conscience” book, Octopus hug contains several elements of melting pot issues since the intact family has a middle-class lifestyle and values (Sims, 1982).

The teachers’ classrooms were fairly evenly divided by gender, but varied widely with regard to racial and ethnic makeup. The class sizes fluctuated throughout the year, but each teacher had an average of nearly 21 children. Because of the disparity in the racial and ethnic makeup across the district, I divided the schools in the study by their location: rural, west side, and east side. In the rural schools, the student racial and ethnic makeup of the participating kindergarten classrooms was 66% white, 28% African-American, and 6% were other races or ethnicities. Seventy-five percent of the students in

each participating kindergarten class on the west side were White; 18% were African-American, the remaining 7% were other races or ethnicities. In contrast, 85% of the children in the eastside classrooms were African-American, 4% were White, and 11% were other races or international students

These percentages suggest that the books the teachers read aloud might not have matched the ethnicity, race, or culture of many of the students in the classroom. Further, the content analysis indicates that those who appeared to “match” the books did not see much diversity, which can increase empathy and understanding of others (Yakota, 1993). Comparing the books read aloud with the demographics of the students in these classrooms, the findings indicate that many of the teachers did not take their students’ diversity into account when selecting read-alouds, a finding supported by previous research (Jipson & Paley, 1991; Sleeter, 1992; Small, 2000).

More than three-fourths of the schools had free and reduced-price lunch populations of close to 50% or more. Additionally, the two focus schools had free and reduced-price lunch populations of 85% and 94%, respectively. With this in mind, I examined the books for evidence of social class. Using categories developed by Rodman (1984), I put books in a middle-class category if the images or texts showed such things as a furnished two-story house with a garage, a mid-sized car, or parents taking their children to school through a neat neighborhood with yards and neighbors outside raking (Nodelman, 1996; Rodman, 1984).

About 61% of the 428 books presented a middle-class perspective or contained some type of middle-class reference. In three of the books with African-American main characters, the families appeared to be middle-class. Jordan’s (2000) Salt in his shoes

portrays a middle-class family having dinner together each night in a well-stocked kitchen. Although a large family, the main character, the youngest sibling, shares a good-sized bedroom with just one brother. While the storyline implies a single parent household, Eisenberg's (1986) You're my Nikki, presents a home that appears to be middle-class with regard to size and furnishings. The illustrations depict a large kitchen and living room, separate bedrooms for the children, and a piano, all of which suggest at least a middle-class income (Rodman, 1984). Likewise, Jordan's (1991) What kind of babysitter is this? shows a single parent home and furnishings that imply a middle-class lifestyle including good-sized, comfortably furnished rooms with big windows. If the text or illustrations suggested a great deal of wealth, I put it in an upper social class category. All books with evidence of upper-class were in the fantasy or traditional literature category. For example, dePaola's (1978) Bill and Pete contains references to a butler and a palace. A little less than 2% presented an upper social class perspective. Because traditional literature such as Cinderella can illustrate both ends of the social class spectrum, I placed this type of book into both an upper and lower-class category. If a book contained a description of a character not being able to buy food, for example, I put the book in a lower social class category. Caps for sale is the story of a man who cannot afford to buy food and takes a nap to forget his hunger. Less than 2% of the books showed evidence of poverty and, with the exception of one, were in the fantasy or traditional literature genres.

Along with social class, I studied the books for stereotypes. Gender stereotypes were the most prevalent, with many of the books containing stereotypical portrayals of gender behavior (Nodelman, 2000; Poarch & Monk-Turner, 2001). All teachers depicted

in the books were white or “culturally neutral” females, including a black and white cow (Darigan et al. 2002). Several books contained witches (all women) and most unfriendly looking. In Sendak’s (1962) Alligators all around, children are shown “pushing people” and “imitating Indians” while wearing feathered headdresses. The two books about Native American Indians were legends and showed the characters in a traditional dress. Noll (2003) suggested that books like these, when presented without books that show contemporary Native American Indians, can perpetuate stereotypes. In a few cases, primarily with regard to gender, stereotypes were countered. For example, Auch’s (1992) The Easter egg farm, the female character is self-sufficient and takes care of her chickens without help. In Munsch’s (1996), Stephanie’s ponytail, the White female main character is outspoken. Allen’s (2000) Dancing in the wings shows a self-sufficient African-American female who achieves her goals through hard work and persistence.

Overall however, these books, partially because they were older books, were laden with stereotypical gender behaviors (Allen et al. 1993; Dellman-Jenkins & Yang, 1992; Ernst, 1995; Nodelman, 2001; Poarch & Monk-Turner, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

Miller (1997) stated that the biggest challenge in teaching in a diverse classroom is the ability of teachers to develop an environment wherein all children see themselves as valued and can read, write, and talk about issues relevant to themselves. My study analyzed the books that kindergarten teachers read to their students and their reasons for book selection. These teachers read aloud frequently, thus the read-aloud curriculum was an integral part of their instructional day. However, their reading was limited to books that could be used to teach curriculum or content areas. Although they were bound to some degree by curriculum mandates, the teachers did not appear to realize or take

advantage of the vast potential that books provide for teaching critical thinking and cultural knowledge (May, 1995; Short & Fox, 2003). I noticed that books read aloud tended to be heavily weighted toward the fantasy genre and included very few books by authors of color. The teachers stated on the questionnaire that they selected books for enjoyment, but in practice they selected books to fit units of study in the content areas and for reading and mathematics skills. These selections and reasons stood up across all schools, even those with very high percentages of African-American students. The teachers in this study read many of the same books and taught similar science and social studies units, suggesting that perhaps a kindergarten “cannon” of literature exists. As a former kindergarten teacher, I noticed that I, too, owned and had read aloud many of the books listed in the read-aloud logs. Interestingly, the books read aloud were not the “weighty” books that might facilitate critical thinking (Teale, 2003, p. 130). In fact, the analysis of the books revealed a significant lack of diversity and multiculturalism and hinted that the teachers did not take their students’ race, ethnicity, and culture into account. As a result, the teachers implicitly marginalized their students’ cultures as they made decisions to privilege certain books by reading them aloud and chose not to read books that more closely matched their students’ backgrounds and interests (Herrera, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Miller, 2001). Accordingly, the students might not have identified with the books and may not have been as engaged with the read-aloud events (Rosenblatt, 1938; Wilhelm, 1997). This finding is significant since 213 of the 375 students, or more than 57%, in the classrooms where logs were kept were from non-White cultures, and two of the teachers who kept the book logs were African-American.

Granted, proponents of multiculturalism have found that students benefit from seeing themselves and others in the books that they read and in the same manner, those books that are read to them. Still, this is more than an academic or a moral issue. The Florida Department of Education publishes a statement of accomplished practices and expected behaviors of teachers. Complying with the 1990 Consent Decree in the League of United American Citizens, et al. v. State Board of Education et al. 1990, the statement delineates required practices of teachers in the state. These practices require that the teacher “demonstrates respect for diverse perspectives and ideas...and sees herself/himself as a steward of the school, of public education, and of our national heritage with its multicultural dimension and works to articulate these positions. . . .” Further, teachers in this state are expected to use strategies and resources that “reflect each student’s culture, learning styles, special needs, and socioeconomic background.” This includes using materials that “reflect contributors which are multicultural” and helping students “develop shared values and expectations that create a climate of openness, mutual respect, support, and inquiry.” (Florida Education Standards Commission; Accomplished Competencies for Teachers of the Twenty-First Century, 2003). In the case of their read-aloud selections, it appears that perhaps the teachers in this study might fall short of these expected competencies and have need for professional development to become aware of the newly published books by minority authors that are now on the market and in public libraries.

The results of my study raise more questions and provide a foundation for further study on what kinds of books kindergarten teachers read aloud to their students. Additional research is needed to determine the access provided to emergent readers

through the read-aloud events in which they participate. Content analyses, along with more in-depth observations of read-aloud events are needed. Studies can be done on the impact of reading aloud books from different cultures and genres. Since reading aloud is known to impact children's vocabulary, increase knowledge, affect writing, and stimulate individual reading, it is vital that teachers realize the significance of their book choices for the read-aloud curriculum. Clearly, the teachers in this district were restricted to various degrees by mandated reading curriculum programs and an environment of high-stakes testing. Research needs to be done to investigate how these issues may impact teachers' read-aloud selections and practices.

### **Limitations**

This study was a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a questionnaire, interviews and observations, and a content analysis. Dictated by the questions I hoped to answer, the number of participants allowed me to more thoroughly study the access to books that teachers provide to their emergent readers through read-alouds and to study the books themselves exhaustively. The schools were not randomly selected. Instead, they were the schools in one district whose principals agreed to allow me to conduct my study. These schools were not a sample of a larger population and the results cannot be generalized. The kindergarten teachers in this district typically taught using social studies and science thematic units, which contributed to a high number of informational or non-fiction books. In addition, the district was in a state with high-stakes testing, and the teachers were under pressure to teach reading skills and focus on state standards. Still, 28 of 36 teachers returned the questionnaires and 18 teachers completed the read-aloud book logs. While the number of books read aloud were similar those found by other studies, the possibility exists that the teachers who returned the book



logs might have valued reading aloud more than the other teachers and may have read aloud more often.

Another limitation is found in the questionnaires, the interviews, and the book logs. The participants had beliefs and assumptions about the nature of my research and their responses were perhaps what they felt they were expected to say, rather than what they in fact believed (Gall et al. 1996). In the case of the book-logs, I relied on the teachers to note the books they read aloud, which may have lead to inaccuracies.

Finally, I was the person who interpreted the data, which meant that, though I was cautious, subjectivity was still an issue. The trustworthiness of the data is increased through triangulation and with the use of trained volunteer readers with experience in children's literature who assisted in the content analysis section. By comparing evaluations and discussing the books, I was able to limit the assumptions or misperceptions on my part.

### **Implications**

My study was an exploratory study and the results both raise questions and suggest implications for researchers and teachers. Because education is an area with a great number of stakeholders, the implications can be extended to administrators, instructors and professors of children's literature, legislators, and parents as well.

#### **Implications for researchers**

The implications for future research are great. First, more research needs to be conducted on what kinds of books teachers are reading aloud to their students, particularly those students who are emergent readers. Studies are required to examine the content of books that children read and that are being read to children (Teale, 2003). Further, experimental research is called for to study the impact of reading aloud on

student learning, reading, attitudes, and beliefs. Along with this there is a need for researchers to explore the cultural match between the books and the students to determine to what degree, if any, that might factor into the quality of the read-aloud experience for the students. Studies suggest that if a student is not interested or connected to a text in some way, he or she might not comprehend or be motivated to master the information or concepts (Barrera & Bauer, 2003). Moreover, disturbing statistics show a significant gap between the reading achievement of White students and the reading achievement of non-White students. More research needs to be done on how books about diverse cultures might impact students of mainstream and non-mainstream cultures.

The context of the read-aloud event can affect students' responses to books (Bus et al. 1995; Cox & Many, 1992; Galda & Beach, 2001), which suggests that qualitative research could be done on teachers' read-aloud practices as well as what they read aloud and the impact their reading has on their students' responses (Barrera & Bauer, 2003).

In this district, mandated reading programs and a high-stakes testing environment undoubtedly had an impact on many of the teachers' decisions about their read-aloud selections and how much they read aloud. More research needs to be conducted to study how these restraints impact the quantity and quality of the read-aloud selections and the read-aloud experiences of the students.

### **Implications for teachers, administrators, and teacher education programs**

The results of this study propose professional development ideas for teachers and administrators as well as preprofessional teacher education. Teachers judge reading aloud to be fundamental and enjoyable (Bus, 2003). From their selections, it appeared that the teachers in this study recognized that literature can be used to teach content and curriculum. However, professional development in several areas would be advantageous

to teachers, administrators, students, and parents. Presenting information on the impact of reading aloud would ensure that both teachers and administrators fully understand the role of reading aloud quality literature, including how quality literature impacts literacy development, critical thinking, and the classroom environment.

Professional development is needed to expose teachers to the current children's literature in various genres and demonstrate to both teachers and administrators why reading a wide variety of genres is an effective use of time. Teachers would benefit from instruction on the value of reading current multicultural and international literature in their emergent reading classrooms and how to support higher order responses from young children (Fox & Short, 2003; May, 1995).

With this knowledge in hand, teachers and administrators may be able to influence other stakeholders in the education process, including parents and legislators—all of whom impact schools in a variety of ways.

In summary, the findings of this study should serve to alert kindergarten teachers to the potential of reading aloud from:

- a wider spectrum of genres
- recently published books
- award-winning books
- books by non-White authors and illustrators
- books that match the race, ethnicity, and social class of their students

This study might spark teachers to use public libraries in addition to school libraries and personal book collections, and to read aloud in ways that encourage critical and creative responses to books, rather than merely for reading and content area instruction. Creating

more aesthetic, pleasurable reading experiences are more likely to encourage students become life-long readers (Shannon, 1989b; Short et al., 1996; Teale, 1978). Focusing primarily on “using” books to learn, although driven by the high-stakes testing milieu of the schools in which this study was undertaken, does not promote a love of reading and an understanding of oneself and the world (Lurie, 1990; Marshall, 1998; Wan, 2000; Willis & Harris, 2000). Teachers might examine the quality of the literature in packaged programs as compared with their own individual book selections. Ultimately, it is the teachers who are responsible for their students’ literacy abilities and habits and the kinds of books to which they promote access in their classrooms. The book selections they make may well have an impact far beyond the particular reading events (Herrera, 2000).

APPENDIX A  
INSTRUMENTS

Books Read-Aloud in Kindergarten: A survey of Kindergarten Teachers

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

Is your school a Title I school? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

*Classroom demographics:*

How many students do you have in your class? \_\_\_\_\_

Please mark the number of students who fit into the following categories:

\_\_\_\_\_ # of Males

\_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino

\_\_\_\_\_ # of Female

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian/Pacific Islander

\_\_\_\_\_ African-American

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (ethnicity) \_\_\_\_\_

1. What kinds of educational programs are in place in kindergarten at your school? (i.e. Open Court Phonics, Success for All, Reading Mastery, Language for Learning, Math Advantage, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do these programs impact your reading aloud time or read-aloud selections?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No. If yes, in what ways do they impact? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. In your view, what is the most important factor to consider when selecting books to read aloud? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this factor most important? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the least important factor to consider when selecting books to read aloud? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this factor least important? \_\_\_\_\_

5. What factors do you take into consideration when selecting books to read aloud? Please check all that apply.

____ topic	____ interesting cover/title	____ language/rhyme
____ author	____ date of publication	____ math/counting
____ illustrator	____ length of book	____ popular book
____ social issues	____ world events	____ child requests it
____ ethics issues	____ moral or character issues	____ read review
____ holiday/event	____ personal favorite	____ social studies
____ science	____ gender of characters	____ race or ethnicity of characters
____ award-winning	____ genre	____ race or ethnicity of my students
____ recommended by teacher/media specialist		____ gender of my students
____ other (specify) _____		

6. How many books on average do you read aloud during a school day? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many books on average do you read aloud in a week? \_\_\_\_\_

7. About how long do you read aloud in a session? \_\_\_\_\_ Do the students typically engage in discussion? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No. If yes, how long does the discussion usually last? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Why do you read aloud to your students? Please mark 1-9 in order of importance (with 1 being most important and 9 being least important).

\_\_\_\_\_ to teach pre-reading skills (phonemic awareness, letter recognition, rhyme....)

\_\_\_\_\_ to teach story conventions and language (once upon a time, plot, theme ....)

\_\_\_\_\_ to teach information (social studies, science, other content areas....)

\_\_\_\_\_ to teach math (counting, number recognition, sequence, etc....)

\_\_\_\_\_ to teach core cultural knowledge (nursery rhymes, fairy/folk tales, songs,....)

\_\_\_\_\_ to teach ethics/character (fairness, sharing, environmental awareness, rules....)

\_\_\_\_\_ to enjoy the literature/for pleasure

\_\_\_\_\_ to counter negative stereotypes

\_\_\_\_\_ to introduce discussion of complex topics (divorce, hunger, peace....)

9. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very important and 5 being not at all important, how important is the date of publication of the books that you read aloud? \_\_\_\_\_

10. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very important and 5 being not at all important, how important is the author or illustrator in your selection of books to read aloud? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What was the first book that you read aloud to your students this year? \_\_\_\_\_ Why did you choose this book to read aloud? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Are the books that you read aloud at the beginning of the year different from the books that you read aloud the second semester? (length,topic,genre,etc.)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No. If yes, in what ways do they differ? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What sources do you use when finding books to read aloud to your students?  
(Please check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_ public library

\_\_\_\_ educational program or curriculum (SFA, Harcourt, etc.)

\_\_\_\_ school media center

\_\_\_\_ personal collection

\_\_\_\_ grade level collection

\_\_\_\_ other teachers/curriculum resource teachers

\_\_\_\_ books stores or book clubs

\_\_\_\_ online/internet

\_\_\_\_ journals or teaching publications

\_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What source do you rely on the most? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What genre (nonfiction, realistic fiction, fantasy, fairy/folk tales, historical fiction, International books, poetry) do your students like the best ? \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you think so? \_\_\_\_\_

15. On a scale of 1 to 5, which 1 being very important and 5 being not at all important, how important is a wide variety of genre selection in your read aloud events? \_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_

16. Do you notice any socioeconomic class in the books you read aloud? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No.  
If yes, can you give an example? \_\_\_\_\_

17. How important are your students' backgrounds in your read aloud sessions?

\_\_\_\_\_



18. What kinds of illustrations do your students like best? \_\_\_\_\_ Why?

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19. How many years have you taught? \_\_\_\_\_ How many in kindergarten? \_\_\_\_\_

20. How many years have you been at this school? \_\_\_\_\_

21. What is the last degree you earned and the year you earned it? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you belong to any professional organizations? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No. If yes, please list: \_\_\_\_\_

23. Would you be willing to meet with me to do a follow-up interview based on your answers to this survey? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No. Would you be willing to allow me to call you to clarify any answers? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No. If yes to either, please list your phone number and email address and the best time to contact you. \_\_\_\_\_

24. Would you be willing to keep three one-week logs of the books that you read aloud to your students? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No.

25. Do you have any other comments or information that you feel is pertinent? If yes, please elaborate.

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*Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey. Please place it in the self-addressed stamped envelope and return to me as soon as possible. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me.*

*Katrina Hall*

## BOOK LOG

Teacher:

School: \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]

Please return to Katrina Hall through truck mail or the SASE envelope provided

## Interview Questions:

Date:                      Time:

Person:

Location:

1. Tell me a little about how your background. What do you remember about your children's literature courses? Do you incorporate what you learned? If so, how?
2. How did you learn to read? Do you remember your kindergarten or first grade teacher reading aloud? Did your family read often? Do you consider yourself a reader? What kinds of things do you like to read? How often do you get to read?
3. How important do you think reading aloud is for your curriculum and your students? Can you tell me why you think so?
4. Where do you usually get the books that you read aloud to your students? Do you ever use the public library? Why or why not?
5. Can you tell me about factors you consider when selecting books to read aloud?
6. What is your favorite genre to read aloud? Why is this your favorite?
7. What kinds of books do your students enjoy most? Why? What illustrations do they like? Do they have a favorite author or illustrator? Tell me more – who, why, how did he/she become a favorite?
8. I noticed that your book log indicates you read aloud a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ this month. Do you read nonfiction differently than other kinds of books? How do you approach this kind of reading aloud?
9. How important do you think the illustrations are when you read aloud? Why? Do you ever read aloud books that do not have illustrations? If yes, can you name a book?
10. Who is your personal favorite author or illustrator to read aloud? Why?
11. About how many books do you read aloud to the students each day? Do you think this is the right amount? If yes, why? If no, why not?
12. How much impact does the curriculum requirements have on your reading aloud selections and time?
13. Are there any books that you read at the beginning of the year? Can you give me an example? Do your books change in content or length, etc. as the year passes?

14. Do you reread books to your students? If yes, how often? If not, why not?
15. In your view, what is the function of reading aloud to the class in the elementary school curriculum?
16. How do you think students benefit from having a teacher read aloud to them on a regular basis?
17. How often do your students go to the school library? Do they check out books? If yes, how often?
18. How important is the date of publication when you read aloud? Why or why not?
19. How important is it that the book has won an award? Why do you think so?
20. Do you think it's important to know about the authors and illustrators of the books you read aloud? Why or why not?
21. Tell me a little about the students in your class. Does this make-up affect your read aloud selections? If so, how?
22. Many of your students are African-Americans. Does that change the kinds of books you read aloud? If so, in what manner?
23. Do you notice any stereotypes in the books you read aloud? Can you give me an example if yes? Do you think noticing that is important in a book? Would you discuss this with your students? Have you done so?
24. Do you notice any socioeconomic class in the books you read aloud? Can you give me an example if yes? Do you think noticing that is important in a book?
25. How important do you think it is to discuss big issues and help your students think about complex ideas? Can you give me an example of a book you might use for that purpose?

## APPENDIX B BOOK LIST

Title of Book	Author	Pub Date
<u>"I can't" said the ant</u>	Cameron	1961
<u>"Not now!" said the cow</u>	Oppenheim	1989
<u>17 kings and 42 elephants</u>	Mahy	1987
<u>5 senses</u>	Aliki	1990
<u>A big fish story</u>	Wylie	1958
<u>A butterfly is born</u>	Berger	1993
<u>A flag for our country</u>	Spencer	1993
<u>A house for Hermit Crab</u>	Carle	1987
<u>A look around Washington, D.C.</u>	Strickland	1985
<u>A luna moth's life</u>	Himmelman	1998
<u>A most special Easter egg</u>	Kraft	1989
<u>A pocket for Corduroy</u>	Freeman	1978
<u>A safe home for manatees</u>	Jenkins	1997
<u>A seed is a promise</u>	Merrill	1973
<u>A tree is nice</u>	Udry	1956
<u>A walk in the rain forest</u>	Platt	1992
<u>ABC Disney</u>	Sabuda	1988
<u>Aligay saves the stars</u>	Stone	1991
<u>All about alligators</u>	Arnosky	1994
<u>All about seeds</u>	Berger	1992
<u>Alligators all around</u>	Sendak	1962
<u>Alpha bugs</u>	Carter	1995
<u>Amazing Anthony Ant</u>	Philpot	1993
<u>Amazing butterflies and moths</u>	Still	1991
<u>Amos, the story of an old dog and his couch</u>	Seligson	1987
<u>An ant colony</u>	Heiderose	1989
<u>An extraordinary egg</u>	Lionni	1994
<u>Anno's counting book</u>	Anno	1977
<u>Ants go marching</u>	Scherer	2002
<u>Ants go marching one by one (The)</u>	Bernal	1993
<u>Ants: Nature close-up</u>	Pasco	1999
<u>Are we there yet, Daddy?</u>	Walters	1999
<u>Armies of ants</u>	Retan	1994
<u>Around the clock with Harriett</u>	Maestro	1984
<u>Arthur goes to camp</u>	Brown	1982
<u>Baby lamb</u>	Spanjian	1988
<u>Baby pig</u>	Hinds	1988
<u>Barn Dance!</u>	Martin	1986
<u>Be nice to spiders</u>	Graham	1967

<u>Bean boy</u>	Shannon	1988
<u>Bear with the golden hair (The)</u>	Kuskin	1964
<u>Bears</u>	Krauss	1948
<u>Bees</u>	Holmes	1998
<u>Bentley and the egg</u>	Joyce	1992
<u>Big book of dinosaurs</u>	Atmire	1990
<u>Big brother, little brother</u>	Dale	1997
<u>Big Bunny and the Easter eggs (The)</u>	Kroll	1982
<u>Big city port</u>	Maestro	1983
<u>Big old bones</u>	Carrick	1992
<u>Big toe (The)</u>	Melser	1980
<u>Big, bad bunny trouble</u>	Wilhelm	1985
<u>Bigger than T-Rex</u>	Lessom	1997
<u>Bill and Pete</u>	DePaola	1978
<u>Birds</u>	Dorfman	1986
<u>Blast off: A space counting book</u>	Cole	1994
<u>Body battles</u>	Gelman	1992
<u>Boomer goes to school</u>	McGeorge	1996
<u>Brown Bear, Brown Bear...</u>	Martin	1967
<u>Bubbles, bubbles everywhere</u>	Kuhn	1994
<u>Bugs</u>	Greenberg	1997
<u>Building a house</u>	Barton	1981
<u>bunnies' alphabet eggs (The)</u>	Bassett	1993
<u>Bunny money</u>	Wells	1993
<u>bunny who found Easter (The)</u>	Zolotow	1959
<u>Butterflies</u>	Freeman	1999
<u>Butterflies</u>	Shapiro	2001
<u>Butterflies and moths</u>	Fichter	1993
<u>Butterfly alphabet</u>	Cassie	1995
<u>Butterfly alphabet</u>	Sanved	1996
<u>butterfly counting book (The)</u>	Pallotta	1998
<u>Butterflies: See how they grow</u>	Taylor	1992
<u>Buttons, buttons</u>	Williams	1995
<u>Caleb and Kate</u>	Steig	1977
<u>Calico Cat looks at shapes</u>	Charles	1975
<u>Calico Cat meets Bookworm</u>	Charles	1978
<u>candy egg bunny (The)</u>	Weil	1975
<u>Caps for sale</u>	Slobodkina	1940
<u>carrot seed (The)</u>	Krauss	1945
<u>caterpillar and the polliwog (The)</u>	Kent	1982
<u>Caterpillar's adventure</u>	Cowley	1998
<u>Caterpillar's wish</u>	Murphy	1998
<u>caterpillow fight (The)</u>	McBratney	1996
<u>Cats, cats, cats</u>	Cowley	1995
<u>Charlie the caterpillar</u>	DeLuise	1990
<u>Charlotte's web</u>	White	1952
<u>Chicken and egg</u>	Back	1984
<u>Chicken soup with rice</u>	Sendak	1987

<u>Chickens</u>	Snowball	1995
<u>chocolate rabbit (The)</u>	Claret	1984
<u>Cinderella</u>	Grimes	1993
<u>Cinderella</u>	Stoneway Books	1987
<u>Cinderella</u>	Perrault	1979
<u>Clever Tom and the leprechaun</u>	Shute	1988
<u>Clifford's happy Easter</u>	Bridwell	1994
<u>Clifford's kittens</u>	Bridwell	1984
<u>Comet's 9 lives</u>	Brett	1996
<u>Commotion in the ocean</u>	Andreae	1998
<u>Corduroy's Easter</u>	Hennessy	1998
<u>Corduroy's Easter party</u>	Freeman	2000
<u>Count-a-Saurus</u>	Blumenthal	1989
<u>Country Bear's good neighbor</u>	Brimmer	1988
<u>Country Bunny and the little gold shoes (The)</u>	Hayward	1939
<u>cow that went oink (The)</u>	Most	1990
<u>Cowboy bunnies</u>	Loomis	1997
<u>Cranberry Easter</u>	Devlin	1990
<u>crayon box that talked (The)</u>	Hubbard	1996
<u>Creepy, crawly caterpillar</u>	Facklam	1996
<u>crunching, munching caterpillar (The)</u>	Cain	2000
<u>Curious George and the dump truck</u>	Rey	1984
<u>Curious George rides a bike</u>	Rey	1952
<u>Dad's dinosaur day</u>	Hearn	1993
<u>Daisy and the egg</u>	Simmons	1998
<u>Daisy-Head Mayzie</u>	Seuss	1994
<u>Dancing in the wings</u>	Allen	2000
<u>Danny and the dinosaurs</u>	Huff	1978
<u>Dig a dinosaur</u>	Gentner	1993
<u>Dinorella</u>	Duncan Edwards	1997
<u>Dinosaur babies</u>	Penner	1991
<u>Dinosaur chase</u>	Otto	1993
<u>Dinosaurs</u>	Gibbons	1988
<u>Dinosaurs and their young</u>	Freedman	1983
<u>Dinosaurs forever</u>	Wise	1997
<u>Discovering seashells</u>	Florian	1986
<u>Don wants a dog</u>	Madden	1997
<u>Donkey, donkey</u>	Duvoisin	1940
<u>Don't laugh at me</u>	Cowley	1987
<u>Dory story</u>	Pallotta	2000
<u>Down by the bay</u>	Raffi	1987
<u>Dragonfly</u>	Bernhard	1993
<u>dumb bunnies (The)</u>	Denim	1994
<u>Easter Bunny's baby (The)</u>	Weigelt	2001
<u>Easter egg farm (The)</u>	Auch	1992
<u>Easter parade</u>	Chalmers	1988
<u>Easter surprises</u>	Backstein	1993
<u>Eat your peas, Louise</u>	Snow	1985

<u>Eeency weency spider</u>	Oppenheim	1991
<u>egg (The)</u>	Jeunesse	1989
<u>Egg in the hole book</u>	Scarry	1979
<u>egg tree (The)</u>	Milhous	1950
<u>Eggbert</u>	Ross	1994
<u>Eggs</u>	Turner	1994
<u>Eggs for tea</u>	Pienkowski	1990
<u>Emergency</u>	Gibbons	1994
<u>enchanted egg(The)</u>	Burrows	1961
<u>Eye on nature</u>	Chrison	1994
<u>Fantastic frogs!</u>	Robinson	1999
<u>Faraway drums</u>	Kroll	1998
<u>Fat frogs on a skinny log</u>	Rides	2000
<u>Fish eyes: A book you can count on</u>	Ehlert	1990
<u>Fish is fish</u>	Lionni	1970
<u>Flashy fantastic rain forest frogs</u>	Patent	1997
<u>Flies: From flower to mosquito</u>	Miller	1998
<u>Florida's fabulous butterflies</u>	Emmel	1997
<u>Foolish Rabbit's big mistake</u>	Martin	1985
<u>Forest Child</u>	McGee	1994
<u>fourth little pig (The)</u>	Celsi	1990
<u>Fox eyes</u>	Brown	1951
<u>Franklin and the Tooth Fairy</u>	Bourgeois	1996
<u>Frog and Toad together</u>	Lobel	1972
<u>Frog Prince cont'd (The)</u>	Scieczca	1991
<u>Froggy learns to swim</u>	London	1995
<u>Frogs</u>	Gibbons	1993
<u>Frogs jump</u>	Brooks	1996
<u>Frog's lunch</u>	Lillegard	1994
<u>From caterpillar to butterfly</u>	Heligman	1996
<u>Funny faces</u>	Ling	1994
<u>Gingerbread Man (The)</u>	Schmidt	1985
<u>giving tree (The)</u>	Silverstein	1964
<u>goat in the rug (The)</u>	Blood	1976
<u>golden egg book (The)</u>	Brown	1947
<u>Goodnight, goodnight</u>	Parks	1989
<u>Goodnight, Gorilla</u>	Rathmann	1994
<u>Grandfather Twilight</u>	Berger	1984
<u>Great egg mystery</u>	Hartelius	1985
<u>Great snakes</u>	Robinson	1996
<u>Green bananas</u>	Neville	1988
<u>Green Wilma</u>	Arnold	1993
<u>Gregory the terrible eater</u>	Sharmat	1980
<u>Grouchy Ladybug (The)</u>	Carle	1986
<u>Growing vegetable soup</u>	Ehlert	1987
<u>Grumpy bunnies</u>	Welch	2000
<u>grumpy Easter Bunny (The)</u>	Korman	1995
<u>happy day (The)</u>	Krauss	1949



<u>Happy Easter</u>	Wiese	1952
<u>Happy Easter, dear Dragon</u>	Hillert	1981
<u>happy hedgehog (The)</u>	Pfister	2000
<u>Happy Holidaysaurus</u>	Most	1992
<u>Harry by the sea</u>	Zion	1965
<u>Have you seen bugs?</u>	Oppenheim	1999
<u>Heckedy Peg</u>	Wood	1992
<u>Hedgie's surprise</u>	Brett	2000
<u>Hello, cat, you need a hat</u>	Gelman	1988
<u>Hello, Red Fox</u>	Carle	1998
<u>hermit crab (The)</u>	Cutting	1988
<u>Hershey Kiss addition book</u>	Pallotta	2001
<u>Hey, little ant!</u>	Hoose	1998
<u>Hiccups for Elephant</u>	Preller	1994
<u>hidden life of the pond (The)</u>	Schwartz	1988
<u>Home for a bunny</u>	Brown	1956
<u>Hook...</u>	Cutting	1989
<u>Hooray! It's Easter</u>	McNeill	1998
<u>Hop on Pop</u>	Seuss	1963
<u>Hopper</u>	Pfister	1991
<u>How a seed grows</u>	Jordan	1992
<u>How ants live</u>	Sheridan	1992
<u>How do dinosaurs say goodnight?</u>	Yolen	2000
<u>How Fletcher was hatched</u>	Devlin	1969
<u>How many teeth?</u>	Showers	1992
<u>How seeds travel</u>	Overbeck	1982
<u>How to hide a butterfly</u>	Heller	1992
<u>How to make an apple pie and see the world</u>	Priceman	1994
<u>Hungry Harry</u>	Partis	2001
<u>I can fly an airplane someday</u>	Rokoff	1973
<u>I can read about spiders</u>	Merriams	1997
<u>I hate to go to bed!</u>	Davis	1999
<u>I know an old lady</u>	Bonn	1961
<u>I see animals hiding</u>	Arnosky	1998
<u>I want to be a postman</u>	Greene	1958
<u>I went walking</u>	Williams	1989
<u>I wish I were a butterfly</u>	Howe	1987
<u>icky bug alphabet (The)</u>	Pallotta	1986
<u>If you give a moose a muffin</u>	Numeroff	1991
<u>If you give a mouse a cookie</u>	Numeroff	1985
<u>If you hopped like a frog</u>	Schwartz	1999
<u>If you were a rabbit</u>	Watson	1988
<u>I'm a caterpillar</u>	Marzollo	1997
<u>I'm a seed</u>	Marzollo	1997
<u>I'm going to be a police officer</u>	Kunhardt	1995
<u>In our country</u>	Canizares	1999
<u>Inspector Hopper</u>	Cushman	2000
<u>Into the sea</u>	Guiberson	1996

<u>Is your mama a llama?</u>	Guarino	1989
<u>It begins with an A</u>	Calmenson	1993
<u>Itchy, itchy chicken pox</u>	Maccarone	1992
<u>It's Spring</u>	Berger	2000
<u>It's too windy!</u>	Wilhelm	2000
<u>Jack and the beanstalk</u>	Kellogg	1991
<u>Jake baked the cake</u>	Hennessy	1990
<u>Jamberry</u>	Degen	1983
<u>Jamie O'Rourke and the big potato</u>	DePaola	1992
<u>Jigaree (The)</u>	Cowley	1983
<u>Jim and the beanstalk</u>	Briggs	1970
<u>Joseph had a little overcoat</u>	Tabak	1999
<u>Jump, frog, jump</u>	Kalan	1997
<u>jumping sack (The)</u>	Rice	1997
<u>Junie B. Jones and a little monkey business</u>	Park	1995
<u>Junie B. Jones and Captain Field Day</u>	Park	2001
<u>Junie B. Jones and Meanie Jim's birthday</u>	Park	1996
<u>Junie B. Jones and the yucky, blucky fruitcake</u>	Park	1995
<u>Junie B. Jones is a party animal</u>	Park	1997
<u>Junie B. Jones is not a crook</u>	Park	1997
<u>Just enough carrots</u>	Murphy	1997
<u>Kat Kong</u>	Pilkey	1993
<u>Knee-High Man (The)</u>	Lester	1951
<u>Laura' star</u>	Baumgart	1997
<u>Leo the late bloomer</u>	Krauss	1971
<u>life cycle of the butterfly (The)</u>	Hogan	1979
<u>Linnea in Monet's garden</u>	Bjork	1987
<u>lion and the mouse (The)</u>	Davidson	1990
<u>Lion King (The)</u>	Disney /no author	1999
<u>Little ant</u>	Novak	1994
<u>Little Chick's story</u>	Kwitz	1978
<u>Little Engine that could</u>	Piper	1930
<u>Little Gorilla</u>	Bornstein	1976
<u>Little Miss Spider at Sunny Patch School</u>	Kirk	2000
<u>little policeman (The)</u>	McClanahan	1992
<u>little rabbit (The)</u>	Dunn	1980
<u>Little Rabbit Foo Foo</u>	Rosen	1990
<u>Little Rabbit's loose tooth</u>	Bate	1975
<u>Little Red Hen (The)</u>	Parkes	1985
<u>Lost</u>	Rice	1997
<u>Magic Schoolbus in Solar System</u>	Cole	1990
<u>Make mine ice cream</u>	Berger	1993
<u>manners of a pig (The)</u>	Scarffe	1988
<u>Marshmellow Clare</u>	Newberry	1942
<u>Max's chocolate chicken</u>	Wells	1989
<u>Me first!</u>	Lester	1992
<u>midnight farm (The)</u>	Lindberg	1987
<u>Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel</u>	Burton	1964

<u>milk makers (The)</u>	Gibbons	1987
<u>Miss Mary Mack</u>	Hoberman	1998
<u>Miss Spider's tea party</u>	Kirk	1994
<u>Monster's birthday hiccups</u>	Mueller	1991
<u>Moondogs</u>	Kirk	2000
<u>Morning</u>	Polushkin	1983
<u>Mosquito</u>	Bailey	1998
<u>Mrs. Wishy-Washy</u>	Cowley	1980
<u>mud pony (The)</u>	Cohen	1988
<u>My cats Nick and Norm</u>	Harper	1995
<u>My name is Johari</u>	O'Brian	1996
<u>My visit to the dinosaurs</u>	Aliki	1985
<u>napping house (The)</u>	Wood	1984
<u>Nature's children: Moths</u>	Ivy	1986
<u>Never snap at a bubble</u>	Winer	1987
<u>Newton, Nell and Barney: Someday I want to be...</u>	Esquinaldo	1993
<u>night before Easter (The)</u>	Wing	1999
<u>nonsense ABC (The)</u>	Lear	1928
<u>Norma Jean, jumping bean</u>	Cole	1987
<u>ocean alphabet (The)</u>	Pallotta	1986
<u>Octopus hug</u>	Pringle	1993
<u>Octopuses</u>	Markert	1992
<u>Oh, no!</u>	Scarffe	1986
<u>Old black fly</u>	Aylesworth	1992
<u>On the way home</u>	Wilder	1962
<u>One lonely seahorse</u>	Joost	2000
<u>One of each</u>	Hoberman	1997
<u>opposites (The)</u>	Felix	1993
<u>Over in the meadow</u>	Cabrera	1999
<u>Over in the meadow</u>	Galdone	1986
<u>Over in the meadow</u>	Keats	1971
<u>Over on the farm</u>	Gunson	1995
<u>Paintbrush bunny (The)</u>	Adams	1976
<u>Pee-Wee's tale</u>	Hurwitz	2000
<u>Peg's ducklings</u>	Rice	1997
<u>Penguin Pete</u>	Pfister	1987
<u>Peter Cottontail</u>	Stephens	1994
<u>Peter Pan and Wendy</u>	Disney/no author	1976
<u>Petunia</u>	Duvoisin	1950
<u>pig in the pond (The)</u>	Waddell	1992
<u>Planting a rainbow</u>	Ehlert	1988
<u>Polar Bear, Polar Bear</u>	Martin	1991
<u>rain came down (The)</u>	Shannon	2000
<u>Rain forest</u>	Cowcher	1988
<u>Rain forest animals</u>	Wilkes	1999
<u>Rain forest secrets</u>	Dorros	1990
<u>Rainbow Fish (The)</u>	Pfister	1992
<u>reason for a flower (The)</u>	Heller	1983

<u>Rechenka's eggs</u>	Polacco	1988
<u>Red, white and blue</u>	Canizares	1999
<u>Rub-a-dub-dub, what's in the tub</u>	Blocksman	1984
<u>Runaway bunny</u>	Brown	1942
<u>Salt in his shoes</u>	Jordan	2000
<u>Sammy and the dinosaurs</u>	Whybrow	1999
<u>Saturday night at the dinosaur stomp</u>	Diggory Shields	1997
<u>Sea creatures with many arms</u>	Souza	1998
<u>Sea horses</u>	Walker	1999
<u>Sea turtles</u>	Gibbons	1995
<u>Seashells</u>	Richardson	1999
<u>Seeds grow!</u>	Medearils	1999
<u>Seven blind mice</u>	Young	1992
<u>Shoo fly</u>	Trapani	2001
<u>Silly Tilly and the Easter Bunny</u>	Hoban	1987
<u>Snappy little bugs</u>	Nielson	1999
<u>Someone is eating the sun</u>	Sonneborn	1974
<u>Sparkle and spin</u>	Rand	1957
<u>Spring is here</u>	Gomi	1989
<u>Stephanie's ponytail</u>	Munsch	1996
<u>Stevie B. Seahorse: A tale of a proud papa</u>	Tate	1993
<u>story about Ping (The)</u>	Flack	1961
<u>Sunflower house</u>	Bunting	1996
<u>surprise garden (The)</u>	Hall	1998
<u>Swimmy</u>	Lionni	1963
<u>tale of Peter Rabbit (The)</u>	Potter/Hague	2001
<u>tale of Peter Rabbit (The)</u>	Potter/Gallery Graphics	1993
<u>talking eggs (The)</u>	San Souci	1989
<u>Tammy Turtle: A tale of saving sea turtles</u>	Tate	1993
<u>Taxi: A book of city words</u>	Maestro	1989
<u>teeny tiny teacher (The)</u>	Calmenson	1998
<u>Teletubbies: It's Tubby bedtime</u>	No author	1999
<u>Ten furry monsters</u>	Calmenson	1984
<u>Ten little ladybugs</u>	Gerth	2000
<u>Ten little rabbits</u>	Grossman	1991
<u>Tentacles</u>	Martin	1993
<u>That's mine, Horace</u>	Keller	2000
<u>There's a Nightmare in my closet</u>	Mayer	1976
<u>This is the sunflower</u>	Schaefer	2000
<u>Three bags full</u>	Powell	1989
<u>three little javelinas (The)</u>	Lowell	1992
<u>Three Little Pigs</u>	Marshall	1989
<u>Three Little Pigs (The)</u>	Gallery Graphics	1993
<u>Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig (The)</u>	Trivizas	1997
<u>Thunder Cake</u>	Polacco	1990
<u>Time for bed</u>	Fox	1993
<u>tiny seed (The)</u>	Carle	1987
<u>To market, to market</u>	Melser	1990

<u>Toestomper and the caterpillars</u>	Collicut	1999
<u>tooth book (The)</u>	LeSieg	1981
<u>Totally amazing rainforest</u>	Graham	1998
<u>Toy Story</u>	Disney/no author	1999
<u>Trains</u>	Gibbons	1987
<u>true story of the three little pigs (The)</u>	Scieszka	1989
<u>Tuesday</u>	Wiesner	1991
<u>Twickum Tweer</u>	Prelutsky	1982
<u>Two bad ants</u>	Van Allsburg	1988
<u>Two Sillies (The)</u>	Hoberman	2000
<u>Tyrannosaurus was a beast</u>	Prelutsky	1988
<u>Underwater animals: Over 300 fun facts</u>	Donati	1992
<u>Verdi</u>	Cannon	1997
<u>very busy spider (The)</u>	Carle	1984
<u>Very first things: Ants</u>	Grossman	1997
<u>very hungry caterpillar (The)</u>	Carle	1969
<u>very lonely firefly (The)</u>	Carle	1995
<u>very quiet cricket (The)</u>	Carle	1990
<u>Waiting for wings</u>	Ehlert	2001
<u>Walking through the jungle</u>	Harter	1997
<u>We plant a seed</u>	Gordon	2000
<u>Wee sing-bugs</u>	Beall	2001
<u>Whales: The gentle giants</u>	Milton	1989
<u>What a funny bunny-- ABC adventures</u>	Whitehead	1985
<u>What a Teddy Bear needs</u>	Kaye	1989
<u>What happened to Patrick's dinosaurs</u>	Carrick	1988
<u>What is a fossil?</u>	Goldish	1989
<u>What is an insect?</u>	Canizares	1998
<u>What kind of babysitter is this?</u>	Jordan	1991
<u>What's it like to be a fish?</u>	Pfeffer	1996
<u>What's the time, Mr. Wolf?</u>	Davison	1984
<u>When Africa was home</u>	Williams	1991
<u>When Sophie gets angry...</u>	Bang	1999
<u>When the Fly flew in</u>	Peters	1961
<u>Where butterflies grow</u>	Ryder	1988
<u>Where does the butterfly go when it rains?</u>	Garellick	1978
<u>Where the Wild Things are</u>	Sendak	1963
<u>white bunny and his magic nose (The)</u>	Duplaix	1981
<u>Who took the farmer's hat?</u>	Nodset	1982
<u>Who will be my mother?</u>	Cowley	1983
<u>Whose eggs are these?</u>	Cutting	1989
<u>Why can't I fly?</u>	Gelman	1976
<u>wide-mouthed frog (The)</u>	Larranaga	1991
<u>Wild, wild, sunflower child</u>	Carlstrom	1993
<u>Wildcats</u>	Winston	1994
<u>Wind says good night</u>	Rydell	1994
<u>Winnie the Pooh's Easter</u>	Talkington	1996
<u>Wishy-washy day</u>	Cowley	1997

<u>wolf is coming (The)</u>	McDonald	1999
<u>Wonders of the sea</u>	Sabin	1999
<u>Yertle the turtle</u>	Seuss	1958
<u>Yes, Ma'am</u>	Melson	1980
<u>You're my Nikki</u>	Eisenberg	1986

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katrina Willard Hall was born on March 31, 1965. She grew up in Georgia and entered Kennesaw State College, in Kennesaw in 1983. She later completed her bachelor's degree in communications with honors at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Hall completed her master's degree in education at the University of Florida in Gainesville in 1993. Hall taught in public schools (including kindergarten, first and fourth grades, Title I, and enrichment) for more than 10 years. During that time, she served as team leader and mentor teacher for pre-interns, interns, and beginning teachers. She completed her specialist's degree in Education from the University of Florida in 1999, and became a National Board Certified Teacher (early childhood/generalist) in 2002. As a full-time graduate student, Hall taught children's literature, early childhood literature, language arts methods, and action research courses. During that time, she worked as a research assistant for Linda Lamme; and served as treasurer for Kappa Delta Pi, an education honor society.

Hall is a member of the Florida Reading Association, and served as managing editor for the Florida Reading Quarterly for two years and as district director for one year. She is also a member of the International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and Phi Delta Kappa. She was vice president and president of the Alachua County Reading Council, and assisted with the annual Young Authors Conference and annual literacy awards reception for teachers. As a classroom researcher, she has presented at conferences, including the National Council of Teachers

of English annual convention. Hall currently lives in Tallahassee, Florida, with her husband and cats.