

Guided Reading:  
Its Effects on Reading Achievement and Attitudes

Thesis

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by

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## Abstract

This study was designed to analyze the effect of guided reading on second graders reading achievement. This study also examined the effect guided reading had on students' attitude towards reading.

The subjects included forty-two second graders from a rural school in western New York. There were two second grade classes who participated in the study. The experimental group received guided reading. The control group did not.

The researcher used Running Reading Records as the tool to determine the students' reading level. The students Running Reading Records were taken at the beginning of the study and again at the end of the study. The researcher analyzed and compared the Running Reading Records of the Traditional Group and the Guided Reading Group. A reading attitude survey was also given to all the students. The survey was given as a means to measure how each student felt about reading.

Results were broken down into two categories; Achievement and Attitude. There was a favorable gain in students' reading achievement. There was not a major difference in the attitudes between the Traditional or Guided Reading Group.

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# CHAPTER I

## Statement of the Problem

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate if guided reading favorably impacts second grade students' reading achievement, strategies and attitude.

### **Research Questions**

1. Does the use of guided reading favorably impact children's achievement as measured by running reading records?
2. Does the use of guided reading favorably impact children's attitude towards reading as measured by the modified Elementary Reading Attitude Survey?

### **Need for the Study**

At a workshop by Richard Allington. The participants were asked to imagine learning to read from a doctor's book. We ask children to do this everyday when we ask them to read something that is at a frustration level for them. We can not expect all children to read from the same text at the same time just because they

are all in the third month of first grade. We know too much about how students learn to actually expect that to happen. Students will learn to read when they are provided an opportunity to practice strategies at their instructional level. It is too difficult to practice strategies and to focus on meaning when we are only able to read a few words on a page. All meaning of the text is lost at this time.

If a teacher's role is to take a child from where he is to where he needs to go in reading, then the teacher must assess the student and use this information to guide instruction. Instruction should be based on the child's needs and scaffold on the child's successes. If we provide this for children then our hopes are that they will become independent readers who consistently focus on meaning. This researcher would like to look at guided reading and see if it is providing these key elements for readers.

## **Definition of Terms**

### Running reading record

Running reading record is a tool for coding, scoring and analyzing a child's precise reading behaviors.

### Independent level

The independent level is when a student scores 95 percent accuracy on a running reading record.

**Instructional level**

The instructional level is when a student scores between 90 and 94 percent accuracy on a running reading record.

**Frustration level**

The frustration level is when a student scores less than 90 percent accuracy on a running reading record.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### Rationale for Guided Reading

One of the primary goals of a reading program is to foster the love of reading in students. Students who want to read and who choose to read will most likely become life-long readers. Reading motivation is also important because students who are motivated to read become better readers (Johns & Lenski, 1997). Instilling a positive attitude towards reading and the desire to read are challenging. Success is key in developing life long readers. If readers do not feel successful they will not choose to read. How does one become a successful reader? What are the traits of a successful reader?

We know that successful readers use many skills and strategies when they read. Independent readers use a wide range of strategies without stopping to think what they are doing. There is a difference between a skill and a strategy. A skill describes a set of helpful tools that students practice in order to improve reading. A skill becomes a strategy when the learner can use it independently, when he or she can reflect on and understand how it works and then apply it to new reading material (Maxim & Five, 1993 ). What are the strategies good readers use? Our teaching of reading strategies is guided by the three cueing systems, graphophonic, syntactic and semantic. Maxim and Five have put together a list of examples of strategies that readers use:

- \* Predicting, using context and letter-sound relationships
- \* Reading on to see whether predictions make sense
- \* Self-correcting when something does not make sense
- \* Seeing whether the sentence sounds right (grammar)
- \* Thinking about what would make sense
- \* Thinking about what you already know about a topic
- \* Making a connection to other related stories
- \* Using the letters and sounds to make a prediction
- \* Breaking the words into parts
- \* Relating the word to a familiar word (how-now)
- \* Skipping the word and going on
- \* Reading on to get more information about what a word might be
- \* Looking up really important words in a dictionary
- \* Asking someone who knows the word
- \* Rereading a difficult passage, getting another running start
- \* Previewing a book: looking at the title, headings, illustrations, summary
- \* Reading faster for momentum and fluency
- \* Creating an image of the story, visualizing
- \* Creating a metaphor or analogy to understand the story
- \* Stopping at certain points to think and predict
- \* Asking yourself questions about what is happening
- \* Talking to someone else who has read the story
- \* Reading the first line of a paragraph and then skimming the rest
- \* Reading what you don't understand slowly and what you do quickly
- \* Paying attention to what's new or contradictory (p.167)

The three reading cue systems are Semantic, Syntactic and Graphophonic. We refer to Semantic as meaning. Does it make sense? Syntactic cueing system is the structure of the language. Does it sound right? Graphophonic cueing system is the visual. Does it look right? O'Flahaven (1999) breaks each system down further by describing each system. He defines Semantic as: prior knowledge, story sense, text and illustrations. Syntactic is the natural language, knowledge of English, grammatical patterns and language structures. He breaks Graphophonic

down into sound and symbols, analogies and print conventions such as :  
directionality, letters, beginnings and endings, punctuation and words.

Children have these systems at their disposal but they need to be guided on how to access them and when to use them. To children, meaning comes from their experiences. This means that reading has to make sense. Syntax comes from knowing how the language is put together. Children have had many interactive experiences with the language. They know when it does not sound right. Visual information comes from the relationship between oral language and its graphic symbols.

If learning to read involves bringing many complex behaviors together as the reader problem-solves his or her way through a story, then guided reading provides the teacher with many opportunities to model important reading behaviors such as linking, cross-checking and monitoring (Clay,1991).

In teaching for strategies, however, skills are taught in a broader context because the learner demonstrates a need for specific skills in the instructional/learning setting, perhaps in a guided reading group (Routman,1994). The skill is taught because the learner genuinely needs to use it. It also might be taught because the teacher anticipates that the learner will need to use it soon. The teacher might teach it prior to or after reading a new text in a guided reading situation. The teacher guides the learner to think through the possibilities in an authentic context. While the teacher may question or suggest, it is the learner who makes the deductions and applies his/her learning in a variety of contexts.

A skill can not be considered a strategy until the learner can use it purposefully and meaningfully. Applying the distinction between skill and strategy to the

teaching of sight words, phonics, and vocabulary, we see clearly that merely teaching the skills in isolation and practicing on worksheets has no relation to meaningful teaching (Routman,1994). The learner must know how to use the skill in a variety of reading situations. This is when it becomes a strategy.

Children need to have successful experiences reading texts, to grow as a reader. They need to have opportunities to practice what they know by applying it to authentic reading situations. The text should not be too difficult for the reader. When this happens, readers struggle to make any meaning of the text and they are unable to apply strategies to help them read. In the same instance, we do not want readers to consistently read text that is so easy for them that they have no opportunity to build their problem solving strategies.

It is important to use carefully leveled books at the student's instructional level for guided reading. Providing support at each child's instructional level is referred to as working within the "zone of proximal development" by Vygotsky (1962). This scaffolding helps transition students between what they know and what they need to know. As student's become comfortable at one level they move to the next level of proximal development (pg. 291)

Guided reading allows you to help students move forward in their reading development through using specific teaching and careful selection of text. The selection of texts is based on running reading records. If a child can not read about ninety percent of the words than the text is too difficult. A text that is too hard does not provide an opportunity for smooth problem solving, or for meaning to guide the process (Fountas & Pinnell,1996). The reading process can become individual word calling with no attention to meaning. When children solve words

using visual information, they need to be able to check their success using meaning and structure. The more children use problem solving while reading for meaning, the better their problem solving will become. This impacts on their success as a reader.

It is the role of the teacher to provide texts that are at an instructional level for the student. Placing students in too difficult a text can have disastrous effects. This happens frequently when a child is placed in a whole class reading or a basal reading. The student attempts to read along without looking at the print, trying to remember the entire text, or just read along one step behind all the other children with almost no independent processing (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). How successful can a reader feel in this situation? Will this promote life-long readers?

Choosing the text is important for the reader. The teacher's use of running reading records and miscue analysis aids the teacher in selecting the leveled text. Text selection is key to providing a meaningful guided reading. As the child maps language onto the text, follows the plot and story with understanding, and somehow begins to deal effectively with several dimensions of this complex task all at the same time, changes occur in behavior (Clay, 1991). When a child checks the picture, pauses, and uses his finger as he point to the words, comments on his experiences, or relates the book to a previous book he has read or heard, these are signals learning is going on. Observing these behaviors helps the teacher to select the next book and guides her to her next guided reading lesson.

## What is Guided Reading?

Over the past few years there has been a large misconception about what guided reading is. According to Routman (1994) it is one of the components of a balanced literacy program. The five components are: reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading and language opportunities to respond thoughtfully and critically. Guided reading is referred to as the heart of a balanced reading program (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Routman, 1994; Howard, 1996). This is the time when students are engaged in text at their instructional level.

Guided reading has become one of the most significant and popular contemporary reading instructional practices in the United States. Although attributed to the work of Fountas and Pinnell (1996) guided reading actually from long standing practices of guided reading in New Zealand-based Balanced Reading Program (Fawson & Reutzel, 2000).

Children learn to read by becoming engaged in reading. It begins long before a child enters school. Literacy begins at birth. There are daily encounters with symbols of literacy in the world. Everyone brings to school a different literacy background. Some children have been read to using a wide range of literature consistently, while others walk in able to read words they have experienced time after time on their computer game. By participating in literacy, children discover written language and what its purpose is.

When children enter kindergarten they are read to and participate in shared reading. In shared reading they are able to engage in familiar text and begin to learn concepts of print and broaden their phonological awareness. As children begin to have some knowledge of what print looks like, they are able to tell if something makes sense or sounds right and they know a few letters. Then they are able to begin guided reading.

Guided reading is a teaching approach designed to help individual students learn how to process a variety of increasingly challenging texts with understanding and fluency (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Guided reading occurs in a small group setting. This allows for interaction among the readers that benefit them all. The teacher works with this small group of students who are using similar reading processes. The teacher introduces the text to a small group of students, works briefly with each student as he/she reads it, support when necessary may be given, engages the students in a meaningful discussion about the text, chooses one or two teaching points to cover after the reading and sometimes offers an extension for the students.

The goal is for the text to be at a level which allows the child to successfully control the story in the first reading with a few challenges but a high degree of potential success (Howard, 1996). Readers are carefully matched with the text, at an appropriate level so that success is assured. The text offers minimal new learning so that the students can read it with the strategies they already have. It provides opportunities for small amounts of learning to happen. The primary goal is to focus on meaning while allowing the child to control and interact with the text

while problem solving. Meaning is being built from the moment a reader picks up a text and anticipates reading it (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001).

Fountas and Pinnell (2001) ask, What does it mean to read a text? In reading we may:

- \*Identify and understand important information
- \*Connect personally with such things as setting, characters and plot
- \*React to the text emotionally, perhaps experiencing humor, loneliness, hope, terror or grief
- \*Derive the author's precise meaning even when it's subtle or ironic
- \*Reproduce the author's intended syntax and phrasing when reading aloud
- \*Incorporate the meaning of the text into our own knowledge of world
- \*Make inferences beyond the text (p.190).

Through guided reading a teacher can demonstrate how a reader constructs meaning from text, makes personal connections and goes beyond the text. While reading, the reader continually draws in meaningful information, processes it, and responds it

The purpose for guided reading is to enable students to use and develop strategies. Guided reading would look a little different for emergent readers and fluent readers. The focus in both is for children to control the reading and their problem solving. Beginning readers will work on strategies that might include predicting, using picture clues using their knowledge of beginning sound with what would make sense in the sentence. Fluent readers would focus on developing strategies for comprehending more challenging material.

## The Teacher's Role Versus the Student's Role

Brabham and Kidd (2002) use the analogy of “who’s in the drivers seat”, to explain the roles of the student and the teacher in guided reading. They discuss how too often teachers have taken students through a predetermined lesson and the teacher has said, “Leave the driving to us”. The teacher took the wheel and led the students. In contrast the concept of guided reading challenged us to think deeply about how to help students become independent, strategic, and self extending readers (Brabham & Kidd, 2002). In guided reading the teacher is behind the wheel for a short time and then steps back and lets the student take control (drive). This can be seen in all aspects of guided reading, from strategic reading to discussions about the text. The teacher’s role is to keep the learner at the cutting edge of his or her competencies (where Vygotsky would have said the reader should be) (Clay, 1991).

There has been a lot of discussion on this topic but very little empirical research.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Design**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate if guided reading favorably impacts second grade students' reading achievement, strategies and attitude.

#### **Research Questions**

1. Does the use of guided reading favorably impact children's achievement as measured by running reading records?
2. Does the use of guided reading favorably impact children's attitudes towards reading as measured by the modified Elementary Reading Attitude Survey?

#### **Methodology**

##### **Subjects**

The subjects consist of 44 second grade students from a suburban elementary school in western New York. Two blended classrooms participated in this study. Each classroom has a full time aide and a half-time consultant teacher. The

student's reading abilities ranged from non-readers to students reading above grade level.

The traditional approach group continued with their current reading program. Their reading program is centered around a basal series. The teacher provided additional literature to supplement the reading series.

### **Materials**

Both groups were exposed to the basal series, trade books and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. The traditional approach group met with their students in flex groups to cover a variety of skills. They used skill sheets and trade books.

The students in the guided reading group were provided with books to read at their instructional level. These books had been leveled according to Fountas and Pinnell's text gradient criteria. After they read these books in a guided reading experience group the books were placed in their book box to read independently or with a partner. The teacher also placed other books that were at the students independent level in their box. The books included non-fiction and fiction books the students had not read during guided reading. The purpose was to provide students with books they could successfully read for understanding while they practiced their strategies and skills.

To find out what level book the child needed the teacher used running reading records on each child. The teacher analyzed their reading behaviors and checked

for comprehension. By doing this, the teacher was able to observe what strategies the student is used. The running reading records were also used to look at achievement.

## **Procedures**

The teacher will gave each child a running reading record to assess the student's level and strategies he/she is using. The teacher in the experimental group then created flexible groups based on this information. The students will met in guided reading groups based on this information. Guided reading groups met two to four times a week. The frequency of meeting times depended on the students' needs. Beginning readers met more often than the students who were reading at a higher level.

In the guided reading group, the teacher followed a typical Before, During and After the reading format. The main purpose of the Before reading segment was to prepare the students for reading the text. The teacher's goal was to have students successfully problem solve during the reading of the text. Preparation included engaging students in discussions to activate any prior knowledge they had on the topic and to build background knowledge to help them understand what they were about to read. The teacher asked the students to make predictions based on the cover, title and pictures. In many cases the teacher had the students take a picture

walk to aid in their predictions and to provide language and syntactic structures with which they were not familiar. This time was conversational and was be teacher supported.

The goal of the During was to provide students with the opportunity to practice their reading strategies and problem solving while reading the text. The teacher provided each student with his/her own copy of the text. The children read softly to themselves. Students read at their own pace. The teacher listened to each student read a part of the text and made note of problem solving and strategies the student were using. This was not a round robin reading. Although the students were reading the same text at the same time they were reading independently and solving their own unfamiliar words. If a student finished before another student he/she reread the text. When the teacher noticed a student having difficulty solving a word she provided strategy prompts.

The goal for After the reading was for students to discuss the story and to reflect on the reading strategies they used. Each student had the opportunity to share his/her ideas about the text and the strategies he/she used. After the discussion the teacher selected a teaching point which was based on the needs of the students in the group. The students revisited the text at other times in partners, independently or with an adult.

## **Analysis of Data**

The student's running reading records will be collected and analyzed. The researcher will record their growth over the course of the school year. The researcher will compare the progress each student has made during the school year. The researcher will collect the Elementary Reading Attitude Surveys and compare the class responses.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results of the Study

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate if guided reading favorably impacts second grade students' reading achievement, strategies and attitude.

#### Reading Achievement

Running reading records were taken at the beginning of the study and again at the end of the study in order to obtain the most reliable results. The focus was on obtaining their instructional level. The researcher analyzed each class's reading growth. Fourteen students' running reading records were unable to be used in this study because the researcher only assessed to a level thirty. These students either started at a level thirty or were at a level thirty a month into the study. Seven students from each class were not used for the reading achievement part of the study. The second grade district benchmark is a thirty by the end of second grade. There was a difference in each class's growth. The guided reading group collectively gained one hundred and sixty-two levels. The traditional approach group gained one hundred and fifteen levels. The mean for the guided reading group was twelve. The mean for the traditional approach group was eight.

**Reading Achievement**

<b>Students in the Guided Reading Group</b>	<b>Levels Gained in Running Reading Records</b>
Student A	14
Student B	10
Student C	15
Student D	5
Student E	12
Student F	11
Student G	10
Student H	12
Student I	21
Student J	2
Student K	18
Student L	11
Student M	10
Student N	11
<b>Mean for Control Group 12</b>	
<b>Students in Traditional Approach Group</b>	<b>Levels Gained in Running Reading Records</b>
Student A	10
Student B	8
Student C	6
Student D	9
Student E	3
Student F	12
Student G	8
Student H	6
Student I	8
Student K	5
Student L	10
Student M	11
Student N	12
Student M	7
<b>Mean for Traditional group 8</b>	

## Attitudes

The students were asked to take a reading survey. The researcher read them eighteen questions. They had to circle one of the four Garfields that best expressed how they felt about the question asked. Every question began with, "How do you feel about ....." or "How do you feel when.....". The researcher collected and analyzed the surveys. The students were ranked from one to four according to their responses. A four represented the most positive attitude towards reading (happiest Garfield) and a one represented the least positive attitude towards reading (upset Garfield). Questions one through ten related to attitude towards recreational reading and questions eleven through eighteen related to attitude towards academic aspects of reading.

There was not a major difference between the traditional approach group or the guided reading group. See Table A for the results of the guided reading group and Table B for the results of the traditional approach group. The mean for both the guided reading and traditional approach group fell within the four range for recreational reading. The mean for academic reading was slightly different for the traditional approach group and the guided reading group. The guided reading groups mean was a 81 and for the traditional approach group it was 74.2. The guided reading group fell in the four range while the traditional approach group was at the high end of three.

**Table A**

<b>Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Results for Guided Reading Group</b>		
<b>Scores</b>	<b>Recreational Reading</b>	<b>Academic Reading</b>
4	12	14
3	8	5
2	1	2
1	0	0

**Table B**

<b>Elementary Reading Attitude Survey Results for Traditional Approach Group</b>		
<b>Scores</b>	<b>Recreational Reading</b>	<b>Academic Reading</b>
4	10	10
3	8	8
2	3	2
1	0	1

**Percentile Mean for the Guided Reading Group**

Recreational Reading 80

Academic Reading 81

**Percentile Mean for the Traditional Group**

Recreational Reading 76

Academic Reading 74.1

## CHAPTER V

### Conclusions and Implications

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate if guided reading favorably impacts second grade students' reading achievement and attitude.

#### Research Questions

1. Does the use of guided reading favorably impact children's achievement as measured by running reading records?
2. Does the use of guided reading favorably impact children's attitude towards reading as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey?

#### Conclusions

The results of this study show that guided reading does favorably impact children's achievement as measured by running reading records. There was a growth of one hundred sixty one levels for the guided reading group and a growth of one hundred and fifteen levels for the traditional approach group. The mean for the guided reading group was a twelve and the mean for the traditional approach

group was an eight. This shows a growth of twelve levels on average for the guided reading group and eight levels for the traditional approach group. This study shows that guided reading does increase students reading achievement at a faster pace. Guided reading is an effective way to teach reading.

This study did not find that guided reading had a favorable impact on students' attitude towards reading. I was disappointed to see the results of the survey. I am a strong believer in guided reading, and I believe that when readers feels successful, they enjoy reading. Why, would my study not have found this to be true? Perhaps I should not have given the survey to the guided reading group at the end of a hot June day. This could have impacted how the class was feeling about reading at the time. I wish I would have included another form of measurement to assess their feelings towards reading such as anecdotal notes. I think this would have given a clearer picture of how each reader felt about reading.

### Implications for the Classroom

This study along with the review of the literature supports using guided reading as one part of a balanced literacy program. Guided reading should be used as the heart of each student's reading program. Students should have the opportunity to read text at their instructional level with a teacher who will guide them towards becoming independent strategic readers. When this is in place the reader will make

greater gains to becoming a successful reader. Students will be allowed to take ownership over their reading and become active participants in their own learning.

### Future Research

I was not able to find any prior research that had looked at the effectiveness of guided reading. I was only able to find books that described what guided reading is and how to use it and articles that discussed guided reading. I was unable to find any true research. I think it would be extremely valuable to do more studies that looked at the effectiveness of guided reading. This could be done as a longitudinal study. It would be interesting to see the results of a study that looked at students who began learning to read with guided reading and continued through third grade. Would the results show strong independent readers?

The results of this study showed a similar attitude toward reading with a class who uses guided reading and a class who does not. The children were overall positive towards reading. Due to my strong belief that confident successful readers are more excited about reading, I think it would be a great idea to see if there is a strong correlation between reader success and attitude towards reading.

There is one more thing. I wish I could have delved deeper as a researcher. I would have liked to have analyzed student's comprehension and compared students who are in a guided reading program to students who are not. I think that is another strength of a guided reading approach. You teach children to be

independent, strategic readers who focus on meaning. The belief is that their comprehension will be stronger.

Guided reading does favorably impact student's reading achievement.

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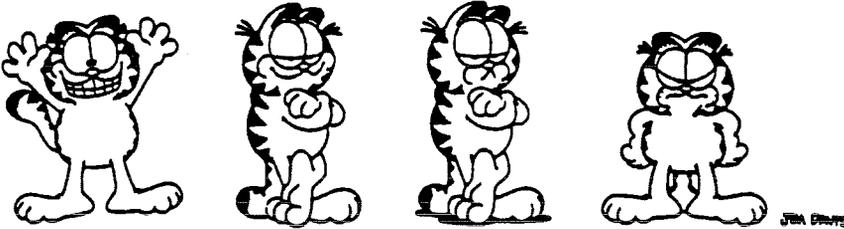
## Appendix

# Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

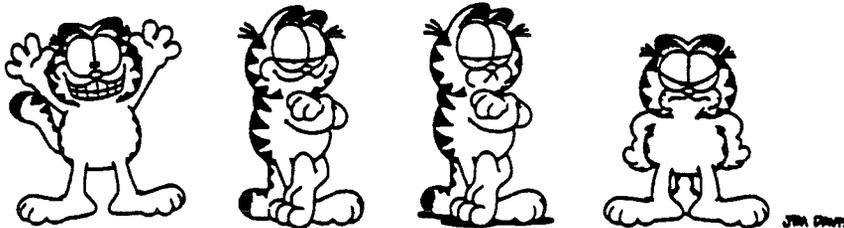
Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

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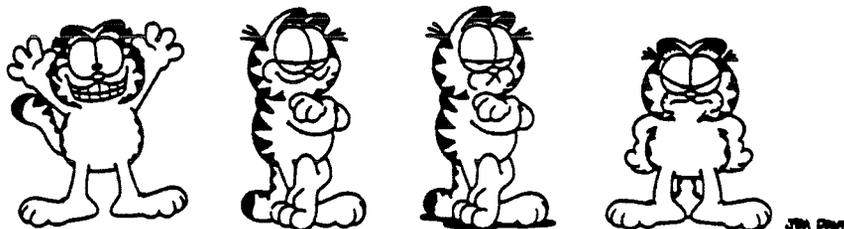
1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?



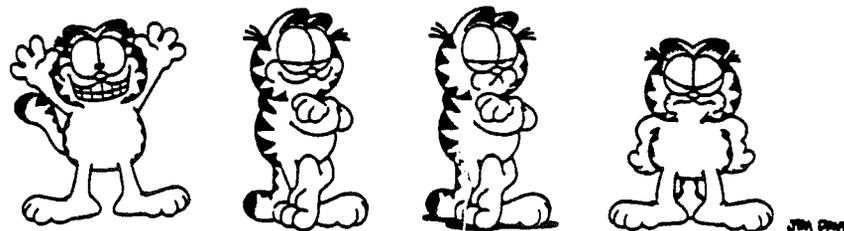
2. How do you feel when you read a book in a school during free time?



3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

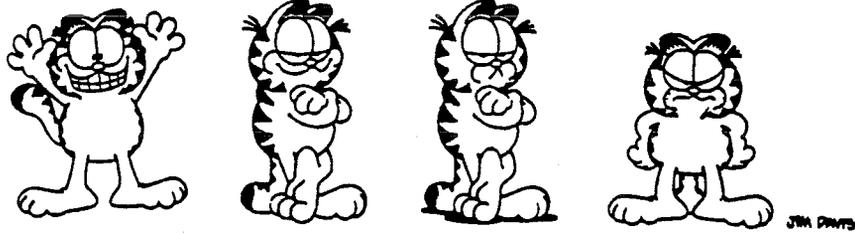


4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?

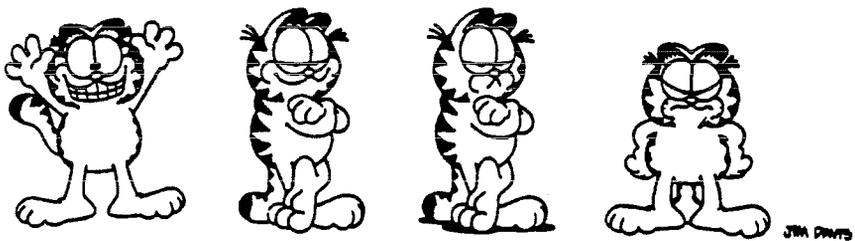


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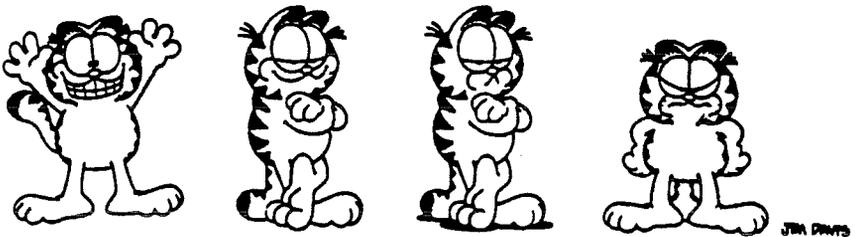
5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



6. How do you feel about starting a new book?



7. How do you feel about reading during summer?



8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?



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9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?



JIM DWYER

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



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11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?



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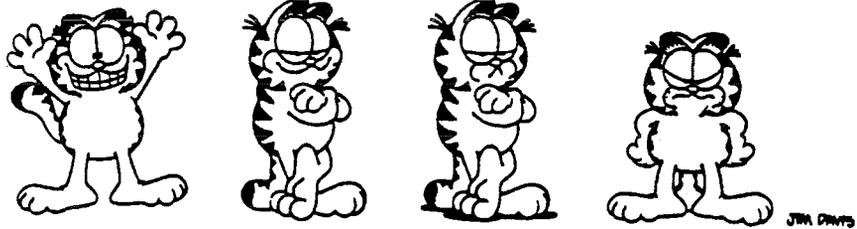
12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?



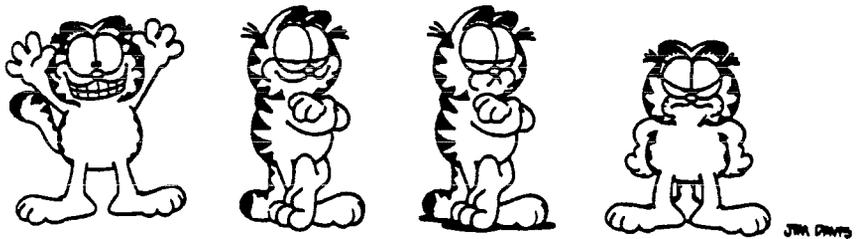
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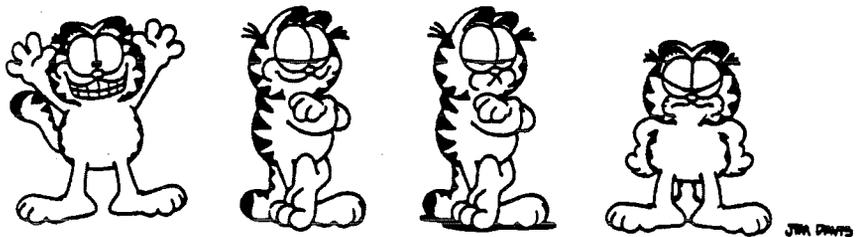
13. How do you feel about reading in school?



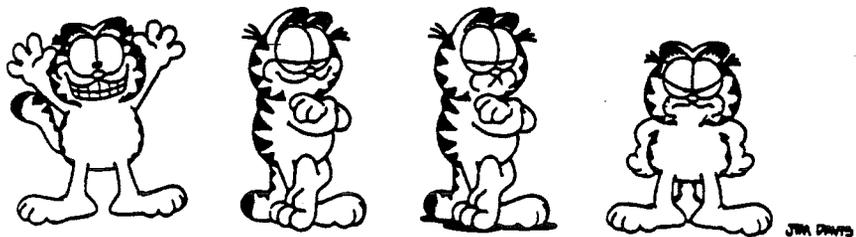
14. How do you feel about reading your school books?



15. How do you feel about learning from a book?



16. How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?



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17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



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18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



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19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?



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20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?



JIM DAVIS