

PATTERNS OF WRITTEN RESPONSE
TO LITERATURE
OF AVERAGE FIFTH GRADE READERS
THESIS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze individual and group patterns in written responses to literature.

The subjects for this study were six fifth-graders of average reading ability. The subjects attended a suburban public school which was structurally designed on an open plan model. Each day in class, the subjects read two novels, The Black Pearl, and The Moldanado Miracle. The children composed written responses in their personal reading logs to what they read the previous night. The teacher wrote back to the children in their reading logs on a daily basis. Individual student responses were then categorized into areas of response (see Tables 1-7) to establish individual response patterns. Group (all six children) patterns were determined by compiling the individuals categorized responses. Samples of typical responses in each response category for each individual student were also recorded.

Two categories of response, Interpretive and Personal, received the greatest number of responses from all six subjects. The high number of responses in each of these two categories may be a result of the question used to prompt the children's written responses ("How did you feel about what you read last night?").

The other five categories of responses (Literary Judgment, Narrational, Personal Associational, Prescriptive, and Miscellaneous) showed no continuity for all six students. There

was variety among students regarding the latter five categories. Perhaps the variety in these response categories among individuals refers to the fact that reading is a very highly personal interaction between reader and text.

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of written responses to literature of average fifth grade readers to determine individual response patterns.

Questions to be Answered

- [1] What patterns of written responses to literature are demonstrated by the subjects?

- [2] Are the individuals' response patterns consistent among the two novels read? What differences were seen in the individuals' responses?

Need for the Study

Moving from Skills Based to Meaning Based

Instruction

With the birth of the Whole Language movement in the early 1980's, the emphasis on teaching reading through a skills approach diminished significantly (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990). Whole Language theorists advocate a more meaning based approach to reading. The torch was being passed from the reading basals to trade books.

Along with more emphasis on meaning came more emphasis on individuals. A more personal examination of the reader was now required in a holistic teaching approach. Children's responses to what they were reading soon became a focal point in holistic teaching. "Response is rooted in human situations which allow the child to experience literature as a part of his or her social interactions" (Tchudi, 1985, p. 468). One of the tools that teachers can use to help them obtain this more

personal look is the examination of written responses to literature. Many teachers choose reading logs to capture this more personal interaction with response to literature.

The data collected from the subjects in this study will help provide educators with information on data collection in the classroom as well as help them to interpret the data.

Assessment Trends

The recent trend in assessment in the field of education has led down a path of authenticity. Cambourne and Turbill (1990, p. 345) argue that “an approach to assessment based on more naturalistic data collection and interpretation procedures is more commensurate with the theoretical principles that underpin holistic approaches”.

New York State’s graduation requirements will soon be based upon student portfolios. Written responses to literature read by students will surely make their way into their portfolios, therefore there remains a strong need to look at written responses for

assessment purposes.

How Can Determining Patterns in Written Responses Help the Instructional Needs of Individual Students?

Given the trends in assessment, meaning based approaches to teaching reading, as well as the emphasis placed on individuality, it only makes sense that future teaching strategies will be affected by what is found in this study and others like it.

Over time, examining the types of children's written responses to literature can be very valuable to a teacher. If a student makes the same kinds of responses consistently, then his/her responses are not very diverse or intricate in nature. Therefore, a teacher's responsibility lies in making sure that his/her students are aware of and utilize all levels of response (Hancock, 1993).

Need for Research in Response to Literature

In a review of research on responses to literature, Galda (1983) alluded to the overall need to

continue research in the area of responses to literature. She recognized that one of the drawbacks of research in this area is that it relies primarily on observation and interviews, which generally involves small numbers of students. Galda found that the power of these studies lies in the similarities of the findings. Therefore, it is important to continue to examine this area so researchers will be able to add more detail to what they already know.

Definitions of Terms

In this study the following terms will be defined as follows:

Reading Logs: A composition notebook where students and teachers respond to the literature they are reading and to one another. It serves as a record of the thinking, learning, and reading that teachers and students have done together.

Literature Study: The time period during the school day devoted to reading, writing about, discussing, and studying the literature used in this study.

Participant-Observer: In this study the participant-observer is also the classroom teacher. The terms will be used interchangeably.

Squire's (1964) categories of written response define the following responses types as follows:

Interpretive: Making inferences, predictions, relating work to something else, discussing theme, characters, setting, and so on.

Literary Judgment: Evaluating, rating, and/or assessing the author's work or style, genre, and/or use of language or literary devices.

Narrational: Retelling the story. Literal level statements or comments.

Personal: Expression of feelings, or personal interests while reading the book.

Personal Associational: References which refer to the students' lives. Putting themselves in the place of a character.

Prescriptive: Telling what the character should do or should have done.

Miscellaneous: Unrelated matters, such as stating what chapter a child is on in their reading.

Limitations of the Study

- [1] The choices of literature used in the study may not be books that the individual students would choose on their own. Therefore the books used in this study may not be as high interest for some individuals, perhaps evoking atypical written responses from the subjects.

- [2] This study takes an in depth look at six students' written responses to literature. However, this is a small sampling of average fifth grade readers and the results found may not be consistent with the population at large of average fifth grade readers.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of written responses to literature of average fifth grade readers to determine individual response patterns.

What Are Considered To Be Responses To Literature?

Response is a personal interaction of a reader with the text. It requires an active involvement of the reader with the text (Harding, 1968; O'Neill, 1984; Rosenblatt, 1938). It is a construct of meaning at the time of the response. Rosenblatt (1978) believes that response is nothing more than the way one feels at the time of responding.

Traditionally, responses to literature have been

researched in the verbal mode of response. Hickman (1981) saw the need to extend the study of children's responses to literature in the field of reading beyond the typical question and answer periods, whose primary focus is on oral responses. Hickman recognized the value in researching children's responses that were not spoken. She stated that the "reliance on verbal measures and critical statements which seems generally appropriate for studying the response of young adults is less satisfactory when the subjects are children, since it ignores the important nonverbal aspect of communication" (1981, p. 344). One of the types of nonverbal responses is found in written responses to literature.

Other activities that fall under the nonverbal category are such things as gestures, acting out, the demand for repetition and successive responses, painting or other modes of artwork, listening behaviors, and contact with books. Huck's study (1979) observed children pointing to parts of illustrations that sparked their interest. Huck also watched how the children listened to stories read

aloud. Even tears are cited as a nonverbal response of value as discovered by Rosenblatt (1978).

Personal Stakes In Reading

Since reading is such a personal activity, studying written responses to literature becomes an even more important piece of evidence in helping to understand what the reader is doing and comprehending. As a result of the complex personal stake involved in comprehension of text, it is no longer even valid to study the texts and the children separately but rather they must be studied together because of this complex phenomenon (Cullinan & Harwood, 1983). Cothorn (1993) has also found that there exists a certain degree of transaction between the reader and the text.

How Do Responses To Literature Affect
Comprehension?

Before one can attempt to assess the effect that responses to literature have on the comprehension of a text, one must make some attempt to understand the reader and the text. Since reading is such a personal activity, the overall comprehension of a text is really a meshing of the interaction between the reader and the text. "Reader response provides a way to look at the multidimensional nature of comprehension rather than looking at a single aspect of the reader's interpretation of a text. It allows a glimpse into the interaction between reader and text" (Cullinan & Harwood, 1983, p. 37).

Much of what has been researched about the effects that responses have on comprehension levels ties into developmental stages. Some researchers have directly correlated some aspects of responses such as morality and children's literature (Pillar, 1983) to the work of developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg. Other researchers do not rely on developmental psychology for "creating"

categories of stages of growth in the responses to literature. Many have simply conducted more descriptive type research using case studies and anecdotes to observe possible stages that children go through in their responses.

One study (Cullinan & Harwood, 1983), looked at the different kinds of responses that fourth, sixth, and eighth graders made to the novels Bridge to Terebithia or Wizard of Earthsea. The findings confirmed strongly that there are indeed clear developmental levels in children's comprehension of literature. The developmental differences that Cullinan and Harwood found are as follows:

- ~fourth graders- were more literal in their comprehension; used very little symbolic and metaphoric meanings
- ~sixth graders- were more inferential in their retellings; used some consideration in symbolic and metaphoric meanings
- ~eighth graders- more evaluative in their retellings; were readily able to see multiple meanings (p.37)

The eighth graders were also able to relate to the novels more personally, drawing implications for their own lives. These findings show an obvious development from more simplistic retellings to retellings which required more critical thinking.

Cullinan and Harwood (1983) looked at the level of interest the children had in the readings as well as literary experiences. They found a strong correlation between the level of interest and literary experiences and the level of comprehension which the children attained.

These findings are consistent with the current beliefs of whole language. Whole language teachers look at students' interests as well as their literary understandings and assess their comprehension of the texts they read considering those factors.

Eeds and Wells (1989) conducted similar research centered on specific novel readings (Tuck Everlasting, The Dark Angel, After the Goat Man and Harriet the Spy) of fifth and sixth graders. Eeds and Wells were concerned with verbal responses which went above and beyond the typical question and answer periods as was Hickman (1981). The teachers of these literary groups were not the holders of all of the answers, but rather participants in the conversations, just as the children.

Similar to the findings of Cullinan and Harwood

(1983), Eeds and Wells (1989) also found categories of types of meanings that the children construed from the reading of their novels. They found four levels of comprehension: simple meaning (what actually happened in the story), personal stories, active inquiry, and evaluation of literature. All of these categories were found from listening to and transcribing tape recordings of the four literature discussion groups. "Talk helps to confirm, extend, or modify individual interpretations and creates a better understanding of the text" (Eeds & Wells, 1989, p.23).

How Do Responses To Literature Affect Writing Skills?

Writing composed after read alouds and written responses to literature read individually are the written materials that researchers have studied to determine the effects that reader response has on the quality and development of children's writing. The basic hypothesis underlying the research is that the writing of poorer readers would improve more than the better readers.

Dressel (1990) stated that

"the relationship between written text and children's writing indicate that discussion which helps children focus on techniques used by authors of children's literature and encourages them to use those techniques in their own writing results in improvement for some children". (p. 398)

The Dressel study showed that the gains that the poorer readers and better readers made in their writing after listening to two different qualities of read-alouds (detective stories) were exactly the same. It seems that the literary discussions centered on the read-alouds involved benefited all of the children's writing. Dressel (1990) stated that "the stories created by the children in this study were directly affected by the characteristics of the stories they heard and discussed". (p. 411)

In another study, conducted by Odell and Cooper (1976), the emphasis was on how the participants made their written responses to the

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literature they read. The written responses were fit into categories ranging from the more simplistic levels of reaction to the more complex, involving more evaluative type comments (was consistent with

Bloom's Taxonomy levels).

Teachers can use these written responses to help them evaluate the comprehension levels in which their students are focusing. This in turn can help them plan for future literary instruction as well as in helping individual children expand upon their responses. When teachers provide children with the freedom to respond to literature, the teacher needs to take on a whole new role as an evaluator of those students' progress.

Developmental Stages Of Responses To Literature

Some researchers in the area of response to literature based their research on developmental psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg, while others created their own developmental stages based upon what their research represented across different ages of participants.

Researchers across the board investigating developmental growth in various aspects of response to literature have all found that children do indeed go through clear steps of development and that some

levels of response can only be attained at a certain growth stage. Some of the aspects of response to literature that researchers looked at were character perspectives, moral judgment in response to fables, and responses to a story.

The moral judgment study conducted by Pillar (1983) and the study conducted on developmental differences in response to a story (Beach & Wendler, 1987) have both based their research on developmental psychologists.

Pillar refers to the work of Piaget (The Moral Development of the Child, 1932/1965) and to the work of Kohlberg (1964) when discovering through her own research that children develop from an immature stage to a mature stage of development in regards to morality. Pillar's research in responses to fables within the moral dimensions of intentionality, punishment, relativism, and independence of sanctions investigates the participants at three levels of development (immature, mixed, and mature) within each dimension.

Although each dimension showed that children

go through the same developmental processes in response to the moral aspects of four different fables read aloud, the most significant difference was found in the punishment dimension. Young children overwhelmingly showed immature responses in this area. For example, young children prefer a severe, painful punishment for the offense committed, whereas older children prefer a punishment that is equivalent and reasonable to the offense committed.

This was consistent in all four stories read aloud. One reason for this difference may be that young children possess such a strong fear of punishment at such an early age that they have not yet learned to separate that fear and egocentrism from what they are responding to after listening to a fable.

A second study that related its findings to Piaget's work on cognitive development was conducted by Beach and Wendler (1987). Beach and Wendler researched the inferences that children make and at what stages of development. The subjects they researched were adolescents (eighth

and eleventh graders, and college freshmen and juniors). The acts of characters as well as the perceptions and goals of the characters in the stories were investigated by looking at the written responses of the subjects.

Beach and Wendler found that the eighth graders performed lower cognitively regarding the acts of characters than the eleventh graders and the eleventh graders lower than the college freshmen and juniors. One reason this difference may exist is that at the eighth grade level many adolescents define themselves by their actions and may be relating to the text characters in the same way, thus defining the characters in the likeness of themselves, therefore drawing a parallel with Piaget's initial formal operational stage of cognitive development. Whereas, the cognitive development of the college subjects moves further away from that type of thinking bringing their cognitive development closer to the formal operations stage. The eighth and eleventh graders performed lower cognitively than

both the college freshmen and juniors in regards to the perceptions and goals categories of response to the literature read.

This study resolves that such factors as cognitive development, concept of self, and social cognition influence the readers' inferences about what has been read. Emery and Milhalevich (1992) recognized this in their own research on developing character perspectives as well as Beach's (1983) research on the social conventions of response to literature. Emery and Milhalevich (1992) stated that the research "indicates a general pattern of movement from a focus on an individual perspective to a social perspective"(p.51). These stages of development which Emery and Milhalevich describe are the same variables that Beach and Wendler use to help classify their subjects' responses into Piaget's formal operation stages of cognitive development.

Emery and Milhalevich found that children move from stages of focusing on the immediate actions of characters to the long range actions as well as noting

a shift from engaging on the perspective of one character to taking on multiple perspectives of characters. These developments are also consistent with Piaget's findings that

"the ability to switch back and forth between the immediate and the long-term situation and between various points of view was based upon the child's loss of egocentrism during the concrete operational stage and his growing ability to decenter or look beneath the surface of things to consider underlying abstractions."
(Emery & Milhalevich, 1992, p.57)

Emery and Milhalevich also noted areas that may affect the younger child's cognitive development may be that they did not possess enough background knowledge to discuss the social situations that would help them to provide more in depth responses. It must also be noted that the younger children also did not benefit from discussions centered on character perspective.

As educators it is important to recognize the different stages of development in regards to responding to literature. If teachers can recognize these stages then they can introduce certain pieces of literature or certain types of genres, such as fables, to their students when it is developmentally most appropriate. Therefore, teachers can lead

children through the developmental process when the children are indeed ready. In this way, the children can benefit maximally from the types of responses that they are ready to share and can slowly build on those with teacher guidance.

Teachers can also balance their instruction focusing on the different stages as well as individualizing their instruction based upon the cognitive and social developmental level of each student in their classroom.

Categorizing Response

Since there is an established transaction between the reader and the text, one needs a way to try to measure it to help assess the transaction. Written response has been used by many researchers to assess the relationship between reader and text. One of the first studies in this area was reported by Squire in 1964. Golden and Handloff (1993) replicated Squire's study by categorizing children's written responses to novels based upon the characteristics of those responses (see analysis

section for the categories). Patterns of response were established and based upon the findings, teaching methods soon matched individual needs. Other researchers (Barone, 1990; Cullinan & Harwood, 1983; Odell & Cooper, 1976;) have also utilized categories in examining children's responses to literature, but are not as specific to the content of the writing in those responses as the categories developed by Squire (1964).

Literature As A Social Process: Verbal And Nonverbal Responses.

In two studies in particular (Hickman, 1981; Kiefer, 1983) the social aspect of responding to literature was noted as extremely important to the literary development of the child. Learning was viewed as a social activity. There were many discussions in these studies and lots of opportunity to respond to literature through a variety of activities.

The verbal mode of response is certainly the more traditionally studied but there are other modes

of response which should be investigated as well. Hickman (1981) and Kiefer (1983) looked at modes ranging from written to artistic to dramatic to gestures. All of these modes were viewed as equally important and equally revealing into the quality of response that the researchers observed in the children.

Both of the classrooms in which research was conducted provided risk-free environments that were rich in literature. Books were found everywhere in the room and the children were free to interact with them in any way they chose. All of the interactions were considered social in nature although children of different age levels had preferences as to how they would interact with the literature.

Hickman (1981) found that as children got older they used the verbal and more sophisticated methods of responding such as writing much more frequently than the younger children who relied more on dramatics and using their bodies to respond. Second and third graders however were focused on enhancing their independent reading skills, so they

most often chose to read alone or with a partner. Many of the fourth and fifth graders responses to a shared book with a friend was modeled after a teacher run whole group book sharing with a question/answer period using the same intonation in their voices as the teachers.

The belief that learning is social is also an underlying belief of the whole language movement. It is in this social aspect that researchers must remember that children take on a variety of roles: teacher, facilitator, learner, evaluator, coach, etc. It is important that researchers not only set up the classroom environment in such a way that these interactions are indeed fostered but also that they are modeled for the children so that they can engage in and use them more effectively.

The importance of the social context in response to literature has not been limited to the classroom setting alone, but also is seen in the realm of reading to youngsters at home. Many (1990) states, ". . . reading to children is more than reading the text on the printed page, but the language and

social interactions surrounding the words and events of the text- the adult's mediating of text- as being extremely significant" (p.48). Many's study took place in a treehouse with a mother sharing a picture book with her two young children. There was reciprocity in involvement between the children and the adult, both in the nonverbal and verbal modes of response, although the mother was more active in both areas of response.

Influences on Response

One influence on an individual's response to literature is time. Hickman (1981), who studied nonverbal and verbal responses, and Kiefer (1992), who studied nonverbal responses, found that time was a very important influence on the type of responses children made. The amount of time invested in making the literature familiar to the children affected the children's ability to respond to literature (verbal and nonverbal).

Although the whole language movement provides for children to be empowered and the

teacher to facilitate, teachers are still the strongest influences that children encounter, as discovered by Emery and Milhalevich (1992), Hickman (1981), and Kiefer (1983). Therefore educators must insure that the choices of literature that are shared with children will best suit their needs as developing learners.

The type of text children are asked to respond to also influences the types of responses they will make (Galda, 1982). Poetry, for example, may require a qualitatively different response than a piece of non-fiction.

There are also reader characteristics which influence the types of responses made by children. Tchudi (1985) believes that the way one is raised affects one's responses to literature because the way one was raised shapes one's background knowledge. Heath's (1983) Ways With Words supports Tchudi's findings with her ethnographic study of the people of the Piedmont region. Along with background knowledge, Galda (1982) notes other reader characteristics which influence response: "age, sex, personality variables, socioeconomic status, reading

ability, previous experience with texts, previous experience with an author, cognitive development, and the situation in which the response occurs” (p. 2).

Classroom Environments and Response

The classroom is where much of the research pertaining to responses to literature takes place, therefore it is important to mention the effects it has upon a child’s ability to respond to literature. Hade (1991) found the following elements essential in a classroom where responses to literature was a fundamental part of the reading program:

“they were places where teachers and students shared literature” (p. 1); children felt comfortable sharing their responses (verbal and nonverbal); responses are accepted as “honest and meaningful” (p.9); teachers interact with the children’s responses; children have personal choices; and the classroom contains literary variety. These elements are consistent with the classrooms in which Hickman (1981) and Kiefer (1983) conducted their

research.

All of these elements Hade (1991) discusses are essential parts of whole language classrooms. They relate nicely to the transactional theory that reader and text are intertwined. The transaction can only become even stronger and more meaningful when the children are provided with choices and the other elements mentioned above.

Chapter III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of written responses to literature of average fifth grade readers to determine individual response patterns.

Questions

- [1] What patterns of written responses to literature are demonstrated by the subjects?

- [2] Are the individuals' response patterns consistent between the two novels read? What differences were seen in the individuals' responses?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects included six fifth-grade students from a suburban, public elementary school in western New York State. The students involved in this study read on grade level. Students were selected by the building reading specialist. The reading specialist helped to place all the children into classrooms and was therefore familiar with each child's reading ability. This particular public elementary school is a structurally open building.

Materials

The novels used for this study were: The Black Pearl by Scott O'Dell and The Maldonado Miracle by Theodore Taylor.

The Black Pearl is an adventure book about a young boy, Ramon Salazar, learning the pearl diving business from his father. Ramon's father does not want his son to sail and dive with his crew yet because he feels it is too dangerous. While the father is away on a dive with his crew, Ramon learns how to

dive from an old Indian named Suto Luzon. While learning how to dive, Ramon spots the biggest pearl ever, the “paragon of pearls,” “the pearl of heaven”. This pearl belongs to the Manta Diablo, the monster devilfish, and now he wants it back. The pearl sets a curse on Ramon’s village of La Paz, Mexico and it is up to him to return the pearl to the Manta Diablo. Only one thing stands in his way, the Sevillano.

The Maldonado Miracle takes place in Mexico and California. A twelve year old boy, Jose Maldonado, must cross the United States border into California to be with his father. His father had recently fled his hometown in Mexico in search of work as a migrant farm worker in the United States. This is a story of Jose and his dog, Sanchez, and their journey crossing the border illegally. Once across the border at the migrant camp where Jose’s father is to meet them, he learns that his father is not there. Jose must survive in the camp alone until his father returns. Jose runs away from abuse at the camp and it is nothing short of a miracle that brings Jose and father back together again.

These two novels were chosen in compliance with the social studies curriculum being studied at this point in the school year: Mexico. They were also chosen to meet the reading level of the average fifth grade reader (the novels are both fifth grade level materials).

Through the use of reading logs, the six students and the participant observer shared written responses about the literature with one another.

Procedure

At the start of each novel, the subjects wrote a prediction log entry, which included making predictions about the characters, setting, and main problem of the novel. The children were instructed to use strategies to help guide their predictions such as using the title, pictures, back cover information, literary criticism which may appear on the book, table of contents, and so on. Prior to the beginning of the study, the students had previous experience writing prediction log entries.

The rest of the daily reading log entries for the books were responses to the following: "Tell how you feel about what you have read so far" (This type of written reading log response was familiar to the students as well as the prediction log entry as a result of instruction and practice prior to the start of the study).

The children were responsible for reading a section of one novel each day. The subjects first read The Black Pearl in its entirety and then went on to read The Maldonado Miracle. The children completed their reading of the sections at home and at school.

At the start of each literature study session in the classroom, the children took between fifteen and twenty minutes to write in their reading logs responding to the statement : "Tell how you feel about what you have read so far." The children also responded to any questions or comments made by the teacher in her written responses to their prior reading log entry.

The teacher responded to the children's reading

logs every day in writing. She responded in two ways: she asked questions to help clarify a child's thoughts and comments, and commented on things the child had done well in his/her reading log. The role of the teacher's written responses was not to guide the children into making certain kinds of responses nor to instruct the children on the different types of responses one can write. The children's written responses were taken for what they were at face value. The children were simply asked to clarify points if necessary.

The teacher asked for clarification by making comments that directed the writer to parts of their writing as related to their reading which needed refocusing, rethinking, or reevaluation. Statements such as "I'd like to know more about . . .," "I was wondering if. . .," and "I didn't understand . . .," were used by the teacher in her written responses to the reading logs. Comments were posed as "I liked your description of . . .," or "I can tell you really put a lot of thought into . . . because"

After the initial fifteen minutes response time,

the children then met as a group with their teacher and three additional students to discuss the novel. The six subjects as well as the three other readers who joined the subjects on reading these novels may have influenced some written responses of the six subjects. With that thought in mind, the researcher purposely had the subjects respond in their reading logs before discussion of the novel. Discussions centered on what the students themselves wanted to discuss about what they read. The teacher's role during discussions was the same as her role when writing in children's reading logs; she commented on the things they did well and she asked questions to clarify, but often the other students took on the behaviors of the teacher asking the clarifying questions themselves.

The other children in the class who were not involved in the study were busy reading their novel, working on their reading logs, or working on literature based activities. Reading log entries for the children not involved in the research group were very structured. The teacher asked for specific responses,

thus guiding their responses. The research group's reading log responses were open ended. The children in the research group were able to respond freely to whatever they wanted involving their reading. When the teacher was not with the research group she held group discussions with the children not involved in the research.

Analysis

Each of the child's log entries was categorized into seven different response types (Squire, 1964):

[1] Interpretive: Making inferences, predictions, relating work to something else, discussing theme, characters, setting, and so on.

[2] Literary Judgment: Evaluating, rating, and/or assessing the author's work or style, genre, and/or use of language or literary devices.

[3] Narrational: Retelling the story. Literal level statements or comments.

[4] Personal: Expression of feelings, or personal interests while reading the book.

[5] Personal Associational: References which refer to the students' lives. Putting themselves in the place of a character.

[6] Prescriptive: Telling what the character should do or should have done.

[7] Miscellaneous: Unrelated matters, such as stating what chapter a child is on in their reading.

Individual patterns were established through the categorization of each individual's written responses. Patterns were established for each subject in each novel read and then compared to observe any individual response type differences that had developed over the course of reading the two novels.

Any other observable, consistent findings such

as whether or not response type differences were observed through the course of reading a novel were noted through anecdotal records kept by the participant observer and are documented later on in the study.

Summary

This chapter discussed the subjects, novels, and the student and teacher written responses made in the reading logs. The role of the teacher's written responses to the children's written responses was not instructive nor guiding, but rather served the purpose for clarifying thoughts the children had made or in pointing out things the children had done well in their logs.

The participant observer categorized individual written responses, observed any patterns concerning differences in responses within one novel and over the course of reading two novels. Any other observable, consistent findings such as whether or not response type differences were observed through the course of reading a novel, were noted through

anecdotal records kept by the participant observer.

Brief summaries of the novels were included in this section for the purpose of providing background information on the novels which will help in later chapters in reading and analyzing some of the children's actual written responses.

Chapter IV

Analysis Of Data

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of written responses to literature of average fifth grade readers to determine individual response patterns.

What patterns of written responses to literature are demonstrated by the subjects?

The group of six fifth-graders taking part in this study overwhelmingly responded in two response categories: personal and interpretive. There were a total of 141 responses made by all six subjects to The Black Pearl and 171 responses to The Moldanado Miracle. One log entry included more than one response type category and often included three or four responses under the same category (when the subject switched the topic but used the same response type it was counted as a separate

response). There were 115 interpretive responses and 117 personal responses during the reading of the two books. It should be noted here that the prediction entries each subject completed prior to the reading of each novel were not used as data for this study since they were required and not their free choice. Prediction entries prior to reading were required in this classroom to help children set purpose for their reading.

The other category results were as follows: narrational and prescriptive received sixteen total responses each, fifteen total responses were miscellaneous, thirteen were personal associational, and literary judgment received ten total responses.

Were the individuals' response patterns consistent between the two novels read? What differences were seen in the individuals' responses?

The individuals' response patterns varied more than the entire group as a whole. This makes sense since reading is such a transactional process. The relationship between text and reader is one which is highly personal.

Table I

Responses Made As A Group

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<i><u>The Black Pearl</u></i>	<i><u>The Moldanado Miracle</u></i>
Interpretive	59	56
Literary Judgment	5	5
Narrational	9	7
Personal	51	66
Personal Associational	4	9
Prescriptive	10	6
Miscellaneous	3	12

Total responses made to The Black Pearl: 141

Total responses made to The Moldanado Miracle: 161

Steven

Steven's responses followed closely to that of the larger group. When he read The Black Pearl most of his responses were made in the interpretive (8) and personal (12) categories. Steven's results for The Moldanado Miracle were almost identical: interpretive (8) and personal (8). Obviously, Steven feels a strong need to express what the books meant to him as he read. However, the question, "How did you feel about what you read last night?", may have led him into making more personal and interpretive responses, since the focus of these categories is more introspective.

The remaining response categories were not addressed by Steven very much. When Steven read The Black Pearl he wrote one narrational response, one prescriptive, and made no responses in the miscellaneous and literary judgment categories. While reading The Moldanado Miracle, Steven made one narrational response, two prescriptive, two miscellaneous, and again made no references to literary judgment. Therefore, Steven's utilization of response types was very consistent between the two novels.

Some researchers such as Cullinan and Harwood (1983) and Eeds and Wells (1989) would argue that Steven is simply not

developmentally ready to create responses in the literary judgment category. Others might argue that he just needs instruction in this category since he is able to write responses in all of the other areas.

Table II

Steven's Categorized Written Responses

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>	<u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Interpretive	8	8
Literary Judgment	0	0
Narrational	1	1
Personal	12	8
Personal Associational	0	2
Prescriptive	1	2
Miscellaneous	0	2

<i>Total responses made to <u>The Black Pearl</u>: 22</i>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u> 23</i>		

Figure 1

A Sampling of Steven's Responses for Each Response Category

Interpretive	<p>"I predict the pearl is a magic pearl because that's why I think the monster wants it. Or mabey it's sacrit (sacred) to the monster family and the monster wants it back. And he'll do anything to get it back."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Narrational	<p>"Jose was in a cabin."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Personal	<p>"I felt scared when they where (were) talking about the monster when they where (were) talking about his long teeth. Or maby (maybe) mad for Salazar's son when they were going for clams."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Personal Associational	<p>"If I was Jose I would not like it that Guterrez took half my money. Plus he isn't even working so why should he get Jose's money."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Prescriptive	<p>"He (Jose) could have told the priest and then the priest could tell everyone in the church whithout saying Jose's name and he wouldn't get hurt. He (Jose) should have told him (the priest) because know (now) anyone can know that it was him and mabey (maybe) send him back (to Mexico)."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>

Miscellaneous

"When ever I read a school book I have a habbit
(habit) when ever I read a school book I still read
but when I read I think of something else or I just
don't get it."

The Moldanado Miracle

Steven made no Literary Judgment responses.

Jamie

Jamie's responses followed the group pattern also in regards to the two most used categories. While reading The Black Pearl, Jamie wrote seven interpretive responses and he wrote seventeen during the reading of The Moldanado Miracle. The number of personal responses written for The Black Pearl was thirteen and ten for The Moldanado Miracle. Again, this may be in large part due to the wording of the question used to start the children writing in their reading logs.

However, Jamie's other responses seemed to dabble in a little bit of the remaining response types. He touched upon all seven of the response categories within the reading of the two books. Jamie composed two literary judgment responses, one narrational, four personal associational, no miscellaneous responses and one prescriptive while reading The Black Pearl. During the reading of The Moldanado Miracle, Jamie wrote no literary judgment response, nor did he write responses falling under the personal associational and prescriptive categories. Two responses were narrational and four were miscellaneous responses.

Jamie might benefit from direct instruction or perhaps simple sentence starters, such as "The author made me feel _____"

because _____” or “If I were _____, I would/wouldn't have done _____ because _____”, to broaden the content of what Jamie can write about the literature he is reading. Since Jamie had dabbled in each response type, sentence starters may be all he would need to write a broader range of responses.

Jamie's responses in the personal, interpretive, and narrational categories was consistent between the two novels. The numbers of responses in each category for each book were very close. Categories where Jamie made responses in only one book and zero in the other were literary judgment, personal associational, prescriptive, and miscellaneous. Qualitatively, it is difficult to establish the level of consistency of a pattern in these response types since the reader did not use them in both books. If a third and fourth book were also read as part of this study, Jamie might have written more responses in these areas across a four book span, rather than just two.

Table III

Jamie's Categorized Written Responses

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>	<u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Interpretive	7	17
Literary Judgment	2	0
Narrational	1	2
Personal	13	10
Personal Associational	4	0
Prescriptive	1	0
Miscellaneous	0	4
<hr/>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Black Pearl</u>: 28</i>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>: 33</i>		

Figure II

A Sampling of Jamie's Responses for Each Response Category

Interpretive	<p>"I still can't understand why he (Jose) is going with Guetirezz instead of going to another city close to the border. Then from there Jose could travel across the border from there, unless there is security."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Literary Judgment	<p>"The Sevillano is what ramon wanted to beat, that's why I think Scott O'Dell put him in the book."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Narrational	<p>"They pay 75c cents a day and they charge 1.75 a day (for food)."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Personal	<p>"I feel glad that Ramon is alive at the end of the Manta Diablo attack. (I hope his father live too) It's nice to know that someone wasn't wiped out by the Manta Diablo."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Personal Associational	<p>"I would keep it (the pearl) too. If I heard the Manta Diablo attacked them for his tresure (treasure) I would heave he cursed thing into the sea."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Prescriptive	<p>"If I where (were) the Sevillano I would take the kid (Ramon) hostage somewhere else. So nobody will find him on the sea shore. Also the Sevillano could be killed for he is the holder of the pearl."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>

Miscellaneous

"P.S. I'm sorry my response (response) was so short."

The Moldonado Miracle

Ryan

Ryan's responses, just like each subject before him, were personal or interpretive. Ryan wrote twelve interpretive responses while reading The Black Pearl and nine during the reading of The Moldanado Miracle. Seven personal responses were also written while reading The Black Pearl and twenty while reading The Moldanado Miracle. The wording of the question could be a factor with Ryan also.

Ryan showed the least variety (along with another subject) in his written responses. Ryan made no responses in the literary judgment or personal associational categories. He wrote a total of one narrational response between the two books, five prescriptive, and one miscellaneous response during the reading of both books.

The response type most often used in Ryan's case over the course of the two books was the personal category. This was not surprising given the time of year this study took place and also the wording of the question prior to the children's composing time. In the beginning of the year, when teacher expectations are still being felt out, children seek what they can do best. What better category is there for a reader than the personal one to make the subjects feel comfortable with themselves in their responses. Ryan appears

to be such a subject.

Ryan's responses showed high levels of consistency in the following responses types: interpretive, literary judgment (zero for both books), and personal associational (zero for both books). Ryan wrote one total narrational response (The Black Pearl) and one total miscellaneous response (The Moldanado Miracle). Again, it is hard to interpret the level of consistency since the reader only used each of these response types with one book.

When Ryan read The Black Pearl he wrote seven personal responses while writing twenty personal responses when reading The Moldanado Miracle. He showed a significant increase in this type of response after having read The Black Pearl. Ryan did exhibit a strong interest in the main character, Jose, and wondered many times about the choices Jose made. Throughout the course of the book, Jose was faced with many life altering decisions. Therefore, Ryan may have been responding to that aspect of the book, skewing the results of his written responses.

Table IV

Ryan's Categorized Written Responses

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<i><u>The Black Pearl</u></i>	<i><u>The Moldanado Miracle</u></i>
Interpretive	12	9
Literary Judgment	0	0
Narrational	1	0
Personal	7	20
Personal Associational	0	0
Prescriptive	4	1
Miscellaneous	0	1

Total responses made to The Black Pearl: 24

Total responses made to The Moldanado Miracle: 31

Figure III

A Sampling of Ryan's Responses for Each Response Category

Interpretive	<p>"I think it was important to Ramon to go on the journey because it was he's (his) first time and he really wanted to go on the journey and he wanted to take that other guys place who was sick."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Narrational	<p>"The back cover told me that Salazar presented the gem to the Madonna of the Church of La Paz."</p> <p><u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Personal	<p>"I think that Gutierrez is a very mean man because its to much for Jose to pay because Jose has to give up a lot of things and if Gutierrez offered me that much I'd say no way!"</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Prescriptive	<p>"I think he (Jose) should have called Sanchez because I bet he would help Jose in the showers."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Miscellaneous	<p>"I could of asked the group or you because you guys might of understood it more if I was confused."</p> <p><u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>

Ryan made no Literary Judgments or Personal Associational responses.

Anna

Anna wrote many more interpretive responses than any other subject when the two books were totaled together. In The Black Pearl Anna wrote sixteen interpretive responses and twelve in The Moldanado Miracle. Anna's personal responses to both books combined (11) were less than any other child in the group. Anna seemed to be able to write in categories that the other children either never did or did infrequently. What is interesting about this is that Anna spoke and wrote no English two years ago. She is obviously a very capable student.

Anna's responses included nothing in the narrational and prescriptive categories. She wrote three literary judgments in The Black Pearl and five in The Moldanado Miracle. No personal associational responses were written during the reading of The Black Pearl and four were composed while reading The Moldanado Miracle. A total of three miscellaneous responses were written between the two books read.

While reading Anna's entries, her responses appeared to be much more diverse than they were on paper simply because she seemed to develop her ideas more and had more reasoning behind her thoughts than the others. Anna focused on characters often and seemed to be understanding the story through the

characters' perspective. This may be one reason why Anna had something to say about the literature as a piece of work. If she was seeing the plot through the characters' eyes, she may have wondered why did this character make this decision and therefore why did the author write the story in this way.

It is true that Anna wrote a high number interpretive responses just as the other subjects so perhaps the wording of the questions did influence her responses. However, Anna did show less tendency to rely on personal response when coupled with the heavy utilization of interpretive responses.

Anna's reading log responses in the interpretive, literary judgment, narrational, personal, prescriptive, and miscellaneous categories exhibit high levels of consistency. The numbers of responses in each of these categories amongst the two books was virtually the same. However, the only category which showed some inconsistency between book was the personal associational category. Anna made no personal associational responses when reading The Black Pearl but made four while reading The Moldanado Miracle. Anna expanded her responses after reading the first novel. She may have felt more comfortable at this point to try a new response approach to literature after having completed just two novels in the school year.

Table V

Anna's Categorized Written Responses

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>	<u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Interpretive	16	12
Literary Judgment	3	5
Narrational	0	0
Personal	5	6
Personal Associational	0	4
Prescriptive	0	0
Miscellaneous	2	1
<hr/>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Black Pearl</u>: 26</i>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>: 28</i>		

Figure IV

A Sampling of Anna's Responses for Each Response Category

Interpretive	<p>"I think La Paz would be in Mexico because when you called us to the esol (easel) you told us that there might be some Spanish word." <u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Literary Judgment	<p>"Also did the author start the book by telling right away that Jose is leaving? Why did the author do that?" <u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Personal	<p>"I wonder if it was the manta Diablo's doing that Ramon's dad died." <u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>
Personal Associational	<p>"When I read this book it makes me think of when I had to leave (Russia). Leave my friends, my home, my childhood. I mean I grew up there all of my memories are there. I think that it's a little harder for Jose because he was alone for months (in Mexico)." <u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u></p>
Miscellaneous	<p>"I'm really excited about our presentation tomorrow." <u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u></p>

Anna made no Narrational or Personal Associational responses.

Ashley

Ashley also wrote a great number of interpretive and personal responses but she also composed a high number of narrational responses, comparatively speaking. Ashley wrote eight interpretive, six narrational, and six personal responses during The Black Pearl. While reading The Moldanado Miracle she wrote five interpretive, three narrational, and eight personal responses. None of the other subjects had anywhere near the nine responses that Ashley wrote in the narrational category. It appeared that Ashley would write the events of a scene in the book and then state her thoughts and feelings about that scene. This seemed to be a recurring pattern in her reading log entries.

At the beginning of the school year retellings (narrational responses) are far more comfortable to write because children can clearly tell what happened in that night's reading and then tell how they felt. It's a more comfortable risk than, for example, trying to interpret the author's intent.

Ashley wrote a total of two personal associational responses (both in The Moldanado Miracle), five prescriptive (four in The Black Pearl), and one miscellaneous in The Moldanado Miracle.

The narrational, personal, interpretive, literary judgment, and personal categories of response were response types which

reflected levels of consistency in Ashley's reading log entries between the two books. She consistently chose not to make literary judgments and the numbers between the two books in each of the other categories were very close.

Ashley decreased her number of prescriptive responses from four to one (The Black Pearl and The moldanado Miracle respectively). She also wrote one miscellaneous response, and two personal associational responses, both while reading The Moldanado Miracle.

Table VI

Ashley's Categorized Written Responses

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>	<u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Interpretive	8	5
Literary Judgment	0	0
Narrational	6	3
Personal	6	8
Personal Associational	0	2
Prescriptive	4	1
Miscellaneous	0	1

<i>Total responses made to <u>The Black Pearl</u>: 24</i>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>: 20</i>		

Figure V

A Sampling of Ashley's Responses for Each Response Category

Interpretive	I think Ramon is the eval (evil) because on the back cover it says: And it was young Ramon who would have to undo the evil he started." <u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>
Narrational	"La Paz is a town." <u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>
Personal	"I felt excited because any minet (minute) Jose is going to cross the border." <u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Personal Associational	"I think it is worth it (trip across the border) because I would want to be with my dad if I did not have a mom or sitters (sisters) or brothers." <u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Prescriptive	"I think Ramon should chose (choose) if he wanted to sell the purl (pearl) and for how much." <u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>
Miscellaneous	"I didn't read anything so I will tell you what I did for our end project." <u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>

Ashley made no Literary Judgment responses.

Stephanie

Stephanie also wrote more personal and interpretive response than any other response type. Eight interpretive responses were composed in The Black Pearl and five in The Moldanado Miracle. Stephanie wrote eight personal responses while reading The Black Pearl and fourteen during The Moldanado Miracle. Stephanie too, like the others, may have been influenced by the wording of the question.

The other categories, as in Steven's case, were barely touched upon. No literary judgments were written. One narrational response, one personal associational, and two prescriptive responses were composed and were only seen in The Moldanado Miracle. One miscellaneous response was written while reading The Black Pearl and three were made during the reading of The Moldanado Miracle.

The interpretive, literary judgment, personal, and miscellaneous categories of response showed levels of consistency between the two books. Stephanie did not have any literary judgment responses in either book. One narrational, one personal associational and two prescriptive responses were made only during the reading of The Moldanado Miracle. There were no responses made in the aforementioned categories when reading

The Black Pearl. It appears that Stephanie, as Anna, expanded her responses after reading the first novel. She too may have felt more comfortable at this point to try a new response approach to literature after having completed just two novels this school year (one outside of the study and The Black Pearl).

Table VII

Stephanie's Categorized Written Responses

<i>Type Of Response</i>	<u><i>The Black Pearl</i></u>	<u><i>The Moldanado Miracle</i></u>
Interpretive	8	5
Literary Judgment	0	0
Narrational	0	1
Personal	8	14
Personal Associational	0	1
Prescriptive	0	2
Miscellaneous	1	3
<hr/>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Black Pearl</u>: 17</i>		
<i>Total responses made to <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>: 26</i>		

Figure VI

A Sampling of Stephanie's Responses for Each Response Category

Interpretive	"I think Ramon could solve his problem by giving the Manta Diablo back the pearl." <u>The Black Pearl</u>
Narrational	"Jose would be sent back by being caught by someone who knew he was from Mexico." <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>
Personal	"I wonder what Eddie will do if he finds Jose. I also wonder what Hector, Jose's father, will do if he comes and Jose is not there?" <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>
Personal Associational	"If I were in Jose's pesition (position) I would be very frightaned (frightened) because Jose is in a church where anyone could find him if there smart and they can take him back to Mexico." <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>
Prescriptive	"When Jose ran away from Olcott he should have gone some where, where it was safer then in the loft." <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>
Miscellaneous	"The reason I was quiet (in group) was because I had nothing to say." <u>The Moldanado Miracle</u>

Stephanie made no Literary Judgment responses.

Summary

To summarize the data found in this study according to Squire's (1964) categories of written literature responses, one would conclude that no significant differences were found between subjects since the two most represented categories among the subjects were the personal and interpretive response types. However, it should be noted that only Ashley had a strong third category in the narrational response type. This supports the transactional theory that reading is an intimate interaction between the reader and the text, since both the personal and interpretive response categories come from the readers' perspective. By contrast, literary judgment requires a child to interpret the author's intended message. Literary judgment also received no response from four of the subjects in both books.

The other types of response were not utilized as much as the personal and interpretive categories of response by all individuals in this study.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the types of written responses to literature of average fifth grade readers to determine individual response patterns.

Conclusions

The two response categories which received the most responses were the interpretive and the personal categories. This may be a result of the way in which the question was worded that the children were responding to daily in their reading logs ("How did you feel about what you read last night?"). The personal and interpretive categories focus on one's own opinions. Whether the opinions are about the students' own feelings or curiosities (personal category) or in trying to figure out, through writing, the

way in which the story will unfold by discussing characters, wondering what will happen next, making predictions and so on. Therefore, when asked for their feeling, the children may have been drawn to making these two types of responses. The personal category directly reflected how the children were feeling about what they were reading and the interpretive category describes a reader trying to obtain meaning from a text. These are two behaviors readers exhibit while reading.

The categories in which the children responded least during the reading of both books included: literary judgment (Steven, Ryan, Ashley, and Stephanie's), prescriptive (Jamie, Anna), personal association (Ryan), and narrational (Anna). The fact that the teacher did not lead children into writing certain types of responses was certainly a factor in the unequal distribution of responses made. This is why it is so important for teachers to prompt children into exploring facets of a literary work that they would not normally embark upon on their own.

Several response categories received no responses during the reading of the two books. They included: literary judgment (Ashley, Stephanie, Steve), personal associational (Ryan), narrational (Anna), Prescriptive (Anna). These categories are obviously response types that these particular children would not

try on their own unless directly asked to do so or prompted by their teacher in some other way.

These results provide support for the fact that reading is a highly personal cognitive activity. Different people bring different sets of prior knowledge and metacognitive skills to the reading of a book. The results also suggest the need for teacher instruction in all areas of response to help children expand their thoughts about what they are reading. Whole language theorists would agree that the teacher's job is to facilitate while the child's job is to be an explorer. The teacher is only providing more exploration tools for children to use on their own.

Therefore, it may be concluded that although there was consistency among the two highest type response categories during the reading of the two novels, there was still a wide variety in response types for these particular individual students. Some children had more of an even span of the response types while others primarily focused on the personal and interpretive and either never attempted other categories or tried others a few times. Many variables may have affected the types of responses these particular children made. Some variables may include: dislike of the book(s), time of day they were responding, the Spanish surnames and places in the books, reading ability (although all

average, differences still exist among subjects), level of cognitive development, concept of self, teacher modeling an interaction with students and so on.

Implications for the Classroom

With the birth of the whole language movement in the early 1980's it has become increasingly important that teachers recognize the individual differences that exist among their students. The results of this study should encourage classroom teachers to use their children's written responses to literature as a guide to help them individualize instruction in the teaching of reading. The research presented in Chapter II stated repeatedly the importance of not only recognizing individual differences (using various modes of response as well as social and developmental stages) but also in recognizing the impact that these differences should have on the instruction of a teacher's classroom.

Teachers should be more aware of the literature that they offer to their children as well as the impact that the literature will have on the individuals that make up their classroom. One of the limitations of this study is that the

children did not choose the literature they read for the study. Therefore, some responses may have been atypical for that particular student given the nature of the book(s).

The classroom environment also plays an important role in what researchers should consider when studying children's written responses to literature. Hickman (1981) and Kiefer (1983) have discovered the importance of setting up not only a literature rich environment but also one that is risk-free, enabling children to interact with a great deal of different literature in a variety of ways. This is important in developing background knowledge which helps to build concept of story as well as other various aspects of literary concepts.

Emery and Milhalevich (1992) found that direct discussion involving character perspectives encouraged children to consider more than one perspective, which helped the children engage in discussion that went beyond their initial impressions and took the larger situation into consideration. This in turn may broaden and enrich the written responses that they complete on their own.

Emery and Milhalevich suggest that strategies such as Readers Theater and cooperative groupings may help to foster further classroom growth in this area through group rewritings

and dramatic interpretations where children are "forced" to take on various roles because they are playing the various character roles.

Strategies specific to the written mode of response may include sharing reading log responses of the previous years' students who have read the book that the current children are reading. Teachers could also model their own responses. Children may also share their responses with one another in a formal setting where they would read their entry aloud with a partner or to the group and engage in discussions centered on why he/she chose to write about the content that is in his/her log entry.

Implications for Further Research

An area which requires further research is the classroom environment in which children respond to literature. Hickman (1981) suggests this as a result of the influential role that the classroom environment played on the subjects she studied. In whole language instruction the environment becomes an integral part of a child's learning. Teachers too could benefit from learning about the ways in which these empowering

atmospheres are established.

In regard to the written connection to responses to literature it has been suggested by Dressel (1990) that further research is necessary to clearly delineate the connections between listening to and discussing literature and the children's written versions of what they heard and discussed. Dressel was concerned that the ratings that were used to evaluate the children's writings were more true to their writing ability because mechanics and spelling were not taken into account, regardless of reading ability. Therefore to provide further validity to what Dressel herself found (poorer and better readers benefited equally to the readings and discussions) she believes that more research is necessary.

In a review of research on responses to literature compiled and written by Galda (1983), she alluded to the overall need to continue research in the area of responses to literature. She recognizes that one of the drawbacks of research in response to literature is that the research relies primarily on observation and interviews, which generally involve small numbers of children. Galda (1983) states, "The power of these studies lies in the similarity of their findings. As more researchers examine response to literature, we will

be able to add more detail to what we already know" (p. 6).

It is in this power that Galda (1983) refers to which research in the area of responses to literature will be taken to new heights. The power of the whole language movement lies within the children themselves, therefore it is important to continue to study responses to literature in the manner that it has been carried out, no matter how laborious because of the descriptive type methods. With continued research, the instruction of whole language teachers will keep improving given the research that has yet to be conducted, while providing more validity to the research that has been reported in the past.

Summary

The benefits of utilizing children's responses to literature to drive individual instructional in the area of reading should encourage future attention to this aspect of research. The descriptive research necessary in this area of reading needs to continue so that researchers and teachers alike can draw upon the similarities of those studies to help them drive instruction in the classroom and extend the realm of research.

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