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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

BEYOND SENTIMENT: A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY
OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS'
EXPERIENCES SELECTING
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
FOR READ-ALOUDS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Teacher Education
Educational Studies

August, 2011

This Dissertation by: Stacy M. Loyd

Entitled: *Beyond Sentiment: A Descriptive Case Study of Elementary School Teachers' Experiences Selecting Children's Literature for Read-Alouds*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Teacher Education, Program of Educational Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Loyd, Stacy M. *Beyond Sentiment: A Descriptive Case Study of Elementary School Teachers' Experiences Selecting Children's Literature for Read-Alouds*.
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The purpose of this study was to examine how and why elementary teachers select books for the read-aloud. A phenomenological approach was used to conduct a 14 week descriptive study. Three participants were purposefully selected to provide an in-depth examination of teachers' book selection processes. Data were collected through observations, think-alouds, and video-mediated reflective interviews. Data were examined through three distinct theoretical lenses throughout the analysis process. Each analysis revealed another layer of understanding regarding the phenomenon studied. The significance of this study lay in its in-depth explanation of how and why teachers selected books for the read-aloud. Finding and implications resulted in a tool that teachers and librarians can use to self-assess their choices. The tool provides questions for adults to consider when intentionally selecting new books to read-aloud to students.

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observed powerful read-alouds and had the opportunity to discuss the details of their decision making processes. I thank them for teaching me how to select books for my own read-alouds.

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“It doesn’t matter where you go in life . . . what you do . . . or how much you have . . . It’s who you have beside you.” Author Unknown.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Teachers' purposeful decision-making is a vital component of successful teacher practice. Conscious decisions can enable teachers to make planned changes and adjustments to both beliefs and practices. Through conscious decision making, teachers can reflect on what they are in the process of doing, how that process impacts students as learners, and the usefulness and vitality of the artifacts and responses the process produces (Short & Burke, 1991). Because it is classroom teachers who have the major responsibility for facilitating students' learning experiences, their decision making processes are an important part of educational research.

Elementary school teachers' decisions in selecting books for read-alouds represent one area where teachers traditionally have significant autonomy in their decision-making. Historically, the read-aloud event was firmly entrenched in the daily routine of elementary school. Not only was it routine but teachers reported the read aloud event among their favorite memories of elementary school experiences (Artley, 1975). Today, the read-aloud might not be as ubiquitous in elementary school classrooms as in the past (Hall, 1971; Hoffman, Roser, & Battle, 1993; Laminack, 2009; Langer, Applebee, Mullis, & Foertsch, 1990; LaPointe, 1986; Lickteig & Russell, 1993). Teachers report feeling as if they do not have time for read-alouds in their increasingly

busy days and they cannot justify spending time reading to children for pleasure (Laminack, 2009). However, in those classrooms where read-alouds are regular events, classroom teachers use their own conscious or unconscious criteria for deciding which books to share with students.

For the purpose of this study, the *read-aloud* is defined as a regularly scheduled literary event where the teacher or selected reader's voice personally performs the story for listeners in the classroom community. Through read-alouds, children's literature can be one of the most accessible art forms for children in the elementary classroom (Heath, 1983; Nikolajeva, 2005; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003; Sipe, 2001, 2008). During the read-aloud, teachers' literature choices bring with them different potentials for interpretation, aesthetic experiences, and literary appreciation (Sipe, 2008).

All artwork, including children's literature, can be approached both as aesthetic objects and as non-aesthetic objects of interest for educational, sociological, political, psychological, or other reasons (Viguers, 1986). Therefore, an aesthetic read-aloud is planned for the purpose of inviting listeners to respond to the book's invitation. The book invites the listeners to an interactive experience absent of instrumental purpose. This interactive experience might be described as "felt freedom" (Beardsley, 1981) where the listeners sense what is presented, semantically invoked by the book, or implicitly promised by it. The listeners sense the book on which attention is concentrated is set a little distance emotionally—a certain detachment of affect. They actively exercise constructive powers of the mind, are challenged by the stimuli to make them cohere, see connections between perceptions and meaning, and experience a sense (which might be illusionary) of intelligibility that might involve self-expansion.

All artwork, including children's literature, extends the invitation for response. All artwork can be approached both as aesthetic objects and as non-aesthetic objects of interest for educational, sociological, political, psychological, or other reasons (Viguers, 1986). *Aesthetic attitude, stance, or attitude* is foundational to *aesthetic experience*. A philosophical tradition spanning the 18th through the 20th centuries, including literary response theorist Louise Rosenblatt, focused on the aesthetic attitude--the attitude that accepts literature's invitation to respond. When applying her concepts of aesthetic attitude to reader response theory, Rosenblatt (1978) distinguished between aesthetic and non-aesthetic reading. She wrote, "In nonaesthetic reading, the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue *after* the reading—the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out" (p. 23, emphasis in original). In contrast, in aesthetic reading, "The reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event.... *The reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text*" (Rosenblatt, 1978, pp. 24-25; emphasis in original). During a read-aloud, readers and listeners might shift back and forth along a continuum between aesthetic and non-aesthetic modes of listening. The importance of *how* students are listening to the read-aloud lies in whether the experience of listening to the read-aloud is aesthetic in character or not. If the experience is aesthetic, it is not aesthetic because of something the *book* is doing except in the sense that it is to the *book* that students are listening. It is the book that is extending the invitation. If students listening to the read-aloud have an aesthetic experience, it is because they are attending to the read-aloud in a manner that renders the

experience aesthetic. Therefore, a teacher's purpose for the read-aloud might promote or guide the listeners' attitudes and impact their aesthetic attitudes and experiences.

The division between aesthetic and non-aesthetic read-alouds might appear more as a continuum than a solid separation. The purpose of the distinction is not to draw the line so solidly that it can support a metaphysical discussion (of difference in kinds of experiences) but to begin to say what is different about aesthetic read-alouds and non-aesthetic read-alouds. For the purpose of this study, a non-aesthetic read-aloud was called *instrumental*. An instrumental or non-aesthetic read-aloud experience might be considered valuable for what remains after the reading--knowledge of content, skills, or values construction. Knowing these differences might help elementary school teachers select books and plan read-alouds accordingly.

Although read-alouds have the potential to shape students' literary appreciation, such aesthetic experiences cannot be presumed to happen in every elementary school classroom read-aloud. No common children's literature canon or literature curriculum guides book selection; thus, teachers use their own judgments to select what books to read. Many factors might influence a teacher's selections. For instance, for read-alouds, the adult chooses the reading for the child listener. Shavit (1986) shares that this cultural fact forces "the children's writer to compromise between two addressees who differ both in their literary tastes as well as in their norms of realization of the text" (p. 93). Shavit extends the notion that "good" children's literature is not determined by a poetic, literary quality; rather, it is established through a process of cultural influences. Literature is situated within a multi-relational system of social norms, literary norms, and educational

norms. These dynamic norms are historically and culturally situated and guide the value judgments and selection of literature.

Researchers have learned of two general criteria teachers use to choose a book for read-alouds: the *appropriateness* of a text within a larger curriculum (Bainbridge & Pantaleo, 1999; Hart & Rowley, 1996; Hoffman et al., 1993; Jipson & Paley, 1991; Luke, Cooke, & Luke, 1986; Moss, 2003; Popp, 1996; Szymusiak, Sibberson, & Koch, 2008; Tunnell & Jacobs, 2007) and *personal preference* (Applebee, 1993; Hart & Rowley, 1996; Jipson & Paley, 1991; Luke et al., 1986; Womman-Bonilla, 1998). Despite the number of studies exploring reasons for choosing a book, no one has yet described the decision-making processes or what guides the decision-making process when the curricular objective is to facilitate aesthetic experiences or to teach literature.

When teachers select books for their appropriateness to teach children, the focus is often not on the potential literary experience or on the book itself but on the content to be shared and/or the by-products of reading the book. Researchers Jipson and Paley (1991) describe the choice as “part of a complex, curricular process—focusing not on the book itself but on the context in which the choice made sense” (p. 156). The choice is embedded within the framework of the classroom and integrated into larger curriculum as a way to convey necessary information to students.

When teachers select books based on personal preference, the focus might extend beyond the content but is limited by the teachers’ own habits, personal reading preferences (Cremin, Bearne, Mottram, & Goodwin, 2008), author reputation, and knowledge of books and genres. Although book choices might be based on *personal preferences*, these curricular choices need to be reasoned and purposeful. Unexamined

decision-making in a curriculum might lead to idiosyncratic or capricious selections rather than systematic judgments.

The purpose of this study was to explore the processes and powers of discernment teachers use when selecting books for the literature read-aloud. This reasoning includes aesthetic judgment beyond content evaluation and personal preference to include “how the work *appears*, what *impact* it has, what is *salient* in it, what merits *aesthetic attention*” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 20; emphasis in original). A universal description and defense of what merits aesthetic attention or what counts as good children’s literature does not exist; however, the ways elementary school teachers select texts for the read-aloud and an exploration of their purposes for those selections answered some questions as to what the teachers in this study considered worthwhile within a contingent and contextualized setting (Nodelman & Reimer, 2002).

Teachers have various resources for identifying literature for the read-aloud: recommendations from colleagues, personal reading experiences, book lists, curriculum guides, and professional publications (Galda & Cullinan, 2002; Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007; Norton, 2009; Trelease, 2006; Tunnell & Jacobs, 2007; Zbaracki, 2008). Such recommendations are typically lists of specific book titles. Children’s literature scholar Zipes (2002) writes, “It appears that everything and anything is good for children’s minds and eyes. Good is rarely defined” (p. 57). When planning for the read-aloud, *how* should teachers decide which books to read? What questions should teachers ask the books?

Statement of the Problem

Researchers Fisher, Flood, Lapp, and Frey (2004) identified that carefully selecting books for the read-aloud is part of the set of common implementation practices; yet they did not describe the selection processes. When instructing teachers on read-aloud practices, Laminack (2009) advocated for intentional selection guided by the purpose of the read-aloud but he did not provide a framework for selecting books for the various purposes. While some studies demonstrated books might be chosen because their topics matched stated curriculum (Bandre, 2005; Green, 2008), other studies revealed that a teacher's personal biases greatly influenced what was selected (Bandre, 2005; Green, 2008). Zipes (2002) wrote, "Given the amount of freedom that teachers and librarians have in choosing books . . . , it is difficult to determine what their preferences are and how they evaluate books" (p. 56).

Educators and researchers have studied the process many teachers use to choose books for didactic or informational purposes (Bainbridge & Pantaleo, 1999; Moss, 2003; Popp, 1996; Szymusiak et al., 2008). During this process, teachers examine content standards or goals and choose books that deliver the desired information in an accessible manner. Little attention was given to the process teachers used to choose books for read-alouds that strove to engage students with literary texts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how elementary school teachers selected books for read-alouds. The following research questions framed my descriptive study:

- Q1 How do elementary school teachers select books for the read-aloud?
- Q2 For what purposes do elementary school teachers select books for the read-aloud?

Significance of the Study

Through this research, I intended to fill a gap in read-aloud research, elementary literature curriculum research, and teacher decision making research. I intended to add to teacher decision making research by describing the phenomenon of choosing books for the read-aloud. Teachers made this process visible through think-alouds during their selection processes and reflective interviews. These descriptions contributed to curriculum research by sharing the possibilities for equipping teachers to evaluate and select books for the purpose of teaching literature.

Concluding Summary

Through this chapter, I focused on how and for what purposes elementary school teachers selected books for the read-aloud. The more we learn about teachers' thinking when selecting books, the better equipped researchers and educators will become to enhance teacher development in literature read-alouds. In Chapter II, I present a review of relevant literature regarding the read-aloud as literature curriculum. In Chapter III, I include the research design and methodological overview detailing the procedures, data collection, data analyses, and validation processes that answered each of my research questions. In Chapter IV, I outline findings of the study. In Chapter V, I discuss the findings and implications of these research findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This descriptive study examined the read-aloud as a curricular event and valued teachers as decision makers. In this literature review, I summarize research and theories that laid a foundation for this phenomenological description of how and why teachers selected books for read-alouds. The following outline provides an overview of the chapter:

- I. The Read-Aloud as Curriculum
 - A. Curriculum defined
 - B. Components of Curriculum
- II. Literature in Elementary School
 - A. Dimensions of Literary Art
 - B. Rule-Governed Practice
- III. Teachers as Decision-Makers Selecting Books for the Read-Aloud
 - A. Reader Response Theory
 - B. Theoretical Orientations to Art
 - C. Literary Value Judgments
 - D. Systems Theory

Introduction

This study focused on the specific curricular decision-making process of how elementary school teachers selected books for the read-aloud. Although the read-aloud is rarely tied to paper-and-pencil tasks and the learning constructed during the event is rarely tested (Hahn, 2002), the read-aloud is still a common classroom event that places it within the scope of curriculum. In this review, I define curriculum with respect to the read-aloud and describe the components of curriculum in context of selecting books for the read-aloud.

Embedded in this review of pertinent curricular concepts, I address the read-aloud as a specific curricular event. For the purpose of this study, the *read-aloud* is defined as a regularly scheduled literary event where the teacher or selected reader's voice personally performs the story for listeners in the classroom community.

The research questions that guided this study were how and why elementary school teachers selected books for the read-aloud. I explored theoretical orientations to art, discussed literary value judgments, and applied systems theory to teachers' book selection processes. Through this literature review, I describe the knowledge and beliefs about my understanding of the research that this study joined—curriculum, the read-aloud, rule-governed practice of literature, and teachers as decision makers.

The Read-Aloud as Curriculum

During the 1920s, progressive educators conceptualized curriculum as “all of the experiences the child has under the aegis of the school” (Eisner, 2002b, p. 26). Therefore, any decision that impacts students' school experiences—ranging from the broadest based types of policy to specific, particular decisions--is a curricular decision.

When elementary school teachers select books for the read-aloud, they are making curricular decisions. For the purpose of this study, *curriculum* was defined as “a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students” (Eisner, 2002b, p. 31). In Table 1, I have tabulated Eisner’s expanded definition of curriculum to provide a clear definition of how I will define curriculum for the purpose of this study.

Table 1

Curriculum Defined

Curriculum	Definition
Series	More than one event planned.
Planned	Has some aim, some purpose, some goal or objective (even though it may be highly diffuse or general).
Educational	Takes place in school, an educational institution.
Consequences	Educational events influence people in a wide variety of ways that might or might not be known in advance.

Note. Eisner, 2002b, p. 31.

According to this definition, read-alouds are curriculum. For example, a teacher may select a series of multicultural texts to read aloud with the educational aim of expanding cultural understanding. This experience may consequentially inspire a listener to read more of the particular author’s works because of the aesthetic experience she had listening to the read-aloud.

Components of Curriculum

To better understand the read-aloud as a curricular event, I explored four components of curriculum: *stated*, *taught*, *hidden*, and *null*. These four components provided a framework for answering the research questions how and why teachers selected books for the read-aloud.

Stated curriculum. Much of what is taught in school is *explicit* and public. This body of material is planned in advance of classroom use. This *intended* or *stated curriculum* is designed to help students learn content, acquire some skills, develop some beliefs, or have some valued type of experience (Eisner, 2002b; Hewitt, 2006). Anything put forward consciously by an official representation of the school (such as a teacher's lesson plans or an adopted packaged curriculum) is the stated curriculum. Literature, not read-alouds, commonly appears in the stated curriculum. The fact that read-alouds are not a common part of stated curriculum enables elementary school teachers to have decision-making freedom with regard to read-aloud practices and book selections.

Taught curriculum. Taught curriculum is comprised of "the unique set of events that transpire within a classroom. It is what occurs between teachers and students and between students and students" (Eisner, 2002b, pp. 33-34). Taught curriculum may deviate from the stated curriculum. For example, to meet the stated curricular objective of teaching literary genres, the teacher may choose to introduce historical fiction through a planned read-aloud. Even if neither historical fiction nor read-alouds are specified in the stated curriculum, once this decision is implemented it becomes the taught or operational curriculum of the classroom.

Reading aloud to children is valued as a home and school practice (Adams, 1990; Durkin, 1966; Mason & Allen, 1986; Snow & Ninio, 1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Wells, 1990) even though it is rarely part of the stated curriculum. The Commission on Reading concluded, “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 2).

Some attempts have been made to measure the extent of this practice but provide an inconsistent picture. Hall (1971), LaPointe (1986), and Langer et al. (1990) reported that only about half of elementary teachers in their study read to their students on a daily basis. By contrast, Lickteig and Russell (1993) and Hoffman et al. (1993) found that nearly three-fourths of teachers in their study read aloud to their students after lunch for at least 20 minutes daily. Jacobs, Morrison, and Swinyard (2000) surveyed 1,874 elementary teachers and found that the teachers surveyed read for at least 10 or 15 minutes two days per week. They also found that primary grade teachers surveyed read more often to their students than did the intermediate grade teachers surveyed.

Despite the inconsistent findings of these studies concerning the extent of this practice, the read-aloud is an example of how schools offered more than the stated curriculum (Apple, 1979; Dreeben, 1968; Eisner, 2002b; Jackson, 1968; Sarason, 1971; Vallance, 1973). These offerings are known as the *operational* or *taught curriculum*.

Some curriculum planning does not result in the creation of physical materials (Eisner, 2002b; Hewitt, 2006). For example, many teachers do not have a written curriculum for the read-aloud. Yet, the read-aloud that is planned in advance or during the read-aloud in the teacher’s mind alone is still a curriculum. However, because the

plans are not public, they cannot be inspected nor shared with others (Eisner, 2002b). Therefore, research and judgment depends upon observing the curriculum in use rather than evaluating published materials.

Hidden curriculum. The stated and taught curricula may include *hidden curriculum* (Dreeben, 1968; Durkheim, 1961; Eisner, 2002b; Hewitt, 2006; Jackson, 1968; Vallance, 1973; Willis, 1977). The hidden curriculum refers to the unwritten, and often unintended, lessons or messages conveyed by teachers, school structures, textbooks, and other school resources (Eisner, 2002b; Hewitt, 2006). When describing the hidden curriculum, Eisner (2002b) said, “These messages are often conveyed by teachers who themselves are unaware of their presence” and are “often believed to serve the interests of the power elite that the school, often unwittingly, is thought to serve” (p. 73). The fact that teachers were unaware of the hidden curricular components of their books choices and that this hidden curriculum might not serve the students reinforced the need for this study.

Null curriculum. When conducting curricular research, it is important to consider not only the explicit and implicit curricula of schools but also what schools do not teach--the *null curriculum* (Eisner, 2002b, p. 97; Kridel, 2010). Null curriculum refers to the exclusion of content or subject areas or the neglect of specific intellectual processes (Eisner, 2002b). If a teacher wants a light-hearted tone for her historical fiction read-alouds, she might avoid books that included racial tension. This decision might result in the theme, topic, or discussion of racial tension being completely excluded from the curriculum. The concept of racial tension then becomes null curriculum in that classroom.

The stated, taught, hidden, and null curricula are ideological constructs because they reflect the clash of ideas over social, political, cultural, and economic purposes schools should serve; what should be taught; the subjects that would best reflect those purposes; how schools should be organized; and who should attend them. The phenomenon of selecting books for the read-aloud is situated within a fluctuating field of curriculum study that reflects the push and pull over issues in society.

What Counts as Literature in Elementary School

Although literature plays an instrumental role in children's education, literature itself is rarely included as a school subject in elementary school curriculum (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000; Nodelman & Reimer, 2002). Historically, elementary literature curriculum was planned and taught to cultivate literary appreciation. This is no longer the case. Sipe (2008) reported, "Today the types of book experiences that result in aesthetic literary understanding are decidedly not among the 'school-valued practices' of many school districts, schools, and classrooms today" (p. 7). Literature has become instrumentally valued as teachers consider what lessons, skills, or information can be taken away from reading experiences. "Teachers expressed the belief that children's literature should be the primary component of a language arts program. However, there was little evidence that children's literature was being used for literary as well as literacy instruction" (Galda et al., 2000, p. 374). Despite school libraries, classrooms filled with books, teachers who read to students daily, independent reading, and comprehensive reading programs, many elementary schools do not have planned literature programs or curricula (Lehman, Freeman, & Allen, 1994).

In her book *The Child as Critic* (2003), Sloan made a case for the role and development of elementary school literature curriculum. She built her case on the belief that literature's place in elementary school is "to provide the verbal element in the training of the imagination" (p. xi). For her, "the imagination is not a self-indulgent, ornamental, or escapist faculty: It is the constructive power of the mind" (Sloan, 2003, p. xi; see also Eisner, 2002a). After expounding on multiple aesthetic and non-aesthetic values of literature's inclusion in the elementary school curriculum, Sloan explained that elementary school teachers needed a curricular framework that provided a "theoretical substructure, a deductive framework to support an inquiry-based, inductive approach to learning" (p. xv). Applying Frye's theories (1956, 1957, 1963a; 1963b; 1982; 1988) of curriculum and literature, Sloan advocated for "a new way of looking at literature as a whole rather than work by work—an interrelated order of words stretching back to myth, legend, and folktale" (p. xv). Understanding the role the read-aloud could play in a literature curriculum aligned with these principles, I conducted this research to seek answers to how and why teachers select books for the read-aloud. I understood that literature's value is often determined by its pedagogical usefulness to teach or reinforce skills or to introduce or expand content knowledge across school subjects rather than for its intrinsic value. I was interested in read-alouds that construct literature curriculum, foster literary appreciation, and educate the imagination.

In his book *The Philosophy of Literature*, Lamarque (2009) illustrated what counts as literature by comparing "doing literature" to playing a game of chess. To play chess, the players must follow the rules of the game. Playing with chess game-pieces does not constitute playing chess. If players abandon or adapt the rules of the game, they

stop playing chess and begin playing something else. In the same way, not all transactions with books in the elementary classroom count as doing literature. Not all read-alouds count as literature curriculum. Some read-alouds are math curriculum. Some read-alouds are literacy lessons. Some read-alouds are social studies curriculum. Lamarque posits that there are rules or practices to doing literature. When readers or listeners begin to do other things with books that “break” the rules of doing literature, they are no longer doing literature. Just as novice chess players may think they are playing chess just because they are playing with chess game-pieces, some teachers may not know when they have shifted away from doing literature and have started using books for other purposes.

Dimensions of Literary Art

Various theoretical frameworks and critical stances provide diverse descriptions of dimensions of literary art. Likewise, elementary school teachers may consider different factors when choosing books for the read-aloud. Some scholars (Knight, 2007; Lamarque, 2009; Lamarque & Olsen, 1994; Nikolajeva, 2005; Nodelman & Reimer, 2002; Sloan, 2003) suggest it is not the *content* or particular books themselves that constitute literature curriculum but the *imaginative/creative* dimension. The imaginative dimension raises an expectation that literature be creative, either through fictional invention or through the imposition of form on subject, and that the work be a unified whole. Other scholars (Barthes, 1975; Derrida, 1976) would agree literary art extends beyond the content dimension; however, they would argue the imaginative/creative dimension can be experienced even when unity is broken or form is violated.

The content dimension raises an expectation of what Lamarque (2009) called *moral seriousness*--content where some broad human interest is raised and developed. It supports multiple readings and invites reflection (Nikolajeva, 2005; Saxby, 1997; Sipe, 2008; Sloan, 2003). Knight (2007) warns that adhering to Lamarque's concept of moral seriousness pushes us toward a canonical concept of literature that could limit aesthetic appreciation.

Because reading is purposive, literature curriculum entails specific kinds of reading with expectations of certain kinds of rewards. Elementary school teachers often pragmatically use books and the read-aloud to teach math, science, social studies, literacy skills, moral and social values, and other content (Blass, 2002; Wadsworth & Laminack, 2006). The purpose of this sort of reading is to share a message or make a point with a specific focus on the content of the book.

The content dimension connects with the imaginative dimension through the idea of *theme*. "Literary themes are conceptions that bind elements in a work together, encapsulating the work's significance and moral seriousness" (Lamarque, 2009, p. 208). Theme is distinct from subject or topic. "To say what a work is about at a subject level is in effect to retell the story" (Lamarque, 2009, p. 150). For example, when discussing the subject or topic of *Chains* (Anderson, 2010), we could say it is topically an American Revolutionary slave narrative. However,

literary themes are conceptions that bind elements in a work together, encapsulating the work's significance and moral seriousness. The descriptions under which they are identified are either given in the work itself or brought to the work in the pursuit of wider significance. (Lamarque, 2009, p. 209)

Theme is the unifying element that orders the subject matter under general human conceptions. For example, one of *Chains*' themes of moral seriousness or *human*

significance could be disappointment and hope. Theme extends beyond the topic or subject of the story. It refers to the more abstract reaches of the work (Peterson & Eeds, 1999) rather than the immediate constructed context of the narrative world. When reading literature, readers expect humanly interesting themes to be explored and developed through the subject presented. Readers' expectations for the imaginative and content criteria determine how they appreciate the work as literature.

Because read-alouds are events where literary art combines with performance art to facilitate a transaction for listeners, language and prosodic potential may become an important dimension of consideration when selecting books. Children's literature scholars and teacher educators Serafini and Giorgis (2003) shared how some works of literary art lend themselves more readily to a read-aloud performance: "Often they contain language that invites itself to be heard" (p. 40). These considerations would "depend on the reader's voice, timing, and intonation patterns, which can effectively convey the mood and tone of the story" (Serafini & Giorgis, 2003, p. 41). Read-aloud expert Lester Laminack (2009) compared reading aloud to playing music. He guided teachers through the process of learning how to read the dimensions of literary art that serve as signals to the reader. Just as musical composers provide visual cues for musicians to interpret, writers, illustrators, and book designers provide readers with visual and linguistic cues to guide the readers' mood, tone, pacing, and intensity. These cues may be a dimension of literature that teachers consider when selecting books for read-alouds.

Rule-Governed Practice of Literature

This study was situated within a framework that values literature as an elementary school curriculum and honors the read-aloud's potential to be an aesthetic literary event. Lamarque (2009) shared four specific rule-governed practices that are included in doing literature: *formal analysis*, *explication*, *elucidation*, and *interpretation* for the purpose of *appreciation*. Because the purpose of this study was to explore how and why teachers select books for the read-aloud, examining teachers' literature instructional practices and what rules they practice when facilitating literature curriculum was beyond the scope of this study. However, understanding some principles and practices that might count as teaching literature was useful when determining when teachers selected books for literature and when they selected them for other curricular purposes.

Formal analysis. When the curricular objective is to equip students to appreciate literature, the taught curriculum would include exploring form and structure. As a rule-based practice, formal analysis is guided by the following questions: How does it work? How do the elements hang together to produce the desired effect? Literary works are structured designs. An objective of elementary literature curriculum is to equip young readers to attend to structure and "to adopt a principle of functionality that understands that all aspects of design can be presumed to fulfill a purpose" (Lamarque, 2009, p. 137). According to Lamarque, this principle is not an inquiry of authorial or illustrator intent but rather the transactional process (Rosenblatt, 1978) where the reader attends to connectedness and patterns in the structured design. Within literature curriculum, the rule for formal analysis is that it contributes to the wider assessment of the work's interest and value.

Explication. As a rule-based practice, “doing” literature includes constructing meaning through the process of explication and close reading. Explication focuses on “relatively localized parts” of works (Beardsley, 1981, p. 130) with the aim of identifying unusual, idiomatic, or problematic usages and exploring ranges of connotations or symbolism (Harrison, 1991; Lamarque, 2009). The processes for constructing meaning will be similar across texts: attending to words themselves as well as the images, situations or events they represent; and examining the word sounds and the text forms. “Lamarque’s point is not that we should ignore language and meaning; rather, we should not privilege them above the principles of literary appreciation” (Knight, 2007, p. 43). The rule for literary explication is that the transactional nature of constructing meaning is not an end but a “stage toward fuller appreciation of the work as a whole” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 144).

Elucidation. Another rule-governed practice of literature is elucidation. Elucidation (Beardsley, 1981) is the exploration of the immediate subject or *world* of the work. It is the “quest for details about a narrative—what occurs in the world of the work—which are not made explicit in the narrative itself” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 145). For example, when reading Browne’s *Voices in the Park* (1998), questions of elucidation could include the following: Why does Mrs. Smythe think she’s better than Mr. Smith? Where is Smudge’s mother? Why does Charles enjoy playing with Smudge? The transactional process of imaginative supplementation extends beyond explication to interpret action. In the context of practicing literature, the procedures of formal analysis, explication, and elucidation are not carried out for their own sake as ends in themselves,

nor even to enhance understanding, but in pursuit of literary appreciation (Lamarque, 2009; Nikolajeva, 2005; Sipe, 2008; Sloan, 2003).

Interpretation. When practicing literature, interpretation has distinct rule-governed aims and procedures. Interpretation is necessary whenever there is a need to make sense of something that is initially puzzling or without one obvious explanation (Barnes, 1988). Interpretation might be needed at the level of individual words and sentences (e.g., complex metaphors) or with longer passages or at the level of the work itself. “Interpretation involves reading a work as a whole, incorporating explication, elucidation, and micro interpretation” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 148).

During interpretation, readers explore and transactionally construct aboutness (Lamarque, 2009) at a thematic level. “To speak of what a work is about, thematically, is to speak of a unifying thread that binds together incident and character in an illuminating way” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 150). Interpretation moves beyond the immediate events portrayed by helping the reader “arrive at a fuller, richer reading that does justice to its artistic complexity” (Cai & Traw, 1997, p. 24). While most read-alouds will require a certain amount of elucidation, the need for interpretation varies depending on the students and the text.

Appreciation. When we practice literature, the aim of formal analysis, explication, elucidation of the subject, and thematic interpretation is to construct appreciation. “Literary appreciation is a trained response, calling for skills of discernment. We appreciate [an individual work] more as we learn about the tradition to which it belongs and the subtleties of its form and thematic development” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 172; see also Bogdan, 1992; Sloan, 2003). Facilitating experiences to help

students learn to appreciate literature is the curricular objective of elementary school literature curriculum. Literary theorist Deborah Knight (2007) agreed that literary experiences and training work together to develop “taste (or a comparable alternative ability), as well as discrimination” (p. 42) necessary for appreciation (see also Bogdan, 1990). The perception of literary qualities involves both imagination and reflection that can be developed when literature curriculum attends to formal analysis, explication, elucidation, and interpretation. This appreciation “is not instrumental or utilitarian but a pleasure in the literary for its own sake” (Knight, 2007, p. 42).

Teachers as Decision Makers Selecting Books for the Read-aloud

The books teachers select for the read-aloud often have hidden curricular implications, i.e., children’s books are often used for some other curriculum than literature. The research on teacher decision making describes a process that is complex, context-dependent, and is not necessarily rational or evidence-driven (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Any teaching act is the result of a decision, whether conscious or unconscious, that a teacher makes after processing available information. Thus, teachers’ decisions impact student experiences (Borko, Shavelson, & Stern, 1981). Making decisions are implicit in the teaching act and teachers are “generally unaware of the nature of their judgment policies” (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, p. 475). Because of the unobservable, often unconscious, nature of decisions, educators and researchers do not know why or how teachers make the decisions to choose specific books for read-alouds.

The phenomenon of selecting books for the read-aloud is an important area of inquiry because adults are the gatekeepers to the books children read. “Books and children are not made of velcro; they don’t stick to each other without a little help from

significant others” (Cullinan & Galda, 2001, p. 24). Since adults connect children with books, text selection functions within a power structure of subjectivity and cultural influences (Even-Zohar, 1978; Shavit, 1986). Children’s literature is written with a dual structure as it addresses two different groups of readers: adults and children. The books’ content, style, themes, and the marketing strategies used to promote the books must often pass the adult filter’s expectations to ever make it into the hands of the child-reader or listener.

In our current culture, children’s literature must address the adult reader because the adult is culturally considered superior to the child and often has the economic and cognitive power to select appropriate reading material for the child. Shavit (1986) pointed out that this cultural fact forces “the children’s writer to compromise between two addresses who differ both in their literary tastes as well as in their norms of realization of the text” (p. 93). This compromise impacts selection processes and aesthetic value judgments.

Shavit (1986) extended the notion that *good* children’s literature is often not determined by a poetic, literary quality; rather it is established through a process of cultural influences. Children’s literature is situated within a multirelational system of social norms, literary norms, and educational norms. These dynamic norms are historically and culturally situated and guide the value judgments of children’s literature. “The wide range of topics included in children’s and young adult literature provides young people access to a comprehensive picture of their world; it also invites serious attempts to censor what they read” (Cullinan & Galda, 2001, p. 25).

Nikolajeva (2010) extended Shavit's (1986) notion of dual address as she borrowed some basic principles of inquiry from queer (de Certeau, 1986) and carnival theory (Bakhtin, 1986). Her analyses illustrated that the central problem of children's literature can best be understood by examining power tensions between adults and children. She conceptualizes *aetonormativity* that identifies how adult normativity governs the way children's literature has been patterned "to educate, socialize and oppress a particular social group" (p. 8).

Nikolajeva (2010) articulately illustrated the complexity of aetonormativity and the insight that carnival theory can provide because of the constant change of power positions: "Yesterday's children grow up and become oppressors themselves" (p. 9). She used Pippi Longstocking's wisdom to describe this distinct power structure:

Of course you have to eat your good cereal. If you don't eat your good cereal, then you won't grow and get big and strong. And if you don't get big and strong, then you won't have the strength to force *your* children, when you have some, to eat *their* good cereal. (Lindgren, 1959, p. 55, italics in the original)

Nikolajeva invited scholars and teachers to embrace "Bakhtin's overall view of literature as carnival, a symbolic representation of a socially liberating process, a subversive, that is, disguised, interrogation of authorities" (p. 10). Nikolajeva explored how writers of literature for children have used specific genres, settings, characters, and narrative devices such as voice, focalization, and subjectivity to "confirm or interrogate power structures in their texts" (p. 11). Despite the inability of adult scholars to fully interrogate their own power position, Nikolajeva's conceptualization of aetonormative inquiry created a theoretical framework that could be applied when selecting books for the read-aloud.

To become better equipped to understand and describe the unobservable phenomenon of book selection, I explored response theory, theoretical orientations to art, literary value judgments, and cultural-historical activity (systems) theory.

Reader Response Theory

When exploring literature's constitutive values and how and why teachers select books, it is important to remember that literature is response dependent. "A literary work, therefore, cannot be an objective entity with its 'meaning' [and value] existing apart from the experience of the reader" (Sloan, 2003, p. 39). Value claims must consider the reader, listener, text, and context. Reader response theorists (Beach, 1993; Bleich, 1978; Fish, 1980; Holland, 1968; Ingarden, 1973; Iser, 1978; Jauss, 1982; Marshall, 2000; Rabinowitz, 1987; Rosenblatt, 1938/1978; Serafini & Giorgis, 2003; Sloan, 2003; Tompkins, 1980) described a transactional account of reading that provides insight into the rule-governed practice of literature. In summary, reader response theories agreed as follows:

1. Reading is an active process of constructing meaning in transaction with a text.
2. Readers do not read in a vacuum and the meanings readers construct are always supported and limited by the context in which they are reading.
3. The text being read both limits and supports possible meaning being constructed by the readers.
4. A text itself carries no meaning.
5. Because readers do not live in a vacuum the notion of an interpretive community is important.
6. Readers respond for a variety of reasons.
7. There is no single correct meaning. (Serafini & Giorgis, 2003, p. 16)

Because reading experiences are transactional, the reader's and/or listener's mental set (Rosenblatt, 1982) determines the nature of the experience.

A reader's mental set or stance is determined by the purpose for the reading. Rosenblatt (1982) described aesthetic and efferent stances. When reading from an efferent stance, the reader is most concerned with the by-products or what he or she carries away from the reading. In contrast, readers with an aesthetic stance focus on the "lived-through experience" (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 27). The text does not dictate the mental set or stance; the purpose for reading determines the nature of the experience. Aesthetic and efferent stances exist on a continuum, do not exclude one another, and can shift during a reading transaction (Rosenblatt, 1982; Youngs, 2009). "Stance guides the selection process and reflects purposes for reading" (Youngs, 2009, p. 159; see also Cox & Many, 1992; Galda, 1982; Karolides, 1992).

Theoretical Orientations to Art

Teachers' aesthetic judgments are influenced by many things including personal orientations to art. All artwork can be approached both as aesthetic objects and as instrumental objects of interest for educational, sociological, political, psychological, or other reasons (Viguers, 1986). To better understand teachers' book selection processes and to look at the tension between instrumental and aesthetic approaches in different ways, I explored Abrams' (1953) theoretical orientations to art in context of selecting books for the read-aloud.

Orientations to art tend to derive insights, distinctions, classifications, and value judgments from one or more of the four elements that influence any communications situation: (a) author/artist, (b) audience, (c) subject/world/reality, and (d) the work of art

itself. Abrams (1953) conceptualized four general orientations to art; each brings one or more of these elements into focus. The participants in this study did not verbally identify or label their own orientations to art but I used these four theoretical orientations:

pragmatic, mimetic, expressive, and objective (Abrams, 1953; Lamarque, 2009) as an analytical framework for typifying teacher's book selection processes within a literature curriculum.

Pragmatic theories. Elementary school teachers with conscious or unconscious pragmatic orientation focus on audience response and the effects of literature and the read-aloud. The concern for the moral, psychological, cognitive, affective, and political effects of art are situated within pragmatic theories. From the pragmatic orientation, teachers focus on the artistic devices that move, affect, or teach an audience. Because of the wide spectrum of literatures' effects, focus and subsequent transactions tend to fall at various points along the aesthetic continuum. Because of the many different effects literature can have, different kinds of pragmatics can dominate or influence teachers' book choices and the purposes of the read-aloud. The following sub-sections describe various pragmatic focuses to provide deeper understanding of teachers' conscious and unconscious book selection processes.

Pleasure pragmatics of children's literature. A characteristic effect of aesthetic experiences with children's literature is pleasure (Darigan, Tunnell, & Jacobs, 2002; Kiefer et al., 2007; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Norton, 2007). When describing what it is like to think of literature as art, Lamarque (2009) writes that literature is "capable of affording distinct kinds of pleasure" (p. 16; see also Barthes, 1975; Lamarque, 2009; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Sontag, 1961). This distinct pleasure can be attached to the

rule-governed literary practice of appreciation that extends beyond a purely hedonic kind of sensory or erotic (Sontag, 1961) pleasure (Lamarque, 2009). Nodelman and Reimer applied Barthes' (1975) concept of pleasure as they conceptualized the pleasures of literature written for children in the following ways:

- The pleasure of experiencing sounds and images in and for themselves—as pure sensory outside and beyond the realm of shared meanings and patterns.
- The pleasure of words themselves—the patterns their sounds can make, the interesting ways in which they combine with one another, their ability to express revealing, frightening, or beautiful pictures or ideas.
- The pleasure of having one's emotions evoked: laughing at a comic situation, being made to feel pain or the joy a character experiences.
- The pleasure of making use of a repertoire of knowledge and strategies of comprehension—of experiencing mastery of what the text expects of its readers.
- The pleasure of recognizing gaps in repertoire and learning the information or the strategy needed to fill them, thereby developing further mastery.
- The pleasure of the pictures and ideas that the words of texts evoke—the ways in which they allow one to visualize people and places one has never actually seen or think about ideas one hasn't considered before.
- The pleasure of finding a mirror for oneself—of identifying with fictional characters.
- The pleasure of escape—of stepping outside oneself at least imaginatively and experiencing the lives and thoughts of different people.
- The pleasure of story—the organized pattern of emotional involvement and detachment, the delays of suspense, the climaxes and resolutions, the intricate patterns of chance and coincidence that make up a plot.
- The pleasure of storytelling—the consciousness of how a writer's point of view or emphasis on particular elements shapes one's response.
- The pleasure of structure—the consciousness of how words, pictures, or events form cohesive and meaningful patterns.
- The pleasure of one's awareness of ways in which all the elements of a literary work seem to fit together to form a whole.
- The pleasure of understanding—of seeing how literature not only mirrors life but also comments on it and encourages readers to consider the meaning of their existence.
- The pleasure of gaining insight into history and culture through literature.
- The pleasure of recognizing forms and genres—of seeing similarities between works of literature.
- The pleasure of formula—of repeating the comfortably familiar experience of kinds of stories one has enjoyed before.

- The pleasure of newness—of experiencing startlingly different kinds of stories and poems.
- The pleasure of seeing through literature—of realizing how poems or stories attempt to manipulate one’s emotions and influence one’s understanding and moral judgments in ways one may or may not be prepared to accept (reading against the text).
- The pleasure of exploring the ways in which texts sometimes undermine or even deny their own apparent meanings (deconstruction).
- The pleasure of developing a deeper understanding of one’s responses and of relating them to one’s responses to other texts and to one’s understanding of literature in general.
- The pleasure of sharing experiences of literature with others.
- The pleasure of discussing with others their responses to texts one has read. (pp. 25-26)

This list focused on verbal texts. Picturebooks have their pleasures also. Nodelman and Reimer (2003) reported that there is a “visual pleasure equivalent to each of the verbal ones mentioned” (p. 26). The pleasure of literature is the pleasure of experiencing “dialogues between readers and texts, and between readers and other readers about those texts” (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003, p. 27).

Moral pragmatics of children’s literature. The moral effects of literature are a pragmatic consideration. “Morality may be defined as one’s concepts, reasoning, and actions which pertain to the welfare, rights and fair treatment of persons” (Nucci, 1997, p. 2). Moral education is the process whereby teachers and other adults support children’s growing understanding of right and wrong, their ability to think critically about the well-being of others, and their expression of values such as caring, respect for others, and responsibility (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004). Historically, moral education has been approached from two divergent perspectives about the nature of moral development. Traditional character educators (Ryan & Mclean, 1987) emphasize activities and teaching that develop self-control and behavioral follow through. Cognitive developmentalists (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989) emphasize rationality in the form of moral

decision-making, i.e., the idea that moral decisions can be achieved through exercising a developed rational faculty. Educators and researchers from both perspectives claim that reading and listening to moral stories improves moral literacy and moral character development (Clare, Gallimore, & Patthey-Chavez, 1996; Kilpatrick, 1993; Koc & Buzzelli, 2004; Krogh & Lamme, 1985; Siu-Runyan, 1996; Wynne & Ryan, 1993).

Researchers recognize that people develop moral judgments on the basis of age and education (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Kohlberg, 1984; Rest, 1986; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). As moral schemas develop, an individual's concerns expand; he or she is able to consider the welfare of more and more others when conceptualizing ideal forms of cooperation advancing from concern of self to concern for strangers. Some scholars and teachers believe read-alouds have the potential to expand moral schema because "through literature, children can observe other people's lives, experiences, and various versions of moral conflicts and learn to take others' perspectives. They can also recognize moral and ethical dilemmas by observing the behavior of story characters" (Koc & Buzzelli, 2004, p. 92; see also Booth, 1983, 1988; Smith & Wilhelm, 2010). Therefore, when a teacher consciously or unconsciously uses the read-aloud as moral curriculum, she selects books with the hope of expanding moral schema.

Social pragmatics of children's literature. The pragmatic effects extend beyond moral pragmatics to include the effect of literature on children's adherence to or reaction against social conventions. Social conventions are the "consensually determined standards of conduct particular to a given social group" (Nucci, 1997, p. 2). Social conventions such as standards of dress, communication, table manners, and so forth are

embedded within a particular shared system of meaning and social interaction. The importance of conventions lies in the function it serves to organize social interaction and discourse within social systems (Nucci, 1997). Learning and practicing social conventions are integrated into the stated, taught, and hidden elementary school curriculum. The read-aloud often becomes the curricular event for these lessons. For example, when a teacher becomes aware of a social problem among the students such as bullying, she may choose a book that subtly addresses the issue with the hope of correcting the social behavior.

Political pragmatics of children's literature. Political pragmatics of children's literature focuses on the effects literature has on children's ideological development. These ideologies are often part of the hidden curriculum and may focus on gender (Bailey, 1992; Marshall & Reihartz, 1997; O'Neill, 2000; Reay, 2001), race (Gilborn, 1992; Vang, 2006), and class issues (Sharp & Green, 1975).

Psychological pragmatics of children's literature. Psychological development is a common curricular objective and consideration of the psychological effects of literature can be a guiding factor in decision making. Psychological pragmatics include children's emotional responses to literature with a focus on attitudes and feelings. During the read-aloud, listeners create images of settings, characters, objects, and actions in their minds; they also create intellectual and emotional responses to those images (Short, 1997; Singer & Singer, 1990). Through these responses—joy, sadness, suspense, awe, surprise—children come to know the texts they are listening to more fully and they come to know themselves and others more deeply (Neuman & Celano, 2001). A teacher's desire for affective response may guide her book selection processes.

Affective responses play an important role in vicarious experiences that enhance listeners' psychological development. Literary experiences provide vicarious knowledge—knowing what it is like (Walsh, 1943, 1969)--that extends beyond purely intellectual knowledge. “Imaginative participation ... furnishes us with empathetic beliefs, and ... with a set of practical hypothesis for tackling similar quandaries in the actual world” (Novitz, 1987, p. 137). To empathize with a character is in some way to share or “live through” the experiences of that character” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 245). This vicarious experience “is not the acquisition of information, or the inferential knowledge about something...it is knowing in the sense of realizing through living through” (Walsh, 1969, p. 101).

Cognitive pragmatics of children's literature. One of the cognitive pragmatic purposes of studying and experiencing literature is to educate or exercise the imagination (Lamarque, 2009; Sloan, 2003). “We have no standardized tests to measure it, but this does not mean that its education can be neglected. . . . Imagination is not secondary to intellect or emotions; it is the very core of them” (Sloan, 2003, p. 12). Literary read-alouds can be curricular events that educate the imagination because “literature itself is born out of imagination” and “literature illustrated what is essential for humans to realize: there are no limits for the imagination” (Sloan, 2003, p. 12). Because literature is “art that describes what happens to human beings as they try to come to terms with living, it gives shape to the shifting human experience” (Sloan, 2003, p. 12).

When using the read-aloud to educate the imagination, teachers select books where the author's “invented characters and incidents can stretch the imagination by causing readers to bring to mind imaginatively what otherwise might not have occurred

to them” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 241). Educating the imagination is just one of the cognitive objectives that teachers may have for read-alouds.

In summary because of the pragmatic nature of school, social views of childhood, and the transactional nature of reading, it would be understandable that pragmatic orientation would be the most dominant orientation to art when selecting books for the read-aloud. However, the seven different pragmatic approaches would conceivably color the choices differently and highlight the aesthetic/instrumental nature of read-aloud differently.

Mimetic theories. As one of the most established concepts of literature going back to Aristotle, mimetic theories investigate how the work of literature relates to a model of external reality. These theories are loosely associated with classical or neoclassical thought about the arts (Lamarque, 2009). Terms that fit within this approach are *imitation*, *representation*, *mimesis*, and *mirror*. Mimetic theories find imitation, representation, and mimesis not only an essential aim of literature but also its enduring characteristic value (Lamarque, 2009). Therefore, often times readers approach a text with mimetic expectations that signify their understanding of the “representational and representative properties of fiction” (Brown, 1999).

Reading, both the activity of reading and the content read, continually describes and explores various relations between fiction and reality. There is a range of possible relations. The matter of fiction may or may not coexist with actual objects; it may improve upon or ignore reality. . . .fiction may just as often complement and elaborate reality as contradict it. (Brown, 1999, p. 250)

Mimetic approaches to children’s literature examine the book’s relationship to reality as understood by the reader or listener.

Mimetic approaches are perhaps the most common in studies of children's literature (Nikolajeva, 2005). A number of analytical models are based on mimetic approaches: Marxism, New Historicism, and the mimetically oriented directions of Feminist and Postcolonial Theories. These models are related to mimesis because they care about the created world of the text and what is represented within it. All these critical approaches tend to be instrumental approaches to literature as they investigate, from slightly different premises, how social structures are represented in literature as well as how texts reflect the time and society within which they were produced. Such studies investigate the ways society and particular social groups are represented in children's novels, informational text, and picturebooks. Many of these studies focus on the values expressed in the books (Nikolajeva, 2005) as they uphold the mimetic idea that literary works attempt to represent or recreate a perceived reality. A mimetic orientation can create an instrumental mindset that leads to moral or affective pragmatics when the objective of the read-aloud is to teach a social curriculum.

From a mimetic orientation, teachers may select books based on an examination of motifs and issues because the motif or issue the book addresses "mirrors" the listeners' lives. Teachers may use the read-aloud as an opportunity to teach listeners how to identify common literary motifs, themes, and extended metaphors. A motif is a textual element—an event, character, or object—recurring in many works of literature. Friendship, love, quest, journey, and struggle are examples of literary motifs (Lerer, 2008; Mitchell, Prescod, & Geiger, 2003; Nikolajeva, 2005). Primary motifs can also be defined as a theme of the book (Nikolajeva, 2005) or as extended metaphors (Peterson &

Eeds, 1999). These motifs and extended metaphors can provide access to humanly significant themes that connect to the readers' lives.

Quest is by far the most common motif in children's literature, especially if we treat it broadly, not limit it to the search for objects or persons, but also include the quest for identity. Quests are common in folktales where the hero leaves home to search for treasure, a kidnapped princess, or simply fortune. We see the motif most clearly in genres closely related to folktales, primarily heroic fantasy. In contemporary psychological novels, quests are predominantly of a symbolic nature, which may be emphasized by the title. In adventure stories, there are many examples of searching for treasure (Nikolajeva, 2005).

Journey is another fundamental pattern in children's fiction including picturebooks. Running away, pursuit, escape, and survival in threatening surroundings are auxiliary motifs associated with journey as well as quest (Lerer, 2008; Nikolajeva, 2002, 2005). Journey, both real and imaginary; discoveries; the search for identity; and survival on one's own without adults' assistance are all important components when representing maturation, which makes these motifs more widespread in children's fiction than in mainstream literature.

An additional mimetic consideration is the book's characters. With a mimetic approach to literary characters, we are interested in what they are and how they relate to real people as we know them from the world as we perceive it. In children's literature, main characters are most often children or animals (occasionally inanimate objects) representing children. From a mimetic orientation, the teacher may use the read-aloud to introduce various kinds of characters that we meet in children's novels. There are

typically two main types of characters we meet in children's books: the underdog and the trickster, both originating from myth and folklore (Nikolajeva, 2005). Beyond these character types, children's literature also features concrete characters that can be treated from various viewpoints: sociohistorically, psychologically, biographically, and ideologically (Nikolajeva, 2002, 2005). When selecting books from a mimetic orientation, teachers would consider how a book imitates, represents, or mirrors the reality of the listeners' lives.

Expressive theories. Teachers with an expressive theory orientation focus on the relationship between the poet and work. Because those who adhere to an expressive view of art believe that literature conveys a subjective experience, the role of the artist is given prominence. Creativity, imagination, and emotion are valued and explored. "The central aim of art is no longer to imitate the human world or please an audience but to express a state of mind" (Lamarque, 2009, p. 44). Biographical criticisms that focus on intentionalist concepts are expressive theories "where the primary aim is the recovery of an artist's inner thoughts and feelings" (Lamarque, 2009, p. 44). Through genre studies and theories, literary critics employ an expressive orientation when they focus on the different stylistic techniques and genre characteristics authors use when writing different sorts of writing (Hernadi, 1972; Nodelman, 1981). Expressive orientations can lead toward instrumental transactions when the focus is on artist for historical or authorial purposes rather than on appreciating literature as expression.

Expressive orientations turn the read-aloud into an authorial reading that foregrounds the notion of an author whose ideas are respected, discussed, comprehended, and perhaps then resisted through the medium of the text (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998).

Expressive read-alouds help us “explore, justify, revise, or adapt our own self-knowledge and belief system” as “we respond and react to experiencing another perspective and from living through an experience shaped by that perspective” (Smith & Wilhelm, 2010, pp. 15-16).

Objective theories. Teachers with an objective theory orientation emphasize the integrity and ontologically sound status of the work itself (Lamarque, 2009). They value literature for its own sake, not for what it says about human experience, its effect on the reader, or its subjective expression. The work uses language, verbal structure, and illustrations to create an aesthetic object to be admired and enjoyed in its own right as literary art rather than as a vehicle for a message or moral (Lamarque, 2009). Teachers with an objective orientation would select a book just because it is literature or because it is a model text of a specific genre. They may neglect to consider the transactional nature of read-aloud experiences. The read-alouds’ whole purpose would be to teach literary structures and features or to appreciate or enjoy literature in its own right.

Literary Value Judgments

When selecting books for the read-aloud, teachers’ choices are guided by various art orientations. Ultimately, however, they are determined by the teacher’s personal literary value judgment. When describing elementary school teachers’ literary value judgments, it is important to extend the description beyond simple judgments such as *Zorgamazoo* (Weston, 2008) is a good book. Value claims of this kind have little intrinsic or curricular interest without supporting reasons. Although there is a place for personal preferences and likes and dislikes when selecting books for the read-aloud, these cannot be the sole basis for considered curricular judgments. Personal literary

preferences are often a result of personal experiences with books that makes reader response theory a foundational component of literary value judgments.

Intrinsic and instrumental value. When making literature book selections, teachers should seek intrinsic rather than instrumental value with the understanding that intrinsic values include values associated with the experience the work offers (Lamarque, 2009).

When exploring value judgments, it is important to make a distinction between reading *as literature* and reading *as something else* (Lamarque, 2009). This is a distinction between intrinsic and instrumental (efferent) values. “Instrumental value is a value arising from an object’s use or consequences. Instrumental values of literature are associated with values attached to the effects of reading where these effects seem remote from artistically relevant qualities” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 264). These values might include reminding me of my childhood, presenting a positive model for social behavior, or introducing the civil rights movement. These effects may be by-products of the reading transaction but do not indicate intrinsic values.

Because of the transactional nature of literature, literary values are *response-dependent*. Lamarque (2009) explored the question: “Which effects—or which responses—are directly related to a work’s intrinsic value, and which are contingent or instrumental effects?” (p. 264). Budd (1995) defended a view of the value of art in terms of the experience a work offers:

The value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers . . . It should be remembered that the experience the work of art offers is an experience *of the work itself*, and the valuable qualities of the work are qualities *of the work*, not of the experience it offers. It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in

undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience. So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable. (pp. 4-5)

Budd conceptualized *experience*, requiring that an “appropriate experience of a work be imbued with an awareness of . . . the aesthetically relevant properties of the work” and be “an experience of interacting with it in whatever way it demands if it is to be understood” (p. 7). Experienced-based values of the work are rule-governed. “If a reader misunderstands a work or is unaware of its important aesthetic properties, then any value judgment of that reader will be compromised” (Bogdan, 1990; Lamarque, 2009; Sloan, 2003). Literary value is subject to the rules of literary practice.

Subjective/objective. When teachers make literary value judgments when selecting books for the read-aloud, are they selecting books subjectively or objectively? This question is linked to the debates about “judgments of taste” going back to the eighteenth century. Objective judgment is associated with properties of an object and “might be thought to be a judgment that characterizes an object *as it is in itself* quite apart from any attitude or viewpoint associated with a human observer” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 269; Nagel, 1979).

In contrast, *subjectivity* makes reference to the qualities in a perceiving subject. Hume's (1854/1996) concepts of subjectivity when applied to literary appreciation and judgment reveal that this subjectivity “is not based on merely arbitrary responses to literature but calls for powers of discernment that to a large extent can be cultivated through experience and training” (Lamarque, 2009, p. 273). Hume separated *subjective* into at least two different senses: *sentiment* and *personal preference*. Value judgments and book selections are sentimental because they are ultimately *response-dependent*:

“there can be no literary values independent of the experience of readers of literature” (Lamarque, 2009, p.273). However, value judgments and book selections need not be subjective in the sense that they are merely personal preference.

Cultural-Historical Activity (Systems) Theory

Situation and context for curriculum influence decisions including books selected for read-alouds. In recent decades, cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and the idea of *situated cognition* have demonstrated the importance of context for human action. CHAT is a psychological framework that derives from Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural work in psychology. His followers, Leont’ev (1981) and Rubinshtein (1957), applied this theoretical framework to their explorations of human activities. This helped them conceptualize all human activity as complex, socially situated phenomena. Activity theory is useful in understanding teacher decision making and the read-aloud as literature curriculum because it highlights that any human activity—whether internal or external—is in fact allowed, encouraged, shaped, and constrained by the particular social situation in which it occurs. Activity theorists argue that human behavior can be highly creative and non-predictable but it is always situated and must be understood in context. Engeström (1993), who built on the work of Leont’ev (1981), argued that all human activity is goal-oriented and rule-governed. Rules are designed by humans in particular settings for the purpose of achieving certain goals. Over time, these rules become the unquestioned way of doing things in those settings. The objective of this study was to describe the unquestioned ways teachers select books for the read-aloud.

Situated Cognition

The theory of situated cognition holds that situations always co-produce thinking, learning, and understanding (Brown, Collins, & DuGuid, 1989). Researchers who study situated cognition argue that the setting in which cognition occurs shapes and, in fact, co-produces all the thinking and problem-solving that is done (Simon, 1996). Context or setting shapes the decisions teachers make and co-produces the curriculum that results from those decisions. Therefore, when exploring and describing teacher decision-making, it is important to understand the context that has shaped and co-produced those curricular decisions.

Curriculum development and teachers' decisions are made in contexts that are nested in other contexts. An aspect of various models in systems theory and cybernetics is that human beings do not develop in isolation; they develop in a variety of contexts—different environments that surround the individual human being and with which he or she is in constant interaction play a major role in development (Bridge, Judd, & Moock, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1979, 1989). For the purpose of this study, three levels of context—microsystem, mesosystem, and macrosystem—were explored to better understand teachers' book selection processes.

The first level of the ecology or the context of human development is called the microsystem. This level has the most immediate and earliest influences that include the family, local friendship and peer groups, and neighborhood or community institutions such as a particular school or church. Interestingly, Jungians and other depth psychologists see the self as embedded—meaning that anyone must be understood as operating inside of various levels—or nestings—of different contexts. Depth

psychologists also see *interactive spaces* as contexts; for example, how two or more people relate in a setting creates a unique nested context within that setting (Gerson, 1996). Therefore, teachers' value judgments and tastes are impacted by their personal microsystems of lived and literary experiences and the microsystem of the classroom context in which the books are selected.

The second level of nested context is the mesosystem. This includes intermediate levels of influence such as larger and less personal social institutions like government, transportation, entertainment, news organizations, or geographic regions larger than the neighborhood. The influence of these systems and institutions interacts with, and is filtered through, the microsystem institutions. This is society at large with embedded community and cultural aspects. The local community and culture is embedded or nested within society and the culture at large; the microsystem is part of the mesosystem.

The third and most global level of contextual surrounding is the macrosystem. This is the most distant from individuals and their influence and includes aspects such as international relations, global changes, or even more abstract aspects of culture. For example, the movement from agricultural and industrial economies to an information-age, global economy is having wide-spread influence on the ways societies, communities, and families are operating and therefore impacting the content and procedures of schooling, curriculum development, book publishing, and book selection. Microsystem value judgments are influenced by meso- and macrolevel influences. The theory of situated cognition demonstrates teachers' book selections processes are always co-produced in a nested context.

Figure 1 provides a visual illustration of the nested context of teachers' book selections for the read-aloud.

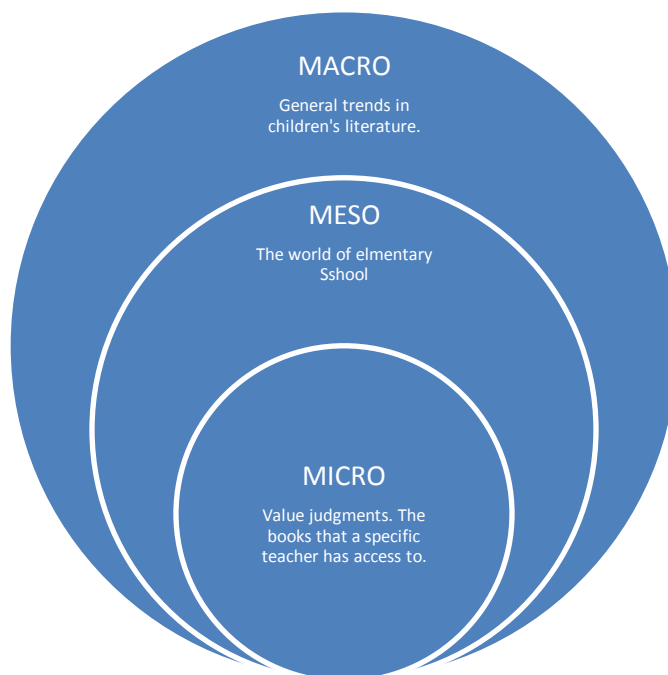


Figure 1. Nested context of teachers' book selections.

Summary

Through this review of cultural-historical activity theory, the concept of situated cognition, theoretical orientations to art, literary value judgments, and reader-response theory, I was better prepared to explore and describe how and why teachers select books for the read-aloud. In this chapter, I discussed a selection of theoretic thoughts related to my research questions: How do teachers select books for the read-aloud? and Why do teachers select books for the read-aloud? The review of the read-aloud as curriculum centered on Eisner's (2002b) definition of curriculum as "a series of planned events that

are intended to have educational consequences for one or more students” (p. 31).

Through an examination of curricular components, I saw stated, taught, hidden, and null dimensions of the read-aloud curriculum that are framed by curricular ideologies.

This literature review was inspired by Sloan’s (2003) argument for a planned literature curriculum for young students. She advocated for a curriculum that served as “a deductive framework to facilitate an inquiry-based, inductive learning process ...that provided a basis for an understanding of what literature, as a whole, is about” (p. 45). In pursuit of this curricular framework, I explored how and why teachers select books for the read-aloud.

Because of the unobservable, often unconscious nature of decisions (Shavelson & Stern, 1981), educators and researchers do not know why or how teachers make decisions to choose specific books for read-alouds. Leont’ev (1981) and Rubinshtein (1957) built upon Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural work in psychology and founded the cultural-historical activity theory that provided insight into the nested context that co-produces teachers’ decisions. To further understand teachers’ book choices, I examined Abrams’ (1953) four theoretical orientations to art and Lamarque’s (2009) insights into literary value judgments. These theoretical principles provided a foundation and analytical lens for thinking about teacher’s decision making practices and for redirecting attention to literature as curriculum in elementary schools.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the process I used to observe, describe, and analyze elementary school teachers' text selection processes for the read-aloud.

- I. Epistemology: Constructivism
- II. Theoretical Perspective: Phenomenology
- III. Methodology: Instrumental Case Study
- IV. Methods
 - A. Participants
 - B. Data collection
 - C. Data organization
 - D. Data analysis
 - E. Final narrative
- V. Additional Methodological Considerations
 - A. Researcher stance
 - B. Researcher bias
 - C. Gaining access and building rapport
 - D. Trustworthiness

Through an explanation and justification of my epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and research methods, I adhered to the essential elements of research design. In the end, I wanted outcomes that merit respect. I wanted the observers of the research to recognize it as sound research. These explanations also served as a defense of “the process as a form of human inquiry that should be taken seriously” (Crotty, 1998, p. 13).

Epistemology: Constructivism

An epistemology is a “theory of knowledge” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Constructivism provided the overarching epistemology behind this study. Those who hold the epistemological view of constructivism believe “the mind of an individual constructs meaning through experiences with others and subjects and objects in varying contexts” (Schendel, 2009, p. 16). For the individual elementary teacher, making literary text selections is a personal experience shaped through various interactions. Therefore, as I subscribe to constructivist theory, I view the decision maker as an active contributor to the field of pedagogical theory. Exploring and describing how three elementary school teachers selected books for the read-aloud could help us better understand the selection process. Sharing these descriptions might enhance practicing teachers’ selection processes and help prepare pre-service and practicing teachers to make the read-aloud a designed literary event.

Theoretical Perspective: Phenomenology

As I planned and conducted this research concerning the process of selecting books for the read-aloud, I subscribed to the theoretical principles of phenomenology. As a phenomenological study, this research described the meaning for several elementary

school teachers of their lived experience of the phenomenon of book selection. The basic purpose of phenomenological studies is “to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a ‘grasp of the very nature of the thing’)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58; van Manen, 1990, p. 177). As the inquirer, I collected data from three elementary school teachers who make books selections for read-alouds. From these data, I developed a composite description of the essence of the experience across all the individuals. Creswell (2007) outlined how this description should consist not only of “what they experience, but also ‘how’ they experienced it” (p. 58). As a phenomenological study, this research is “not only a description, but it is also an interpretive process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 59; van Manen, 1990, p. 26) in which I made an interpretation of the text selection process by mediating the processes of three participating elementary school teachers.

As I generated and interpreted data to answer my research question, I questioned the meaning of what the teachers were doing and saying and then transformed that understanding into public knowledge. Schwandt (2000) reminds us that “social inquiry is a distinctive praxis, a kind of activity (like teaching) that in doing transforms the very theory and aims that guide it” (p. 191). Through this process, I inevitably took up “theoretical” concerns about what constitutes knowledge and how it is justified.

By selecting phenomenology as my theoretical framework, I adhered to the assumptions influenced by the work of Alfred Schutz (1962, 1967). Phenomenological analysis is principally concerned with understanding how the everyday, intersubjective world is constituted. The aim was to grasp how we come to interpret our own and others’ action as meaningful and to “reconstruct the genesis of the objective meanings of action

in the intersubjective communication of individuals in the social life-world” (Outhwaite, 1975, p. 91). As I engaged in this interpretative practice, I engaged in both the *hows* and the *whats* of social reality. This study described how people methodically constructed their experiences of text selection and what shaped these processes (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000).

Edmund Husserl (1970) argued that the relation between perception and its objects is not passive. “Rather, human consciousness actively constitutes objects of experience. Although the term construction came into fashion much later, we might say that consciousness constructs as much as it perceives the world” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 488). Therefore, as the teachers in this study became conscious of their decision making processes, they actually constructed these processes. From this perspective as the observer, I focused on how teachers “apprehend and act upon the objects of their experience as if they are things separate and distinct from themselves” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 489).

Operating within in this framework, I also adhered to the assumptions of typification and intersubjectivity. Schutz noted that “individuals approach the life world with a stock of knowledge composed of ordinary constructs and categories that are social in origin” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 489). The myriad phenomena of everyday life, including how we select books for read-alouds, are subsumed under shared constructs (or types). Typification organizes the life’s experiences into recognizable forms by making them meaningful. Taking for granted that we intersubjectively share the same reality, we assume further that we can understand each other in its terms. Intersubjectivity is “a social accomplishment, a set of understandings sustained in and through the shared

assumption of interaction and recurrently sustained in the process of typification” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p. 489). Typification was enhanced when I analyzed the transcriptions and textual descriptions through a system theories lens and Abrams’ (1953) theoretical orientations to art. Through shared experiences, self-reporting, and conversations about book selection, intersubjectivity was strengthened and we were able to construct a description of the phenomenon of selecting books for the read-aloud.

Methodology: Instrumental Case Study

This study was an instrumental case study (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). As an instrumental case study, “a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Therefore, I looked at the case in depth, scrutinized its context, and detailed the ordinary activities because it helped me pursue the external interest of how and why teachers selected books for the read-aloud.

Case study research is a study of a bounded system such as a child, a teacher, or a classroom (Stake, 2000). In this study, the bounded system was elementary school teachers who had taken the university master’s level children’s literature class and who facilitated read-alouds. Merriam (1988) further defines four additional characteristics beyond the issue of boundedness essential when defining case study research design:

1. *particularistic* in that the study is centered on a particular situation, program, event, phenomenon, or person;
 2. *descriptive* in that the researcher gather rich description of the object of study;
 3. *heuristic* as the study enriches the reader’s understanding;
 - and 4. *inductive* as the data drive the understandings that emerge from the study.
- In summary, case study is defined as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. (p. 16)

This research qualified as case study in all four additional areas. It was particularistic--it is centered on the particular situation of the read-aloud. It was descriptive rather than normative--the purpose was to describe the teacher's selection processes. The aim was to provide a rich, inductive description of elementary teacher selection processes that would heuristically enrich the reader's understanding of elementary teacher practice. Through this study, I strove to maintain an inductive stance as the emerging understandings were driven by the data. For example, as I observed a read-aloud, the data--observed behaviors and actions--guided the follow-up interview. As a result, this case study was an intensive, holistic description and analysis of the phenomenon of teachers' book selection process for the read-aloud.

Methods

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants. Creswell (2007) described purposeful sampling in the following manner: "[T]he inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 125). I purposefully selected three elementary school teachers who had gained content knowledge of literature as art. The following selection criteria were used to identify a purposeful sample of potential participants (Creswell, 2007).

1. Participating elementary school teachers facilitated read-alouds as regular literary events.
2. Participating teachers had curricular freedom to independently select books for the read- aloud.

3. Participating teachers expressed a willingness to participate in the study.
4. Participating teachers completed the university master's level children's literature course.

I contacted those teachers fulfilling the selection criteria through a follow-up phone conversation to review the details of their involvement and confirm their willingness to participate.

Dorothy. Young, blond, second-year teacher, Dorothy eagerly pursued her master's degree in reading. Dorothy commuted to the new rural elementary school where fourth graders of diverse ethnicity and literacy levels benefit from her pursuit of advanced pedagogical content knowledge. Her stylish, yet conservative dress reflected her youthful professionalism and calm demeanor. This calm demeanor permeated her classroom each time I observed. When I arrived, a kind greeting and a list of morning reminders were projected onto the board, silently guiding students' morning routine. Students quietly prepared for the day until over the speaker system they were welcomed to a new school day by the principal and his morning messenger. After collectively reciting the pledges and school motto, students were invited to the red rug at the front of the classroom for the daily read-aloud. Dorothy, sitting in her rocking chair sweetly and quietly, shared literature of various genres with her students for 20 to 30 minutes each day. This shared literature experience became the catalyst that propelled them into their independent reading and other literacy activities of the day. Dorothy's quiet read-alouds were the steady heartbeat of her reading workshop.

Alice. An experienced, confident teacher for 12 years, Alice appreciated the literacy and literature knowledge she gained through her master's degree courses. After

moving from Texas, Alice teaches in a core knowledge charter school in an affluent community. She is proud of how her diverse third-grade students thrive in the academically rigorous setting. Her classroom reflects the content themes her students are immersed in with maps, charts, and vocabulary words filling the walls and white board. A giant paper tree with paper books hanging from its branches is a visual reminder that literature is a part of this growing community. Alice reads aloud at the end of the school day. When I arrived, students were often scattered around the crowded room collaborating on history or science projects. Alice, in her muted silk scarf, encouraged students to “use haste” to prepare for the read-aloud. Students crowded around her plush reading chair and lamp as she began her animated read-alouds with a thorough review of the previous reading. Her interactive readings were peppered with reminders of listening comprehension strategies and various opportunities for students to exercise formal analysis, elicitation, elucidation, and interpretation. The school bell would often end the read-aloud as students grabbed their backpacks bulging with homework and headed out for the day.

Hope. Flexible, bubbly, red-head are a few words that describe Hope. She is a professionally trained flutist who turned first-grade teacher. She spent time away from the classroom when her children were young, returning six years ago to teach fourth graders at an integrated elementary school in a community filled with racial tensions. Hope was inspired by her master’s course experiences and strove to pass on this love for learning to students. Hope’s mid-afternoon read-alouds are one of her favorite parts of her day because she gets to use her performance talents and silly sense of humor to share her love of books. Hope’s passion and energy filled the colorful classroom as her

students' noisily settled in front of shelves packed with book baskets for the daily reading. Peer conversation and student sharing are an important part of Hope's read-alouds as students bring their own experiences to the reading and construct collective interpretations of various pieces of literature.

Data Collection

As a qualitative researcher, I used six methods for gathering information and to promote the trustworthiness of the research findings:

- Observed and video/audio recorded master level children's literature class;
- Observed and video/audio recorded read-alouds;
- Audio recorded participants' think alouds;
- Audio recorded participants' reflective interviews;
- Documented questions, summaries of observations, and development of research in researcher journal (Afflerbach, 2000; Schwandt, 2007).

Class observations. I observed and audio and video recorded the university master's level children's literature course (Borich & Cooper, 2003) as a non-participant/outside observer (Creswell, 2007). Through these observations, I advanced my own literary content knowledge, built rapport with the participants, and became familiar with the vocabulary, literary content knowledge, and literary pedagogy the participants constructed during their course experiences regarding to read-alouds. These observations were a valuable step in preparing me for this research study.

Read-aloud observations. In each participants' classrooms, I video recorded 9-18 class sessions as I observed (Borich & Cooper, 2003) the read-aloud as a non-participant/outside observer (Creswell, 2007). Through these observations, I explored the

facilitation of the read-aloud to further equip me in facilitating the reflective interviews and enhance reliability through triangulation. During the observation, I recorded field notes that guided my reflections recorded in my researcher journal. Using the video recordings and field notes, I typed a description of each read-aloud to share with the participants (i.e., member-checking) so they could determine the accuracy of the description, offer clarification, and provide further explanation as appropriate. These descriptions were electronically shared with the participants and discussed during the reflective interviews.

These observations were considered observations in an arranged natural context (Erekson, 2000). I was aware that the observer affects the observed. Therefore, despite my attempts to naturalize my presence in the classroom, my presence plus the presence of recording equipment impacted the context. The nature of my research question and the relationship I developed with the participants during the course of the master's level literature course also arranged the context. The fact that I asked teachers to think about their thinking impacted the processes they might have naturally used to select texts. In addition, each interview, shared transcriptions, and descriptions impacted subsequent read-alouds and corresponding book selections. I arranged a classroom context when I observed read-alouds followed by reflective interviews where teachers shared their thinking concerning how and why they selected books for those read-alouds.

Think alouds. I facilitated and audio-recorded three to five think-alouds (Afflerbach, 2000; Pressley & Hilden, 2004) per participant. Think alouds as a research method have a strong place in cognitive and social science research. "Verbal reports and protocol analysis represent one evolution of the human habit of asking people to share

their thoughts into a useful form of scientific inquiry” (Afflerbach, 2000, p. 163). Just as Aristotle and Plato urged people to discuss their thinking, researchers of the last century have developed this useful form of scientific inquiry as they listened to people in formal studies. During the cognitive revolution, thinking about thinking resulted in think aloud protocols (Newell & Simon, 1972). These protocols were originally applied by cognitive psychologists to obtain data about the way humans cognitively process information (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Kucan & Beck, 1997). Thinking aloud and the analysis of the resulting transcripts, or protocols, have been criticized as a research methodology (Lashley, 1923; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Smargorinsky, 1994). However, the trustworthiness and rigor of the approach has been upheld and the number of studies making use of the approach continues to grow (Afflerbach & Johnston, 1986; Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). This method has been used to gather data in product design and development (Lewis, 1982) and a range of social sciences including reading (Kucan & Beck, 1997; Pressley & Hilden, 2004; Wyatt et al., 1993), writing (Emig, 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1981), and translation process research (Bernardini, 2002; Ericsson & Simon, 1993).

Throughout this study, the selected elementary school teachers performed two kinds of think alouds. The first was a concurrent thinking aloud protocol (Hannu & Pallab, 2000) completed during their process of selecting books for the read-aloud. The second was a retrospective think aloud (Hannu & Pallab, 2000) performed after the selection had already been made to reflect on what considerations, aesthetic judgments, and purposes were considered when selecting the book.

I transcribed these think alouds and documented emerging themes and questions. I shared an electronic copy of each think aloud transcript with the participants (i.e., member-checking) so they could determine the accuracy of the description, offer clarification, and provide further explanation as appropriate. These transcripts were electronically shared with the participants and discussed during the reflective interviews. These transcripts were also referenced in the textual descriptions and final narrative and shared during peer checks to create an audit trail that honored the data. I also referenced these transcripts in the thick description of the final narrative as a form of external validity.

Reflective interviews. Each participant participated in four to eight semi-structured interviews to answer questions that arose from observations and to provide further explanations of concepts and processes mentioned in the think-alouds. The recordings of the read-alouds were used in the interviews to enable participants to reflect on the read-aloud event. All interviews were digitally recorded. Recordings were transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their statements for accuracy (Creswell, 2007). Corrections and reflections that resulted from the member-checks became data for the purposes of this study.

The semi-structured interviews included structured interview questions (i.e., closed questions) and unstructured questions (i.e., open-ended questions) to elicit specific information and elaboration on the part of the participant. With semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, the focus was on the salient issues and perceptions of the participant. Two techniques were used during semi-structured interviews that allowed me as the researcher to focus on the salient issues of the interviewees.

First, we watched a video segment that I had previously selected to inspire conversation about the selection process or to provide context and reflection for answering my questions. This transaction enhanced the trustworthiness as a form of triangulation and member checking and created an audit trail. For example, during my observation of Dorothy's read-aloud, she identified the setting as a salient feature of historical fiction. After viewing this video segment, she talked about how she selected books that clearly demonstrated genre characteristics.

Secondly, as the researcher, I used routing and prompting to ask follow-up questions about important issues that were elicited in previous observations, think-alouds, and reflective interviews. I used a prompting technique to elicit more information when answers were general, ambiguous, or brief. Interviewer prompting provided opportunities for the participant to elaborate on the statements made previously, thus allowing me as the researcher to clarify participant perceptions. In addition, routing and prompting allowed me to perform member checks to enhance the credibility of the participant's story throughout subsequent interviews (Creswell, 2007).

Because of the self-reporting nature of this data collection, it was important for me to consider context and power. Context is of particular importance in the interviewing process (David, Tonkin, Powell, & Anderson, 2005). A particular context might evoke a certain mood, behavior, ideology, or interaction. This research had two contexts—the context of the master's level course and the context of the teacher participants' classrooms. The context of the interviews aligned with the research question and the focus of the study. The power relation between the researcher and

participants might stem from the underlying societal and educational views of research, the nature of the research, and the rapport built between the participant and researcher.

Advice for improving the quality of interview data included suggestions for providing clear and comprehensible expectations throughout the entire process. Allowing participants sufficient time to answer and the opportunity to provide “I don’t know” responses was also important. Since the best way to collect information regarding phenomenon is done by asking those who experience the phenomenon themselves, performing repeated checks of information quality through follow-up interviews was imperative. Routing and member checks were used throughout a multiple interview process to further improve the exchange of authentic information.

Improving the quality of information gathered through interviews was dependent upon the behaviors of me as the researcher. First, I had to be mindful of the participants’ experiences with the topic and the clarity of the questions asked of participants (de Leeuw & Otter, 1995). Meaningful data were dependent upon the relevance of questions as they pertained to the participants’ experiences and their knowledge of such experiences. Second, it was essential for me as the researcher to develop a rapport with participants. The interviewer exudes the value of the participant’s perspectives through patient and respectful listening. By allowing sufficient response time, employing strategic listening to participant responses and acknowledging the topics salient to participants’ authentic responses might be offered.

I was able to attend to the ethics of relational research by observing the master’s level course and had conversations and electronic communication with participants that spanned over a year. Relational researchers regard their relationships with participants

and their communities as having greater importance than the research itself (Ellis, 2007). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2000) viewed respect as “the single most important ingredient in creating authentic relationships and building healthy communities” (p. 1). Driven by this view, Lawrence-Lightfoot argued for the nurturing of respect in all facets of human interaction including research. Relational ethics call for the researcher to question the benefits associated with their research and weigh those perceived benefits against the risks to participants. Essentially, the researcher is obligated to gain the trust of participants by allowing process, providing open access to written work from collected data, and nurturing a caring relationship (Munhall, 1988).

Data Organization

The data from all of the data sources along with organizational video and audio summaries, which documented analysis decisions and coding revisions, were stored in a digital portfolio that was backed up on an external hard drive as well as on DVDs and CDs. This portfolio was an organizational tool for managing data such as video, audio, and research journal including observational notes according to date, theme, and type of data. My digital portfolio included the following data sources:

- Video and audio recordings. Classroom activities and interactions during the university master’s level children’s literature course and the read-aloud observations were recorded with four voice recorders and one camcorder. Interviews with participants were recorded with the voice recorder. The recordings were cataloged, summarized, and organized by date, theme, and type of data. Four voice recorders were used to capture audio in various areas of the room. The camcorder was used to capture video of the whole group

instruction and focus on the teacher performing the read-aloud. Audio data were documented in field notes by listing the participants, summarized activity, and the voice recorder and digital file where the data could be retrieved.

- **Observational notes.** Handwritten field notes were used in read-aloud observations. The field notes were fleshed out into type-written field notes daily after leaving the sites. The field notes were merged into a digital folder with the corresponding video, audio, and research journal entry. The field notes for the university master's level children's literature course were typed during the observations. These observational notes were printed and filed in the researcher notebook.
- Any written assignments created during the master's level children's literature course that provided insight into answering the research questions were collected and digitally stored in participants' files. A hard copy of the artifacts was printed and stored in the researcher notebook and was used in interviews and analysis. The written artifacts were used in the interviews as participants reflected on their decision making processes.

Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002) pointed out that the boundary between data collection and analysis might become blurred. The data collection process influences the analysis but the ongoing analysis also influences data collection. Within the research journal and the video and audio summaries during cataloging, the boundary line between collection and analysis was blurred.

- **Researcher journal.** I formalized my field notes, documented my reactions, reflections and emerging questions, thoughts, and themes in my researcher journal. I reflected in digital format daily after returning from the research site. These entries were filed digitally by date and hard copies were printed and filed in the research notebook.
- **Video and audio catalog.** I created a Word template for summaries. The template included data, digital file name, recorder specifications, and participants to provide initial background information. Then, I used a table with three columns: time, video summary, and coding/notes. I logged the time stamp from the recording, typed in a summarized version of what was taking place, and added coding or notes that emerged as I watched or listened to the recording.

Data Analysis

As I collected and analyzed the data in this phenomenological descriptive study of teachers' book selections, the data collection processes influenced the analysis but the ongoing analysis also influenced the data collection (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002).

Researcher journal. In this iterative research process, I used my researcher journal to adhere to a code of reflexive ethics that promoted self-awareness and documented ongoing analyses (Hertz, 1997). It served as a medium to hold conversations with the self about those participating in this study. These conversations did not end with me--the reflexive researcher. They inspired requests for participant assent, disclosure of intended uses of participant stories, celebrations of researcher/participant relationships, and portrayal of the researcher's stance (Ellis, 2007;

Etherington, 2007; Lahman, Geist, Graglia, Rodriguez, & DeRoche, 2008). Occurring at all stages throughout the research process, it encompasses all other ethical traits (Hertz, 1997). I used my research journal to take a critical look at my research behaviors and make practical modifications that served the best interest of all those involved in and impacted by the research process.

I used a researcher journal to further ensure the dependability and confirmability of this study. Comprehensive reflective journals are critical in qualitative work because the research is the research instrument (Janesick, 1999). I used a field journal to define and refine my role as the researcher. As inspiration for reflexivity (Kay, Cree, Tisdall, & Wallace, 2003), using the researcher journal allowed me to identify my position in context, provided a reference for my biases, and honored my ethical beliefs throughout the research process (Schwandt, 2007). With every observation, every think aloud, every interview, and every theme that emerged during immersion, I called upon the researcher journal to illuminate my understanding of the phenomenon.

Procedural Steps

I analyzed the collected data using the following seven-step process that continued to honor the data:

1. During the observations of both the master's level children's literature course and the read-alouds, I wrote field notes.
2. Then upon leaving the site after data collection, I viewed the video recordings, wrote summaries, cataloged video details, and selected a segment for the next reflective interview. Sometimes, these reflective exercises resulted in theme identification. Most often, the result was the

determination of reflective interview questions or observational objectives for subsequent data collection. These summaries were shared with participants as they were created.

3. I transcribed participants' think alouds and reflective interviews immediately following the interviews for clarification and analysis. The transcription processes required me to become immersed in the data. I was able to experience the think alouds. I used open coding (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002) to break the data (i.e., paragraphs, sentences, and words) apart to inspect its discrete parts. During this step, I periodically recorded emergent themes, descriptors, and questions in a separate column of the transcription. These transcriptions were shared with the participants as they were created.
4. After the read-aloud observations, think alouds, and reflective interviews were completed, I reduced the data for repetition and organized it by book title. I used my researcher journal and transcriptions to write a textual description of each participant's selection process. The textual descriptions were shared with the participants. At this point in the analysis process, I also shared the textual descriptions and corresponding transcripts with a peer to check internal validity and enhance trustworthiness.
5. I then returned to the transcripts analyzing them through the theoretical lens described in Chapter II: Systems Theory and Theoretical Orientations to Art. I coded and reduced the data for these two theories separately and wrote corresponding descriptions that were peer checked.

6. Using the entire set of data, I wrote the composite description and findings. During this time, I revisited digital recordings, studied artifacts created in the master's level course, reviewed transcribed data, sifted through the researcher journal, discussed the findings with peers, and consulted the research question to guide the description of the phenomenon.

Findings

The findings are presented in Chapter IV. Through rich descriptive narrative incorporating participants' direct quotations, I desired to share the story of how elementary school teachers selected texts for the read-aloud. I described how teachers' advanced literary training influenced their selection processes, how teachers' book selection processes were always co-produced in a nested context, and how teachers' orientation to art influenced their selection processes. By understanding the nature of instrumental case study and the rigorous implementation of it as outlined in this chapter, researchers, elementary school teachers, pre-service teachers, and curriculum experts might gain greater insight into how teachers selected texts for the read-aloud.

Additional Methodological Considerations

My Stance as Researcher

As a passionate elementary teacher for a dozen years, I had a repertoire of books I selected as perfect read-aloud texts to inspire my first-grade readers. I had a deep sentimental attachment to each story and fond memories of experiences those texts facilitated for my students and me. In my opinion, I read the best books to my first graders, one of which was *Spunky's Diary* (Oke, 2000). With growing anticipation, I

prepared to introduce the furry, first-person narrator who shared his sweet puppy adventures with us through his creative journal entries.

These thoughts were halted when my new team-teacher, Terri, insisted we read *Hank the Cowdog* (Erickson, 1998) as our first person animal narrative. *What? Trade in energetic Spunky for the sarcastic Hank? How could I exchange the innocent antics of the puppy I loved for a dog whose biggest claim to fame was creating classroom giggles when urinating on a tire?*

Sentiment held no sway. I had no authority or skills to articulate an informed and reasoned opinion for my text selection. Neither of my evaluations of these two narratives was based on sound analysis or critical readings. I was an elementary teacher, not a literary critic.

My story illustrates the argument Jack Zipes (2002) presented in his essay, “Why Children’s Literature Does Not Exist” (reprinted in *Sticks and Stones*). Zipes wrote, “Given the amount of freedom that teachers and librarians have in choosing books for their courses, it is difficult to determine what their preferences are and how they evaluate books” (p. 56). I could articulate my preferences. I preferred *Spunky’s Diary* to *Hank the Cowdog* and my colleague preferred *Hank*. However, I could not professionally articulate a reasoned analysis; yet I was not willing to trade in Spunky’s story for Hank’s. I was not alone in my dilemma. Zipes said,

I have rarely read a negative review of a children’s book or a book for young adults. It appears that everything and anything is good for children’s minds and eyes. Good is rarely defined, though the reviewer may appear to have a firm grasp of what is appropriate literature for children and is a discriminating reader. (p. 57)

Neither of the texts we evaluated for our classroom read-alouds had received poor reviews. Both were considered “good” children’s literature. How would we decide which text to read? Which text would facilitate the richest literary experience?

Researcher Profile

I framed my discussion of researcher bias with a research profile: I am a White, middle-class female completing her doctoral degree who grew up in a religious, conservative home. My three siblings and I were homeschooled by my parents, which gave us more time for reading without traditional curricular accountability. My love of literature and childhood literary experiences was facilitated by my mother’s daily read-alouds. Her book choices expanded beyond those that aligned with our religious beliefs (i.e., *Wednesday Witch*; Chew, 1972) and her purposes were by guided by pleasure pragmatics. Therefore, my childhood literary experiences were largely aesthetic with very little didactic intent.

I was a classroom teacher in private schools for 12 years. Teaching in private schools removed some curricular accountability pressures and provided me with literary curricular liberty. This liberty enabled me to follow my mother’s example in facilitating enjoyable read-alouds. From my experiences as both a classroom teacher and a doctoral student at the university, my biases included concern and passion for the role of the read-aloud beyond its literacy instructional value. I was particularly concerned about the manner in which preservice teachers received literary instruction. I found idiosyncratic and unplanned read-alouds to be a wasted classroom exercise that robbed students of artistic events. I believe approaching the read-aloud from a solely didactic or instrumental stance with a focus on literacy skills or non-literary content delivery can be

detrimental to students' aesthetic development and limit their literary experiences. I believe read-alouds are transactional events that are impacted by previous literary and non-literary experiences. Therefore, to maximize the opportunities for meaningful transactions, read-alouds should be planned across multiple books and readings. I believe educators and researchers need to understand the processes elementary school teachers use to make their book selections and find ways to ensure that the read-aloud is a designed literary event extending across multiple books so as to enhance aesthetic awareness, aesthetic literacy, and aesthetic response.

I am aware that my background and ideological stance toward literary education shaped my research design, selection of research setting, interactions with participants, and data analysis. These biases are inevitable but I attempted to minimize their effect of this study through various methods of triangulation that were used to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of this case study.

Gaining Access and Building Rapport

Through the initial opportunity to observe in the master's level children's literature course, I established rapport with the participants. I sought and obtained approval from University of Northern Colorado's (UNC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research (see Appendix A). After the research was accepted, participants signed consent forms (see Appendix B). I contacted the appropriate school district gatekeeper (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and provided the approved UNC IRB research, which was then approved by each participant's principal. Participating students signed a verbal informed assent (see Appendix C) after informed consent was granted by their parent or legal guardian (see Appendix D; Creswell, 2007).

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was enhanced by using the following five strategies Merriam (1998) suggested:

- I had multiple sources of data and methods (see methods section for full list).
- I took transcriptions and textual descriptions back to the teachers for member checks and recorded their feedback and revised data accordingly.
- I conducted multiple observations.
- I used peer examination throughout data collection and data analysis to critique the findings as they emerged. Peer examinations included meeting with me regularly to discuss the themes and patterns as they emerged, reading each transcription and chapter revision, responding to the coding by occasionally questioning meaning or suggesting alternative meanings, examining the textual descriptions I wrote of each participant; and theoretical analyses.
- I clarified my researcher's bias at the outset of the study.

Trustworthiness was enhanced as I incorporated participants' direct quotations and provided rich descriptions to allow readers to transfer these findings to other cases.

Trustworthiness was also strengthened as I documented findings, interpretations, and data reduction processes (Schwandt, 2007).

Concluding Summary

In this chapter, I described aspects of constructivist epistemology and the theoretical lens of phenomenology I used to conduct this instrumental case study. I

concluded this chapter by describing the methods and examining additional methodological considerations.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to describe how and for what purposes elementary school teachers selected books for read-alouds. In this chapter, I report the findings of this study discovered through data collection and analysis of three elementary teachers' descriptions of the phenomenon of selecting books for read-alouds. Elementary school teachers' books selection processes are complex phenomena where personal aesthetic judgments, curricular ideology, and the artworld of children's literature interact to co-produce these decisions.

In the beginning of this chapter, I report findings related to the first research question:

Q1 How do elementary school teacher select books for the read-aloud?

Teachers in this study reported various resources they used in the decision-making processes. For example, Hope described finding *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2006) at the school library. Frequently, decisions were influenced by various forms of recommendations and personal and professional experiences with specific books.

Next, I report findings related to the second research question:

Q2 For what purposes do elementary school teachers select books for the read-aloud?

As I analyzed the teachers' self-reported purposes, I typified the teachers' purposes using Abrams' (1953) orientations to art: pragmatic, objective, mimetic, and expressive. Analysis revealed that the teachers in this study used the pragmatic orientation as one basis for selecting books but their pragmatic purposes were not identical. To better understand the diverse pragmatic purposes, I further typified their self-reported pragmatic purposes into six distinct pragmatic purposes. This analysis generated questions for the reflective interviews and helped describe the phenomenon of selecting books for the read-aloud. In addition to the pragmatic purposes, analysis of each participant's descriptions revealed various complementary orientations to art that provided rich descriptions of the teachers' multi-dimensional purposes for selecting books.

After reporting the decontextualized findings related to the research questions, I reported the recontextualized findings viewed through systems theory. Systems theory analysis of the data revealed the interrelated aspects of purposes and processes of selecting books for the read-aloud. For example, Dorothy's purpose for wanting to read a classic determined the process of selecting a classic. Her purpose and process were integrated. These findings illustrated the tensions and dynamics among the micro-, meso-, and macrosystems that determined purposes for the read-aloud and coproduced teachers' book choices.

As described in Chapter III, these findings were a result of multiple levels of analysis used to answer my research questions. Direct quotations from participants are identified by italics.

How Elementary School Teachers Selected Books for the Read-Aloud

Elementary school teachers' decisions in selecting books for read-alouds represent one area where teachers traditionally have significant autonomy in their decision-making. For these three participants, the read-aloud event was entrenched in the daily routine of their third and fourth grade classrooms. Not only was it routine but they reported the read-aloud was an enjoyable component of their taught curriculum. Through this research process, they became more reflective and metacognitive of the conscious and previously unconscious criteria they used for deciding which books to share with students. Here I report the findings that address my first research question: How do elementary school teachers select books for the read-aloud?

In Table 2, I tabulated the three teachers' book selection processes in alphabetical order by book title. The sections were a result of the typification process I adhered to through the research process. I formed these categories and classified selections according to teachers' self-report. For example, Dorothy reported selecting *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 2004) because she wanted to read a Newbery Award winning book. She proceeded to tell me that because there were so many Newbery Award winning books, she deferred to her literature text book (recommendation) to select the particular award winning book. Therefore, I included award winner and recommendation in the typification process. Shared experiences, self-reporting, and conversations about book selection strengthened intersubjectivity and are reflected in these reported findings concerning how the participants selected books for the read-aloud.

Table 2

Teacher's Resources for Selecting Books

	Experience	Recommend	Genre	Award	Author	Library	Curricular Connection	Curricular Requirement
<i>Aladdin and the Magic Lamp</i>								x
<i>Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves</i>								x
<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>								x
<i>All the Places to Love</i>	x	x	x		x		x	
<i>Apple and the Arrow, The</i>			x					x
<i>Bear Dancer: The Story of a Ute Girl</i>	x	x	x				x	
<i>Boy in the Girls' Bathroom</i>	x	x						
<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>		x		x				
<i>Cricket in Times Square, The</i>	x							
<i>Esperanza Rising</i>	x	x	x					
<i>First Thanksgiving, The</i>							x	x
<i>Grow</i>			x					
<i>Heidi</i>	x		x					
<i>Hundred Dresses, The</i>	x							
<i>Husband Who Was to Mind the House, The</i>								x
<i>Little Match Girl, The</i>								x
<i>Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>		x						
<i>Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome</i>			x				x	x
<i>Native American Tales</i>							x	x
<i>Norse Mythology</i>			x				x	x
<i>People Who Could Fly</i>								x
<i>Room One</i>			x		x			
<i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>	x							
<i>Secrets of the Sphinx</i>		x	x			x		
<i>Shiloh</i>	x							
<i>Stone Fox</i>	x							
<i>Tale of Despereaux, The</i>	x					x		
<i>Tar Beach</i>	x	x	x					
<i>Thank You, Mr. Falker</i>	x		x		x			
<i>Three Cups of Tea</i>	x				x			
<i>Three Words of Wisdom</i>								x
<i>Voices in the Park</i>	x	x	x					
<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i>	x	x						
<i>Wind and the Willows</i>								x
<i>Wonderful Wizard of Oz, The</i>	x		x					
<i>Zen Ties</i>						x		
<i>Zorgamazoo</i>	x					x		

In the following subsections, I report the findings tabulated in Table 2--Teacher's Resources for Selecting Books. In alignment with phenomenological research, I report the findings in composite format with the examples being representative in nature.

Curricular Requirement

Alice was the only one of the three participants who taught at a school that adhered to a stated literature curriculum that required specific books to be read-aloud as literature curriculum. In addition to the books required by the stated curriculum, Alice still had opportunity to supplement the required literature with books of her own choosing. Curricular requirement did not eliminate teacher choice.

Curricular Connection

Few of the books selected by the three participants had a curricular content connection. Because the three participants had all taken a graduate level children's literature course, they had the opportunity to construct knowledge of the importance of literature curriculum and a professor who explicitly emphasized the read-aloud as a curricular event rather than an instrument for teaching non-literary content.

Dorothy described two book selections that were chosen by connecting them to non-literary curriculum. One of her team members had created an integrated writing lesson based on Patricia MacLachlan's (1994) *All the Places to Love*. Dorothy selected this book early in her teaching career when she believed she needed to plan and facilitate activities connected to her read-aloud. Although the read-aloud had become more of a salient component of her taught curriculum, she chose to read this book again this year because of its connection to the planned writing lesson.

Dorothy's description of selecting *Bear Dancer: The Story of a Ute Girl* (Wyss, 2010) further demonstrated that elementary school teachers selected books by connecting them to non-literary curriculum. She said,

Bear Dancer was a book I found when I created my thematic unit for the master's class. It is all about Ute Indians, so that's why I chose it. It is a historical fiction book about real Ute girl and her life in Colorado. She was captured by the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. So not only was it a tie to our history curriculum, it was also a really good historical fiction book. It was closer to a biography because it was so true to history. After reading this book we began our study of Native Americans. It worked well to read this book because it helped the students have more background information and understanding of Colorado tribes.

Dorothy's stated history curriculum helped her select this particular historical fiction novel as her read-aloud.

Library Find

Exploring community and school libraries was one of the processes used for selecting books. When sharing her process for selecting *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2006), Hope described that when she worked at the school library for a year, she enjoyed exploring the new books as they received them. She said,

I found Tale of Despereaux. I read it before it won an award and thought, "This book is AMAZING." I was telling everyone, "You should read this new book." When it won the Newbery, I told the librarian, "I was RIGHT! I knew it was a good."

Whether purposefully looking for a book to read aloud or being in the library for other purposes, finding books at the library was a process Hope and Dorothy both described when reporting on how they selected books for the read-aloud.

Author

All three participants described selecting specific books by author. Because *The BFG* (Dahl, 2007) had provided enjoyment and clever word play for Dorothy's class

earlier in the year, Dorothy selected Dahl's (1999) *Esio Trot*. Because she perceived her students enjoyed *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (DiCamillo, 2006), she read DiCamillo's (2009) *Because of Winn Dixie*. Dorothy felt that once an author's work facilitated a positive experience, she could trust him or her to do the same with his or her other books. Therefore, she used the author as a mode of selecting books.

Alice designed units of study by author. She reported, "Author studies provide students opportunities to be immersed in a selected author's particular works." She enjoyed selecting Chris Van Allsburg's, Jan Brett's, or Patricia Polacco's books for those studies. One of the reasons she reported for enjoying Patricia Polacco's works was because "I saw her at CCIRA and really liked her. She's a beautiful linguist. She's just a hoot. She was so colorful. She is just this cute little lady." Experiences with authors and their books inspired these teachers to use author as a process for selecting books for the read-aloud.

Award

Across all three participants, many of the books selected were award winners. However, Dorothy was the only participant in this study who mentioned using the characteristic of award-winning as criteria for selection. She said, "I chose *Bud, Not Buddy* because it was a Newbery award winner. Newbery was our theme, or genre, for the month." Teachers in this study selected award winning books but did not describe this fact as part of their process for selection.

Genre

Dorothy's foundational decision-making process was selecting books by genre. Each month, she selected a specific category or genre from which to select her read-alouds. She said she valued genre categories because there were "so many millions of

good books that it's hard to narrow down one or even narrow down your purpose of why you're going to read a book. Genre knowledge grounded me in my choices and provided purpose for my read-alouds." Selecting books by genre became a standard process for selecting her read-alouds. Dorothy's use of categories or genres for book selection enabled her to narrow down her choices when she was otherwise overwhelmed by the sheer number of possibilities.

Recommendation

Teachers in this study repeatedly described how recommendations guided their book selections. Recommendations came from peers, experts, textbooks, Amazon.com, and other on-line resources. Hope's decision to read *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* (Sachar, 1988) is one example of how teachers were guided by peer recommendation when they selected books: "My teammates told me I had to read this book. It's great. It's a great start to the beginning of the year. It helps students really build community and helps them understand each other." Because of their strong recommendation, she pre-read it for the purpose of preparing for the first read-aloud of the year. She reported,

As I read the first half, I hated it and thought it was horrible. The main character is this little guy named Bradley Chalk. I read it all the way through and was encouraged by the good ending. But I still thought, "I can't read this, because it had a mean teacher who treated students with partiality." But my teammates were like, "No, read it. Read it. You'll love it." So I did. I just sort of trusted my teammates. And now when I have new teammates, I tell them, "You should read this."

Hope trusted her peers' recommendation more than her personal response to the book. It was interesting to note that this recommendation came during her first year of teaching fourth graders before she had experienced reading aloud to fourth graders.

Although she still reads this book her peers recommended, she is now the teacher making the recommendations rather than making her choices based on her peers' recommendations.

Alice, a teacher for 14 years, did not mention using recommendations as a process for book selection. In contrast, Dorothy, a teacher of two years, reported depending on the recommendations of her peers to select *All the Places to Love* (MacLachlan, 1994), *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (DiCamillo, 2006), and *The BFG* (Dahl, 2007). After she participated in the master's level reading course, she chose "new experts" to help make her decisions. For example, when she wanted to explore Newbery winners, she chose *Bud, Not Buddy* (Curtis, 2004) out of all the Newbery winners because in her professional readings, it consistently appeared as a recommended read-aloud. She reported, "It made me very curious. If everyone is saying it's a really good read-aloud, then it's worth reading (Dorothy, 4/15:26). Without having *Bud, Not Buddy* show up in so many of the reading texts, I probably wouldn't have chosen it."

During this selection process, the recommendation of the professional resources guided her selection but she then confirmed it by gaining a peer recommendation. She shared, "I also had a partner teacher read it and she loved it and so hearing all that made me select it."

In addition to using literature textbooks as her new "experts," Dorothy used other professional resources. For example, when selecting books for her Native American literary unit, she used the recommendation from Seale and Slapin's (2005) *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children* and recommendations from

www.oyate.com, a Native American organization working to see that Native American lives and histories are portrayed honestly.

As she gained more experience selecting books for her read-alouds, Dorothy still used recommendations as a process for selection but her sources for the recommendations shifted.

Experience

Teachers in this study described three distinct kinds of experiences that guided their book selections: personal experiences they had reading books as children and adults, experiences they had with specific books in their professional development, and experiences they had sharing books with students. Dorothy described that she chose *Heidi* (Spyri, 2006) because *Heidi* “was one of my favorite movies and classic stories that I read when I was little.” She chose *My Teacher Is an Alien* (Coville, 2005) for this reason as well. She said, “The fourth grade team was trying to buy new book. I remembered when I was in fourth grade we read *My Teacher Is an Alien*. I loved it, so we purchased that book.”

For her girls’ lunchtime book club, Alice also selected a book because of how it connected to a personal reading experience. Concerning the children’s edition of *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Journey to Change the World, One Child at a Time* (Mortenson & Relin, 2009), she shared, “I had read the adult version and loved it. I just heard about the children’s edition coming out and I went and bought it.”

In this study, teachers described their personal experiences with a book as a process for selecting books for the read-aloud. *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) read aloud by Dorothy and Alice is an example of one of the 17% of the books selected over

the course of this study because the teachers had experienced it during their master's level children's literature course. Hope's reading of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (Curtis, 2000) also connected to her educational experience. During her advanced literary training, Hope did extensive work analyzing this work. Her knowledge of and experiences with the book might have influenced her decision to repeatedly read this book. When she first selected *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* as a read-aloud and then analyzed it as such, the reading was embedded in a Civil Rights study unit. This year, the stated and taught curriculum eliminated this unit but Hope still chose to read the book. She reported, "My kids now don't have the same background, so it's kind of hard to read this now. I try to fill in the background information as I go." Her experiences facilitating previous read-aloud and experiences with this book in her professional training guided her decision to read this text.

Thirty-two percent (32%) of the books selected over the course of this study were selected because the teachers had previously used them as read-alouds with perceived success. Hope said, "I haven't taught that long in fourth grade. I've only taught five years, but I don't want to get in a rut. I don't want to be that teacher that teaches the same books for 10 or 20 years in a row. But when I find a good book, I want to keep it." This was interesting because she did not read any new books this year. Hope and Alice demonstrated that experience facilitating a read-aloud with a perceived success was a process veteran teachers used to select books for future read-alouds. In contrast, even though Dorothy reported a successful read-aloud with *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane* (DiCamillo, 2006), she chose not to reread it this year.

The findings regarding the first research question (How elementary school teachers select books for the read-aloud) aligned with previous research (Galda & Cullinan, 2002; Kiefer et al., 2007; Norton, 2009; Trelease, 2006; Tunnell & Jacobs, 2007; Zbaracki, 2008). Teachers used various selection resources for identifying literature for the read-aloud: recommendations from colleagues, personal reading experiences, book lists, curriculum guides, and professional publications.

Summary of Findings Regarding How Elementary School Teachers Selected Books for the Read-Aloud

1. Some curriculum suggested or required specific books to be read aloud.
2. Elementary school teachers selected books by connecting them to content area curriculum or units of study.
3. Elementary school teachers selected books from the local and school library.
4. Elementary school teachers selected books by author.
5. Elementary school teachers selected award winning books for read-alouds.
6. Elementary school teachers selected books by genre.
7. Elementary school teachers selected books per recommendation.
8. Elementary school teachers selected books they had experienced.

For What Purposes Did Elementary School Teachers Select Books for the Read-Aloud?

All artwork, including children's literature, can be approached both as aesthetic objects and as non-aesthetic objects of interest for educational, sociological, political, psychological, or other reasons (Viguers, 1986). The focus here was to report the findings constructed through my analysis of teachers' reported rationales for selecting specific books for read-alouds. The teachers in this study reported multidimensional

purposes. Analysis of the diverse purposes revealed that the division between aesthetic and instrumental read-alouds appeared more as a continuum than a solid separation.

The field of children's literature does not have a universal description, or a defense of what texts merit aesthetic attention, or a canon of literature texts for elementary literature curriculum (Nodelman & Reimer, 2002). By exploring teachers' expressed purposes for their book selections, I learned what the teachers in this study deemed worthwhile within a contingent and contextualized setting.

The three participants in this study reported that the read-aloud event served multiple pragmatic and aesthetic purposes. Through this research process, they became more reflective and metacognitive of the conscious and previously unconscious purposes they had for deciding which books to share with students. In the process of horizontalization and typification, I used Abrams' (1953) four dynamic and interrelated art orientations--pragmatic, mimetic, expressive, and objective--as a framework for discussing the composite reasons these elementary teachers shared for selecting books for the read-aloud. I used this framework as a resource to explore the tension between instrumental and aesthetic purposes and provided a richer understanding of the multidimensional nature of the purposes for specific book selections. Because all book selections had a pragmatic orientation but the pragmatic purposes were not identical, I further sorted the pragmatic purposes into six categories: moral, social, political, psychological, cognitive, and pleasure.

Table 3 lists the three teachers' self-selected book selections in alphabetical order by book title. The teachers' expressed purposes for each selection are identified by

pragmatic purpose, complementary art orientation, and dimensions of literary art teachers considered when making a book choice.

Table 3

Teachers' Pragmatic Purposes, Complementary Art Orientation, and Dimensions of Literary Art

Book Selections	Pragmatic Purposes	Complementary Art Orientation	Dimensions of Literary Art
<i>All the Places to Love</i>	Cognitive-Literacy	Mimetic	Form; Content
<i>Bear Dancer: The Story of a Ute Girl</i>	Cognitive-literary; social studies	Objective	Genre Conventions; Content
<i>There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom</i>	Pleasure; Social	Mimetic	Content; Theme
<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>	Cognitive-literary	Objective	Genre Conventions; Content
<i>Cricket in Times Square, The</i>	Psychological	Objective	Content; theme
<i>Esperanza Rising</i>	Political; Social; Cognitive-literary	Mimetic	Form; Content; Theme
<i>Grow</i>	Pleasure; Cognitive-literary	Objective	Genre Conventions
<i>Heidi</i>	Cognitive-literary; Pleasure	Objective	Publication Date
<i>Hundred Dresses, The</i>	Social	Mimetic	Content; Theme
<i>Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i>	Pleasure; Cognitive-literary	Objective	Content; Theme; Author
<i>Room One</i>	Cognitive-literary; Pleasure	Objective	Genre Conventions; Author
<i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>	Social	No Data	Content; Theme

Table 3 continued

Book Selections	Pragmatic Purposes	Complementary Art Orientation	Dimensions of Literary Art
<i>Secrets of the Sphinx</i>	Pleasure; Cognitive-literary	Objective	Genre Conventions; Content
<i>Shiloh</i>	Pleasure; Moral; Social	Objective	Content; Theme
<i>Stone Fox</i>	Pleasure; Moral; Social	Objective	Content; Theme
<i>Tale of Despereaux, The</i>	Social; Cognitive-literary	Mimetic	Form; Content; Theme
<i>Tar Beach</i>	Political	Mimetic	Form; Content; Theme
<i>Thank You, Mr. Falker</i>	Moral; Social	Expressive; Mimetic	Form; Content; Theme; Author
<i>Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Journey to Change the World, One Child at a Time</i>	Moral; Social; Pleasure	Mimetic	Content; Author
<i>Voices in the Park</i>	Cognitive-literary	Expressive	Form
<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham</i>	Social; Political	No Data	Content; Theme
<i>Wind and the Willows</i>	Cognitive-literary	Objective	Content
<i>Wizard of Oz, The Wonderful</i>	Pleasure; Cognitive-literary	Objective	Content
<i>Zen Ties</i>	Social	Mimetic	Form; Content
<i>Zorgamazoo</i>	Pleasure	Objective	Genre Conventions; Content

Pragmatic Purposes

The art orientation analysis of participants' descriptions revealed that when selecting books for read-alouds in the elementary classroom, teachers consciously or unconsciously discussed how they considered the needs of the students in the classroom when making book choices. During the horizontalization and typification process of analysis, I classified teachers expressed considerations as moral, social, political, psychological, cognitive, and/or pleasure. These classifications should be considered fluid; some book choices could have been placed in multiple categories and I made decisions about where they belonged based on my understanding of the teachers' primary intent. This typification was helpful because it enabled me to explore the hidden curriculum of teacher read-alouds, construct a better understanding of why teachers select the books they do, and write a composite description of these pragmatic purposes. When teachers made selections that targeted students' needs, it not only narrowed the list of potential books but also allowed the read-aloud to be used to foster growth in students. I reported the composite findings connected to various pragmatic considerations of all three participants. I reported the findings regarding the pragmatic orientation to art and connected purposes in six subsections detailing various kinds of pragmatic purposes.

Moral pragmatics. When teachers described concern with the book's potential to support children's growing understanding of right and wrong, their ability to think critically about the well-being of others, and their expression of values such as caring, respect for others, and responsibility, I classified this choice as a moral pragmatic decision. Alice reported she intentionally selected books that demonstrated positive character development. She described that she chose *Stone Fox* (Gardiner, 1992); *Shiloh*

(Naylor, 2000); *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (MacLachlan, 2004); or *The Courage of Sarah Noble* (Dalglish, 1991) “because they are such good character building books for kids.” She also read shorter stories such as “Three Words of Wisdom” (Hirsch, 1994) because they “are very rich and meaningful. Really sort of moral-based in terms of teaching a lesson, kind of a life truth.”

When I asked Alice why she selected *The Cricket in Times Square* (Selden, 2008) as a read-aloud, she said it because the protagonist was “a great role model for students” and because of the “positive character lessons shared through the book’s themes.” She says she selected *The Cricket in Times Square* “because it’s about friendship and responsibility.” In addition to the friendship theme, Alice shared,

The Cricket in Times Square has the “life is not always easy” theme. It’s not easy for the Delaney family. It’s not easy for Chester Cricket. It’s not easy for the cat and mouse. Yet they help to support each other. It’s that timeless message in terms of helping each other and being there for each other. It’s a good promoter of good character and relationship skills.

Alice chose this book because she wanted to teach students these moral values and behaviors.

Social pragmatics. When teachers’ descriptions advanced beyond teaching specific moral character traits and included concern for teaching social norms and values, I classified them as social pragmatic purposes. Hope wanted her students “to get a deeper awareness of humanity.” When sharing her purposes for reading aloud *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom*, *The Tale of Despereaux*, and *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, Hope said,

I think students this age need to know that there is more to life than the day-to-day school and sports. A bigger picture. It’s public school, so we can’t get into spirituality or religion, but you can go into books and go into the fact that there

are big things in life and one of the big things in life is to be a good person and so I guess I choose books that try to teach this.

Hope selected these books for the social pragmatic purpose of helping each student see the need of being a good person.

Psychological pragmatics. Teachers in this study sometimes considered psychological needs: the sense of belonging, the awareness of others, and the development of self. These purposes included children's emotional responses to literature with a focus on attitudes and feelings. In addition to the personal dimension of self-development and belonging, psychological pragmatics have a social dimension that focuses on understanding others. These teachers' stated purposes for specific book choices included both personal and psychological pragmatics.

Hope intentionally selected books for psychological purposes. She wanted students to learn that "people's hearts are deeper wells than what you just see on the surface level." Psychological pragmatics considerations caused Hope to select books with a problem-solving theme. She reported,

It's fun when we have discussions centered on the problem-solving theme. The students say, "Oh, ya, Despearux solved his own problem and in Tiger Rising the boy solved his own problem." When I asked the students why do you think authors have kids solving their own problems in books? Why don't the parents swoop in and solve the problems?, Caitlyn answered, "The author probably wants you to think, you might be just a kid, but you can really solve your own problems and make your life better no matter what life gives you." And then she pointed out all the books this theme was in. I want students to realize there is a treasure in everyone and if they can't find it in themselves, they should hunt for it. If they can't see it in someone else, they should hunt for it.

One of Hope's purposes for the read-aloud was to help students learn how to solve problems.

Hope also selected *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* for the psychological purposes. Topically it is rich with the theme of civil rights and segregation but she reported that her purposes were more psychological:

Byron shows everyone makes mistakes and you can move on. The world's not perfect. We need to realize that's it's not so black and white, good character, bad character. I like how the characters are multi-dynamic, multi-layered, multi-faceted. Kenny is more than just the good kid because he makes some wrong choices. Byron's more than just the bad kid. I think that's good for students to realize as the start becoming more self-aware.

Hope selected this book for the psychological purpose of enhancing each student's ability to be more self-aware.

Hope wanted literary inferencing and exploring character dynamics and development to enhance students' abilities for social inferencing. She shared,

When we talk about character's actions, thoughts, and feelings and evaluate if the character's actions are a reflection of what's going on in the heart. We have to look past the outside and into the deeper heart. We practice that in book clubs and in read-alouds when we look past the characters' actions and infer what is going on in the character's heart. I want them to do that with each other.

She selected books for the read-aloud in hopes of impacting students' values and behaviors.

Psychological pragmatics were so important to Hope that she said,

I don't choose books without strong themes and morals because I have a limited time with the students. I want them to come with compassion. I want them to have compassion and respect for all people and so all my books point to that and if they don't even if they are engaging, I probably wouldn't spend much time on it. I guess I am socially engineering these kids and maybe that is bad because I read to them the books with the messages I want them to have.

Through the think-alouds and reflective interviews, Hope discovered and shared that psychological and moral pragmatics were key purposes of her read-alouds.

The desire and process of building the classroom community blended social pragmatics (understanding others) and psychological pragmatics (the need to belong).

This form of psychological pragmatics guided Alice's decision to read *The Hundred Dresses* (Estes, 2004). She reported,

I always start the year with The Hundred Dresses. It is a great book for building community early in the year. Part of our character building curriculum is to introduce the terms, bully, bystander, victim. And so it's a great book to start the year with in terms of how do we treat our classroom family members? How do we treat other people? And what does it mean if you're a bystander? I have students relate it to their own personal experiences and write a little bit about their personal or observed experiences and share if they feel comfortable. And then we continue to use those words all year long and bring them into other discussions.

Like Hope, Alice had strong psychological purposes for her read-aloud.

Just as Alice chose a book to build community at the beginning of the year, Dorothy chose a book to keep the community intact at the end of the year. Through the think-aloud process, she found that social concerns were driving her selection choices. She shared,

Today we read Zen Ties because as this year's coming to an end, my class is really bitter towards each other. They argue all the time. I have been drawing on what students need as reminders of classroom community, using more of my books to keep that community intact.

Dorothy perceived a need and chose a book in hopes of correcting student interactions and behavior.

These teachers' stated purposes for specific book choices included both personal and social psychological pragmatics. They selected books to encourage students' self and social development.

Political pragmatics. During analysis, I classified teachers' concern for sharing particular ideology as political pragmatics. Within our diverse society, pluralistic

thinking has become a political value. Therefore, teachers valued books that enlarged perspectives and celebrate diversity. Alice chose to read *Tar Beach* (Ringgold, 1996) to enlarge perspectives and celebrate the individual and collective stories of third grade listeners. This book provided a new experience for the students who were middle and upper class. As evidence that it was providing a new experience, Alice noted that even after they went through and took a visual tour of the book, the students could not really interpret the title.

This was interesting to me because I realized what a foreign concept it was for them to think of someone spending time on top of a roof of an apartment building and considering asphalt her beach. Their perspectives were also enlarged when she's imagining that she's flying all over the city and imagining that her family owns the building they live in other places because her father helped construct them. It was good to really take them out of their comfort zone. Many of them had been to a beach. They certainly wouldn't have envisioned this kind of beach. It was real good in terms of just helping me get a glimpse of them trying to think outside the box.

This literary experience provided an opportunity to discuss diverse perspectives. Alice described how they had an ethnically diverse class. However, as a whole, their perspectives of beaches were quite similar because they had individually shared similar experiences; whereas, the girl's perspective in *Tar Beach* was from a rooftop of her building and she had concrete to play on all the time.

When describing why she read *Esperanza Rising* (Ryan, 2000), Hope shared what I labeled political pragmatic purposes:

It is a kind of social lesson for the kids. We have many migrant workers in our area and a high Hispanic population, but we usually have mostly White kids in our classes. There is still a lot of racism in our district and immigration fights. I think one of the reasons I really like this book is because in the beginning the kids really identify with Esperanza and they feel like they could be Esperanza who is this beautiful little rich girl who gets everything she wants. But then she has to go to America and become a migrant worker. To me, it is really powerful when

listeners have a chance to connect the people they demean and who they think are beneath them to a girl they admired.

Hope also reported she hoped this book would help students realize that there is more to life than what they see. Esperanza did not choose to be poor. She did not choose to be a migrant worker but that is what she became. Hope again selected a book for social purposes; this time, those social purposes were ideological and political in nature.

Cognitive pragmatics. I typified teachers' considerations for how literature can enhance or exercise cognition as cognitive pragmatics. Cognitive purposes spanned the curricular content areas. Sloan (2003) advocated for a literature curriculum that educated the imagination. However, the teachers in this study did not report this as a cognitive purpose for read-alouds. One cognitive purpose for the read-aloud was to inspire more independent reading. Dorothy described this was the purpose she had when she selected *Black and White* (Macaulay, 2005):

I'm going to read Black and White again next week to tie into the postmodern picturebook revisit. Since they liked that so much at the beginning of the year, hopefully that will kick start them to be reading this summer. Hopefully that will get them to the library and encourage them to read this summer.

In addition to inspiring independent reading, teachers described how they intentionally selected books that were above the average student's independent reading level, e.g., *The Cricket in Times Square*:

It's not something that I would expect most third graders to read independently and really enjoy. Yet, as a read-aloud, it is understood, appreciated, is great in terms of receptive vocabulary and listening comprehension and facilitated engaged discussion.

Hope said,

I love books that enrich their background knowledge because if they only read about stuff they know they don't get that stretch. I like reading books where it is not easy to see everything, where everything is not laid out. I select books where

readers and listeners have to dig deep to find the good stuff. If it is too easy to get to, I don't select it as a read-aloud. I figure they can read those on their own whereas some of these books need a little more uncovering. I use read-alouds to show them the process of how you dig apart the layers and how you look for deeper meaning.

Hope used her read-aloud to model how to read literature.

Hope described how she selected *The Tale of Despereaux* for the cognitive purposes of learning how to read complex plot structures.

It is not a straightforward second or third grade story with just one plot. I love how it has Despereaux's story and then Roscuro's story and then Mig's story. When the story shifts to Roscuro and Mig, the students respond, "This is supposed to be about Despereaux. I have to tell them, "Just wait. It will all come together." I teach them about tapestry and weaving has all these threads and at the end you can see how they come together and you can see the picture they make. When all the characters come together, the students LOVE it.

Hope reported that selecting books for literary cognitive purposes provided an opportunity to differentiate experiences for all students.

I like books that hit all the students. The deep thinkers who can pull all the themes and literary elements. I like to give them that opportunity. And then the others who are just in it for fun and can hear the characters as if you were at a movie. I try to read books that have all of it—the voices that can draw them in so they aren't bored while I am reading it, but also have deeper connections—social or connections to literature.

Realizing her students had different cognitive needs, Hope selected books to meet each student at his or her cognitive level.

Pleasure pragmatics. Pleasure is often associated with aesthetic experiences with children's literature (Darigan et al., 2002; Kiefer et al., 2007; Nodelman & Reimer, 2002; Norton, 2007). Each of the three participants desired the read-aloud to be a pleasurable experience and purposefully selected books for this purpose. Alice considered the level of students' enjoyment of a read-aloud as a measure of success: "The successes were when students loved the book. They couldn't wait for read-aloud time.

They loved it. And if we had to miss a day, you knew because you heard about it.” Hope believed that students experienced pleasure when she selected books that “opened a new world to the students and when students anticipated the read-aloud every day and were excited to be taken away into this reality or imagined land during the day.” She also shared that she selected books for pleasure by considering the book’s potential by asking the question, “Will students be immersed in it and feel like they’re there? Will it be worth being immersed in once they’re there?” Dorothy abandoned *Heidi* because she perceived students were not enjoying it. She also incorporated more poetry when she perceived the pleasure students had experiencing it. She added a second read-aloud each day after lunch as an informational read-aloud just because she perceived students enjoyed the informational text read-aloud. Teachers in this study reported pleasure as an important purpose of the read-aloud.

Although read-alouds were planned curricular events in these classrooms, an examination of the teachers’ reported purposes aligned with Sipe’s (2008) report: “The types of book experiences that result in aesthetic literary understanding are decidedly not among the ‘school-valued practices’ of many school districts, schools, and classrooms today” (p. 7). The teachers in this study reported various pragmatic purposes as they considered what lessons, skills, and information could be taken away and what could be experienced during the read-aloud experiences.

Beyond Pragmatic Purposes: Complementary Orientations to Art

In addition to pragmatic orientations that motivated each participant's book selections, I categorized teachers’ descriptions of their book choices according to

expressive, objective, and mimetic purposes. This analysis provided a deeper understanding of why specific books were chosen to address the particular pragmatic objective. For example, Alice selected *The Hundred Dresses* for social pragmatic purposes; but why did she pick that particular book when there were other books that could have been used to teach students about bullying? Using the other three art orientations as a resource to look beyond the stated or hidden pragmatic purposes provided a deeper description of the phenomenon of selecting books for the read-aloud.

When the teachers expressed desire to explore the relationship between the poet and the work, they consciously or unconsciously shared the belief that literature conveys a subjective experience as they gave prominence to the author and/or artist. I classified these descriptions as an *expressive* orientation. Purposes for these selections included building on previous literary experiences with an author, expanding literary knowledge of writing stylistics, and enhancing engagement by experiencing a “known” author. Planning strategies for these experiences included reading favorite authors and teaching about stylistic features. Teachers considered these experiences successful when students expressed enjoyment, made intertextual connections, and independently identified stylistic features per and across authors. Expressively orientated choices highlighted the aesthetic/non-aesthetic tension when the purpose of the read-aloud shifted from experiencing and appreciating the literature to getting to know the author or when learning about the author’s expressive stylistics became the focus of the read-aloud.

When teachers expressed consideration for the integrity and ontologically sound status of the work itself, I classified these descriptions as an *objective* orientation. These descriptions revealed they valued literature for its own sake as art, not for what it said

about human experience, its effect on the reader, or its subjective expression. They shared the belief that the work used language, verbal structure, and illustrations to create an aesthetic object to be admired and enjoyed in its own right as literary art rather than as a vehicle for a message or moral. The purpose of this kind of read-aloud was to share a work of art. Planning strategies for these experiences included explicit instruction of visual design and literary elements and diversifying text formats. The teachers in this study expressed challenges related to this orientation that included the limitations of personal understanding and ability to teach literary or visual design elements, developing personal aesthetic judgment, and selecting books with aesthetic flow and readability. Teachers shared that they considered these experiences successful when students demonstrated enjoyment and developed understanding of literature's aesthetic features. Objectively oriented choices highlighted the individual nature of aesthetic experience, response, and judgment. Not all listeners demonstrated an aesthetic attitude or aesthetic level of engagement with particular works of art.

When teachers described considerations for how the work of literature related to a model of perceived reality, I typified it as a *mimetic* orientation. They expressed conscious or unconscious value for the representational properties of fiction and chose a book for the purpose of exploring that perception of reality. They selected books for the expressed purpose of connecting literature to students' worlds. The books selected contained misfit characters, quest themes, and home-adventure-home patterns. The guiding purpose for these selections was to provide literary experiences students could relate to their personal worlds. Planning strategies for these experiences included encouraging connections, exploring cause and effect, comparing and contrasting, and

connecting content knowledge to literary experiences. Reported and observed challenges from this orientation included limited collective comprehension and interpretations and inadequate background knowledge. Mimetically orientated choices highlighted the aetnonormative differences between the aesthetic tastes and perceptions of reality that exist between adult readers and child listeners. Listeners' aesthetic responses might depend on listeners' abilities to make personal connections to the work of art but teachers' perceptions of if or how a book aligned with students' perceived realities differed. A mimetic reading that connected or aligned with the adult reader's perceptions of reality might not connect or align with the child listener's perceptions of reality and therefore not be a mimetic listening experience despite the adult's attempts to select a book for mimetic purposes. Successes included selecting texts and facilitating read-alouds where individual student's ethnic and social identities were validated and intertextual connections were established and discussed.

In the following subsections, I report findings constructed by analyzing each teacher's book selections and explore and describe the art orientations that typified the purposes for the teachers' choices.

Alice's Book Selections

When describing her selection processes for *Stone Fox*; *Shiloh*; *Sarah, Plain and Tall*; and *The Courage of Sarah Noble*, Alice revealed that objective and mimetic considerations complemented the decision-making process. Objectively, she liked the "basic fictional format centered on a strong character with a big problem that they have to wrestle with and overcome." Mimetically, she found that they were "age-appropriate in terms of the affect of the characters." She reported that the characters and themes of the

books were “things students are thinking, doing, and talking about. Things they are struggling with. They lend themselves to very good conversations as students are able to relate and make connections.”

The Hundred Dresses. Alice selected and read *The Hundred Dresses* for psychological and social pragmatic content. But she hoped the lessons taught about the various relationships in a bullying situation would become mimetic as she had students

relate it to their own personal experiences. I have them write a little bit and share out if they feel comfortable. Sometimes they write about a personal experience; other times they write about an experience they observed. And really all students can relate to being the bystander or victim.

The vocabulary, discussion, and story become touchstones for social conversations throughout the year. Mimetic orientation to art complemented psychological pragmatic purposes of the read-aloud. Alice believed that if the students could relate the story to their personal experiences, the psychological lessons had a better chance of making an impact on students’ values and behaviors.

Picturebook units. When selecting books for her picturebook units, Alice demonstrated an expressive orientation to art. She said, “I initially gravitate to authors I already know and that I’ve had success with before.” She selected books from an expressive orientation when she designed author studies of picturebooks. She reported, “Author studies provide students opportunities to be immersed in a selected author’s particular works.” Alice said Polacco’s books provided mimetic experiences: “Students can relate because her stories are often based on truth. They’re her personal experiences growing up.”

Alice in Wonderland. *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 2010) was part of the stated literature curriculum. Alice approached it objectively as a classic piece of art. She also

focused on the expressive elements of figurative language and word play. She reported, “We have a lot of fun.”

Dorothy’s Book Selections

Postmodern picturebooks. Dorothy started the school year by reading a collection of postmodern picturebooks selected from an objective orientation. During the exploration of the postmodern picturebook genre, she taught visual design elements. They read and reread *Voices in the Park*, exploring interpretations of color, motif, framing, and other elements. She reported,

They still talk about Voices in the Park even though some of them haven’t seen it since the beginning of the year. After I read it, the book in our library has been continuously checked out. Every students was trying to check it out to show mom and dad and friends—“Did you know the hat is red because...and do you know that the hat is everywhere because...and this is green because....” They’ll notice and name visual design elements and they say “This one is breaking the frame.” “Did you notice there are butterflies on every page?” Their eighth-grade book buddies are amazed at the fourth-graders’ understanding of visual design elements.

Dorothy approached this text from an expressive orientation as she focused on how the author, Anthony Browne, expressed himself through postmodern visual design elements.

Genre. Dorothy’s focus on genre conventions demonstrated a strong objective orientation toward art. She objectively approached each book as she selected it for its adherence to genre conventions. As she began to be more purposeful in planning her literary curriculum and choosing books for the read-aloud, genre became a guiding factor in her selection process.

Last year when I didn’t have any real reason or rhyme of why I was choosing books, they were always just fiction books that I liked and there was not genre tie and there was no discussion about the genre. There was no exposure to new kinds. Maybe because I didn’t even understand them myself as well. Some genres, like novels in verse, I didn’t even know existed. I would love that students

would know about genre at an earlier age than I did. That's a big experience that I missed out on to not even know that genre existed.

One of her purposes for read-alouds was to expose students to literature they might not independently experience. Genre-based literary selections provided this diverse exposure. As she read a different genre each month, students' literary experiences were expanded: "It just opens their eyes to some things they wouldn't be exposed to in some of the stories they read."

Dorothy reported that selecting genre mentor texts for read-alouds and explicitly teaching genre conventions enhanced students' understanding of literary features, introduced literary vocabulary, enhanced students' abilities to make intertextual connections within a genre, and enabled students to compare and contrast texts across genres. These skills enhanced literary discussions and guided students' approaches to specific texts.

Diversifying text formats. Dorothy further demonstrated her objective and expressive orientations when she purposefully selected various literary text types. Because she valued the expression various text formats provided, it became important for her to facilitate a blend of listening experiences that extended beyond the novel and included picturebooks, poems, short stories, and informational texts that broadened literary experiences and enhanced literary engagement and appreciation.

Poetry. Novels and stories in verse were new literary formats Dorothy discovered in the master's level children's literature course. She objectively selected *Grow* (Havill & Kodman, 2008)--a novel in verse, a chapter book in poetry form.

At first I didn't know how well they'd understand it as a read-aloud, but they actually understood it really well. They really got into the story. I also checked out other poetry books from the library and students were wanting to read those

for a long time. They loved the poetry so much that I found the book Zorgamozoo (Weston, 2008), which has become one of their favorite books of the year.

Her purpose for sharing these books was to ensure her students experienced the specific literary art form of poetry.

Classics. Dorothy further demonstrated an objective orientation when she chose to read *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 2000) as a classic read-aloud. Classics are part of our cultural heritage and she did not think students would naturally select them on their own. She wanted students to have a positive experience with classic literature to enhance their “sentimental attachment” with their literary heritage. She wanted them to have a literary experience that enabled them to join readers from past generations. She said she wanted them to see that “literature can be timeless. Literature’s been important for a very long time and it’s not just something that you have to do in school right now.” Reading a classic gave Dorothy an opportunity to demonstrate literature’s cultural significance.

Reading *Heidi* highlighted the challenge of objectively selecting a read-aloud with the expectation of providing an aesthetic listening experience. Dorothy selected *Heidi* from an objective orientation and neglected expressive and mimetic considerations. She remembered reading it as a child and had an old copy that had belonged to her mother. She thought the older copy would be symbolic of the timeless treasures classics can be. She perceived that it did not provide a mimetic experience for the students; nor did it lend itself to aesthetic sound. It was difficult to read-aloud. The narrative progresses through dialogue but the flow of the dialogue does not identify the character speaking, who is being spoken to, or the relationships between characters. Dorothy felt this lack of

narrative flow inhibited listener comprehension and negatively impacted reader response. Therefore, she decided to select a new book before completing *Heidi*.

Dorothy knew aesthetic response was dependent upon individual transactions in the literary event with each listener bringing his or her own interests and experiences to the read-aloud. Objectively choosing one book that engaged all listeners was a challenge. She abandoned *Heidi* because the students were not engaged.

Award winning books. Consistent with her objective orientation, she wanted to explore Newbery winners. She chose *Bud, Not Buddy* out of all the Newbery winners. Reflecting on the experience, she said, “It was definitely worth reading, but the students didn’t connect to it or think it was as interesting as I thought they would for some reason.” Once again, her objective orientation caused tension with her pragmatic purposes for the read-aloud.

Room One. Dorothy selected *Room One* (Clements, 2008) from an expressive orientation because she appreciated Andrew Clements’ work. She shared, “When selecting the book to read-aloud for the mystery genre, I gave the students three choices. Andrew Clements is one of the favorite authors of this age group. They automatically selected *Room One* because they had seen other books of his in the library.” Their choice demonstrated the power of author connections and the importance of expressive orientation when selecting books for the read-aloud. She said, “They really got into that one. And they talk about that one still to this day as they make connections and they really want him to write a sequel—*Room Two*.”

Hope's Book Selections

There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom. Despite Hope's pragmatic purposes for this book choice, she struggled mimetically. Her personal reaction to the book was "this book is HORRIBLE. I can't read this." When she chose to read *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*, she experienced that adult readers and children listeners have different mimetic orientations and literary tastes. Books that mirrored her reality might not mirror those of her students. The teacher in the book did not model her concept of a good teacher. She did not really care for it. When seeking literary engagement and aesthetic response, she wanted to appeal to students' tastes but found it challenging to know what students would relate and respond to.

Through the think-alouds and reflection during this study, she discovered she selected books with a misfit character. This discovery further demonstrated her mimetic orientation to art. She believed that fourth graders could relate to misfit characters as they became more self-aware and might experience misfit feelings themselves.

The Tale of Despereaux. Hope's objective aesthetic orientation also influenced her decision to read *The Tale of Despereaux*. She chose it to emphasize the quest theme that is common in literature, not for the theme itself, but because it is common in literature:

When I read it, I also add in fairy tales and folk tales. We do a whole month long unit on folk tales and fairy tales and we get into the whole quest and archetypes. We talk about how there is a hero character on a quest usually overcoming some HUGE odds to save somebody or make the world a better place. It's really easy to find that in The Tale of Despereaux because he is the little hero mouse surpassing HUGE odds to save his princess. We talk about how the hero has to go down into the dungeon and goes into the dark side of the world to go save the princess. We explore this pattern in other folk tales and fairy tales we read.

The study of quest theme can stem from a more objective orientation when it focuses on learning about the structures of literature. However, it becomes mimetic when we expand the notion of quest to include the quest of belonging or maturation.

Her objective orientation was also pleased by the rich symbolism of this text. She said, “There are they symbols of light and dark where we can talk about good and evil, and desire. We discuss how the red thread symbolizes death.” She believed this conversation enabled students to analyze the author’s symbolic use of color and equipped them to interpret color in other texts.

The Tale of Despereaux also enabled them to have a rich exploration of cause and effect--a mimetic teaching strategy. Cause and effect is a mimetic teaching strategy because the reader and/or listener consider his or her “real life experiences” as she critically examines the literature:

Mig’s ears. Her ears get boxed because she can’t hear and then because she can’t hear because her ears were boxed. We talk about the spiraling effect and chart the causes and effects. I can’t remember how it all starts, but I think it all starts with Roscuro wanting to see the light, but somehow it all starts with Mig because of this, this happens and we trace it all back and the students think they are so smart. They respond, “No, it is because of this!” and I ask, “What made that happen?” And they respond, “Oh, it’s because of THIS!”

Exploring literary cause and effect was a mimetic teaching strategy Hope used to facilitate deeper transactions with the read-aloud.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham. One of the objective reasons Hope chose *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* was because it had the home-adventure-home. Hope shared,

We talk about this literary pattern a lot. In The Tale of Despereaux, Roscuro starts in the castle, goes down to the dungeon and then ends up back in the castle. A lot of the fairy tales do that. I read The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit (Potter, 1902) right after we finished Watsons and asked them to compare the two texts. After a while, they figured it out. “Oh, Peter is kind of mischievous. He goes out and has some trouble and makes it back home. Byron has some trouble

and is sent away, makes it through the danger, and comes back home. I think it is powerful.

Similar to the quest theme, the home-adventure-home pattern can be objective or mimetic. When it is approached as a pattern experienced during the developmental process in life, it demonstrates a mimetic orientation; however, when it is explored structurally, it is objective. In this example, Hope approached the texts objectively because she was exploring patterns of literature and striving to enhance students' awareness of intertextuality.

This book choice also highlighted the challenge of selecting books that reflect students' worlds and captivate their interest rather than her own. There were some long, descriptive chapters in this book. Hope said, "I give those chapters to subs." For example,

Yesterday I was reading a chapter of the Watsons and it was SO LONG. It is an entire chapter about dad getting the brown bomber ready and putting this record player in it. I saw the restless boys wrestling around. They started playing with their shoes and looking like they weren't really enjoying it. So I asked them, "Does this part bore you guys?" And the boys who were picking with each other's shoes said, "No, we love that part." When I asked why they responded, "Because, you could just tell the story 'they go to Alabama' but it makes the story longer. All the details make it more interesting. Then you get to know the dad. The dad tells jokes all the time." It does seem to go slower, so I don't know. Students get stuff out of it sometimes that I don't get out of it. And sometimes I get stuff out of it, so the beautiful mix is when we're both getting something out of it.

Hope described a challenge adults encounter when selecting books for children.

Esperanza Rising. This selection clearly showed the push and pull of the various aesthetic purposes. Pragmatically, Hope used the book to teach social and psychological lessons. Objectively, she shared a beautiful piece of literature rich in symbolism. She also hoped to create a mimetic experience as well, particularly for a young Hispanic girl

in the class. By providing a mimetic experience for one child, she limited the mimetic opportunities for the remainder of the students.

Hope selected *Esperanza Rising* for objective reasons because it is rich in literary patterns and symbolism:

I liked it because it had the cycle of the seasons and the harvests. The chapters are named after the harvests. I don't even know what that would be called literary wise, kind of a circular theme or like a natural theme that goes with a natural time line. I like the foreshadowing. For example, when she gets pricked on the rose or the zig-zags in grandma's knitting. When abuelita messes up a row and has to take it all out. I love that because it's telling Esperanza not to be afraid to start over. I love how she talks about the mountains and valleys of life.

Hope enjoyed the home-adventure-home pattern so much that maybe that was one of the objective struggles she had selecting *Esperanza Rising*. She questioned, "Maybe I don't like *Esperanza Rising* because she doesn't end up back in Mexico? I seem to pick books where they always end up back where they started or feel like they finally belong."

This selection also highlighted the challenge of choosing one book that engages each listener in the community.

It's always the boys who are the ones I have to rope into listening. That's why I lean so heavily on those boy main characters, funny, quick books. The girls seem to have an easier time getting drawn into the boy character stories, but I think the boys' struggle when there's a lot of description and slow moving plot.

She could tell the boys struggled to connect with *Esperanza Rising*: "When the uncles are in the story, they really like that part of the story. Or when Miguel comes back in and wants to work on the railroad, you can see them perk up a little bit."

Hope believed that students' abilities to interpret texts were enhanced through interactive read-alouds when she modeled and explicitly taught literary elements and features from an objective aesthetic orientation. For example, when she taught symbolism, she described it as a "concrete picture of something you can't see. You can't

see hopes and dreams being crushed in Esperanza's heart, but you can see the zig-zag, mountain and valley pattern of the afghan." Her goal was that listeners' experiences were enhanced because they were given resources to construct meaning from the symbolic images and references. She shared her belief:

If students have a rich book with rich experiences where the students feel like they are there and escape for a little bit, it's easier for them to bring something away from it. I love the morals in Esperanza Rising and the character growth. The thing I have trouble with is it only engages half the class. If they are not having a rich literary experience, it doesn't matter about all the symbolism. They are just checked out. The challenge was selecting books that draw students into books.

When you can guide a student, give them background knowledge, give them experiences, and the understanding necessary to appreciate a piece of art, literature, you are leading them up to a point where they can have that aesthetic experience, but whether or not there is an aesthetic experience is a highly personal thing. You can't teach them how to respond aesthetically. But you can provide an environment which nurtures it. So while Esperanza Rising is real literature, real art, capable of producing an aesthetic experience in students, whether or not the child experiences it might be related to how it is presented, whether a child can relate to it, or whether it has significance for a child. On that note, maybe we need to really know the children, know what tugs each one of their hearts, and provide experiences and education in the literature and the arts that they can relate to and understand that will allow them to have that aesthetic experience.

When a listener has a strong mimetic connection to a text, their personal individuality can be validated. Hope believed that reading *Esperanza Rising* validated Crystal's ethnic identity. Crystal read the Spanish words during the read-aloud and Hope shared,

Crystal comes up every day just begging to read that story. She came in the other day bubbling, "Look, I did my hair in a braid just like Ramona!" This was the day after reading the part about Ramona having to braid her hair to work in the sheds. We talked about how that braid could represent so much more than just a hairstyle (different stage/season of her life). Crystal also came decked in her "Our Lady of Guadalupe" gear. She had the t-shirt, a bracelet, and a ring. It was so fun to see her be the expert, and see the reaction she is having to this book.

Overall, Hope aimed for a mimetic experience where students related to the characters and grew as the characters grew:

I think if students aren't learning anything, they aren't going to be engaged. I think learning and engagement go hand in hand. Students want to see characters grow. If they find a book where a character is learning, growing, and changing, I think it's easier to relate to. And if they that character is just fluff and fun, they kind of like those, but their hearts aren't as invested. Their hearts were really invested in The Tale of Despereaux and The Watsons Go to Birmingham and the girls' hearts are invested in Esperanza Rising because they identify with the characters and that's where the engagement comes from. The reason their hearts become invested in the character is because the character is going through some sort of struggle that they have to work out. And that usually comes with a moral or a lesson about how to get along with other kids in the class or how to honor yourself. I think those ideas are what the books I read mostly bring out.

Hope's mimetic orientation connected to her pragmatic purposes. She believed that as students learned, they were engaged. Because children are growing, developing, and solving problems, they can mimetically connect to literary characters who are growing and solving problems. Hope described this mimetic connection as "hearts being invested."

The participants in this study did not verbally identify or label their own orientations to art. However, the four theoretical orientations--pragmatic, mimetic, expressive, and objective (Abrams, 1953; Lamarque, 2009)--formed an analytical framework for describing the multi-dimensional purposes for teacher's book selections.

Dimensions of Literary Art

When describing why teachers selected specific books for the read-aloud, the analysis of pragmatic purposes revealed teachers' stated educational objectives. Analysis of purposes guided by orientations beyond the pragmatic provided an additional layer of understanding regarding teachers' hidden purposes for selecting specific books. The first two analysis resources provided descriptions as to what the teacher hoped to accomplish by reading specific books but did not provide a description of teachers' personal literary value judgments of books. When describing elementary school teachers' literary value

judgments, it was important to extend the description beyond simple judgments such as “*Zorgamazoo* is a good book.” Generic value claims of this kind provided limited insight why teachers selected specific books. Analysis of teachers’ self-report revealed how they selected books because of the particular book’s content, theme, and/or form (see Table 3). Exploring this component of their decision provided another perspective into the purposes of their book selections.

Content. Because reading is purposive, literature curriculum entails specific kinds of reading with expectations of certain kinds of rewards. Elementary school teachers often select books for the pragmatic purpose of teaching math, science, social studies, literacy skills, moral and social values, and other content (Blass, 2002; Wadsworth & Laminack, 2006). The purpose of this sort of reading is to share a message or make a point. The lessons, messages, and points that become the educational objectives of the read-aloud might or might not align with the author’s intent. Selecting books to teach a specific lesson or share a specific message ignores or minimalizes the transactional nature of reading because it assumes every listener will take away the same message or lesson from the read-aloud experience. The content of the book becomes the reason the specific book is selected. Considerations for the content dimension also include selecting the book for the story it shares. The books included in Alice’s stated curriculum were chosen because the curriculum designer valued the content of the stories. They were considered “good stories” for third graders to experience.

Teachers in this study selected various books for these purposes (see Table 3). For example, Hope said, “I read to them the books with the messages I want them to have.” She selected books because of the content the books contained. The descriptions

Alice and Hope shared concerning the content of the books they selected aligned with Lamarque's (2009) moral seriousness--content where some broad human interest is raised and developed. Hope shared that she selected books to help students "get a deeper awareness of humanity." The content dimension of literary art was one of the purposes teachers in this study selected particular books for the read-aloud.

Theme. "Literary themes are conceptions that bind elements in a work together, encapsulating the work's significance and moral seriousness" (Lamarque, 2009, p. 208). Theme is distinct from subject or topic. "To say what a work is about at a subject level is in effect to retell the story. The descriptions under which they [the themes] are identified are either given in the work itself or brought to the work in the pursuit of wider significance" (Lamarque, 2009, pp. 150, 209). Theme is the unifying element that orders the subject matter under general human conceptions. Theme extends beyond the topic or subject of the story. It refers to the more abstract reaches of the work rather than the immediate constructed context of the narrative world. However, like content-based decisions, selecting books for a particular theme may ignore the transactional nature of reading when the teacher expects every listener to experience the same theme. Teachers in this study mentioned theme as one of the reasons for selecting particular books. Hope said,

I don't choose books without strong themes and morals because I have limited time with the students. I want them to come away with compassion. I want them to have compassion and respect for all people and so all my books point to that and if they don't even if they are engaging, I probably won't spend much time on them.

Hope's awareness of the constraints of time in an elementary classroom led her to use theme as a central purpose for choosing specific books. Among the themes participants mentioned were friendship, misfit, responsibility, life's challenges, and quests.

Form. Teachers in this study reported consideration for three different aspects of form when selecting books for the read-aloud: literary structure and stylistics, visual design elements, and linguistic form that guided prosodic performance. It was interesting that consideration of form was often pragmatically driven because the purpose was not for students to merely experience the literary form but to learn about a specific form. When Dorothy made her genre-based decisions, she selected books because the form aligned with specific genre conventions. For example, she wanted students to experience mysteries and she picked a specific mystery to teach the genre conventions mysteries often follow. Hope shared how she selected *Esperanza Rising* because it was rich in literary patterns and symbolism.

I liked it because it had the cycle of the seasons and the harvests. The chapters are named after the harvests. I don't even know what that would be called literary wise, kind of a circular theme or like a natural theme that goes with a natural time line. I like the foreshadowing. For example, when she gets pricked on the rose or the zig-zags in grandma's knitting. When abuelita messes up a row and has to take it all out. I love that because it's telling Esperanza not to be afraid to start over. I love how she talks about the mountains and valleys of life.

One of the reasons Hope selected this particular book was because of its literary form. When Alice and Dorothy selected picturebooks, they did so because of the picturebook form of the book. They valued the power the picturebook had for engaging learners. Form was considered when they selected *Voices in the Park* as their expressed purpose was to introduce visual design elements.

Because of the performance nature of the read-aloud, linguistic form was considered by all three participants when selecting books. One of the reasons Dorothy reported for abandoning *Heidi* was because the form did not lend itself to a read-aloud performance. She said, “I found that once I started reading it, it wasn’t quite as flowy or understandable as a read-aloud for them.” When sharing why she read *The Cricket in Times Square*, Alice said, “I like the opportunity to use different voices with the characters. The kids love that at this age.” Teachers evaluated the book’s form when they considered how fluently and dramatically they thought they could perform the reading.

The first time I visited Hope’s classroom and introduced my research project to the fourth graders, they responded positively telling me, “She’s good cuz she does the voices.” “The voices” and her ability to perform with panache were common themes in our conversations. Hope described how she evaluated form by considering how the books aligned with her natural speech patterns and personality, the book’s prosodic potential to enhance listener engagement, prosodic potential to enhance characterization, and prosodic potential to enhance listeners’ interpretation.

When considering reading *Esperanza Rising*, she said,

I like the style of Esperanza Rising too, it’s just such a quiet, graceful style. My personality is probably more bubbly and kooky. So if you look at bubbly and kooky, I can make The Tale of Despereaux bubbly and kooky. Roscuro and Mig. I love doing Mig. I can be bubbly and kooky there! In Esperanza Rising, there isn’t any bubbly, kookiness. But there is a very good storyline. Maybe my kids need more than just bubbly and kooky. Maybe it is good to give them all sorts of different things? Different types of literature. Because it is more kind of romantic, I don’t want to say romantically written, but it has more of the artistic flow to the words, whereas this [Tale of Despereaux] has . . . I mean they are all artistically done, but you know the artistic. The Watsons’ slang and the way they talk. You know, so Esperanza is probably just not my natural speech patterns. The way I would talk.

Hope realized she tended to select books that followed her natural speech patterns and aligned with her personality. As she discussed this, she thought maybe she “should” read different types of literature.

One of the expressed purposes of the read-aloud is to engage students in literary experiences. The concepts of reader performance and student engagement were reciprocal in Hope’s read-alouds. The more engaged students became, the more she enjoyed performing; the more she performed, the more engaged she perceived students to be. Because she valued student engagement, she selected books that provided rich opportunities for her to “read the voices.”

I like to really put myself into it. I majored in music and really loved performing recitals and being on stage. I am kind of a show off. When I’m reading a book, I like all the students to be looking at me like Ah, that’s amazing! I like feeling drawn into the aesthetics of it and feeling like a part of it.

Performing the read-aloud gave her an “emotional connection with the book.” She was on stage, performing. She described it as an aesthetic experience for her.

During her first novel read-aloud, *There’s a Boy in the Girls’ Bathroom*, she shared she was uncomfortable with the book and unsure of what the student response would be. Therefore, she performed hesitantly:

When I saw the students’ reactions as they were totally tuned into me, I thought, “This is great.” Then I started hamming it up and started loving the read-aloud. I really enjoy reading it still because I get to use my crazy voice. Like when he says, [rough and growly] “SHUT UP or I’ll spit on you”.

Her enjoyment of the performance became a stronger purpose than her concerns about the content of the book.

When she read *Esperanza Rising*, she did not put as much into the performance. She reflected,

Maybe if I put more into it they'll be into it? Maybe it's like a self-fulfilling prophesy, I'm expecting them to be bored so they are. I should try to be more like, "Oh, my gosh, this is the best book ever." Then maybe they'll be more engaged? If I was just reading to engaged girls I think I'd be able to put more into it because I'd know that they'd feed off it. But when I see unengaged boys, I'm like, "Oh, I'm going to bore them to tears." Maybe my reading performance is more reserved as self-protection. I don't want to be rejected by the fourth-grade boys.

Hope's use of performance to engage students seemed to reflect a desire to be "liked" by her students, particularly boys. An underlying motive for choosing books that engage readers might be to enhance a teacher's social capital in the classroom.

The voices were so important to Hope that she became possessive of the reading experience. For example, when she was reading *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, she rushed through other readings so that a substitute she had coming would not read the "The Nazi's Attack America and Get Shot Down" chapter. She reported thinking,

"You can't read that chapter. That's my chapter." The funny thing was the substitute was an old friend of mine that used to be on my teaching team and she loves this book too. I knew she would do it well, but I still didn't want her to. These characters are my voices, so I had to do the voices my way. I thought, she's not going to read Byron the way I read Byron. She won't read Joey the way I read Joey. I have to read that chapter.

This too suggested that Hope felt some competitive drive to make sure her students preferred her to others. In this case, she not only performed for students but also adjusted her schedule to allow her to read the most engaging chapters.

Voice opportunity was so important to Hope that it was one of the reasons it was difficult for her to select *Esperanza Rising*. She said, "When I try to read the Spanish, I'm such a dork, because I can't read it. I have always had one or two Spanish speakers in my class and sometimes they'll be willing to help me, but sometimes they are embarrassed to do so."

Hope's decision-making processes considered the books' potential for her to perform them well, which connected to her belief that the read-aloud should be engaging. It also reflected Hope's desire to be seen as an excellent performer. With *Esperanza Rising*, she risked the popularity with the boys and her ability to perform for a single student in the class.

Hope believed when she selected books for their reader performance opportunities, she was able to use her voice to enhance characterization, demonstrate character development, and reveal subplots. When reading *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom*, she used different animal voices for Bradley's stuffed animals. She described, "I make the bear sound like a gruff bear. And the little rabbit sound like a silly little rabbit. In the beginning, I give Bradley a really kind of stupid, dumb voice, but by the end, he has a normal voice."

One day Bradley drew a monster while he was talking to his social skills counselor. Hope shared that "when I read it right, the listeners understand that the monster is Bradley's self-portrait." Hope believed that prosody helped her reveal the subplot and the inner dynamics of character development.

As Hope reflected on reading *The Watson's Go to Birmingham*, she said, "I love doing Mama's voice. She has this real strong, southern, 'had it with Byron' voice. But when you listen closely you can tell she really loves him. I guess, I can really relate to the mom kind of thing where you are annoyed at your kids but you love them." Hope used her voice to convey her interpretation of the characters with the students.

When describing reading *The Tale of Despereaux*, she said,

Every year I read The Tale of Despereaux I get better. I have a different voice for each mouse. There is a part where Despereaux's brother, the one that actually

turned him in and sends him to the dungeon, is one of the mice who is headed down into the dungeon to help Despereaux. The listeners do not know the identity of the two mice. The only identifying clue is the word “cripes.” If I don’t read “cripes” in the correct mouse voice, the students miss it. But when I read “cripes” in the brother’s voice, they “[Gasp] That’s his brother!” The students feel so smart because they made the connection. I love having them feel smart, so I like to do the voices. They just sit there and look at me like, “This is amazing.”

Hope believed her ability to read each character enhanced listener engagement and added another dimension to the pleasure and engaging nature of the read-aloud. This ability also helped them recognize and understand various characters and their roles within the narrative.

Interpreting literature was a component of literature curriculum Hope considered when selecting books for their expressive potential.

As I was conducting a whole group read aloud of The Watsons Go to Birmingham, we came across a part that I had chosen ahead of time to highlight for prosody. In the text, Grandma seemed to be put out with Mama because Mama disapproved of Grandma's new boyfriend. She told Mama, “Wilona, your father has been gone for 20 years. Now, Mr. Robert is my dearest friend.” The text goes on to say that sometimes Grandma can “say just a few words, but mean a whole lot more.” I used this passage to open up a discussion about different ways we could read it, and how those different ways could give the text different meanings.

Hope taught a mini-lesson on how prosody leads to interpretation and how your interpretation dictates your prosody.

This analysis revealed that teachers’ literary value judgments generally centered on the content dimension. Their considerations might extend beyond the content dimension of art but even those considerations were often for pragmatic purposes. The examination of their purposes for selecting particular books for read-alouds illustrated that some read-alouds were a literature curriculum with the objective of refining skills for

reading, interpreting, and appreciating literature and some read-alouds were a part of non-literature curriculum.

Summary of Findings Regarding Why Elementary School Teachers Selected Books for the Read-Aloud

1. Elementary school teachers selected books for various pragmatic purposes.
2. Elementary school teachers' book selections and purposes for reading aloud were influenced by their orientation to art.
3. Elementary school teachers considered various dimensions of literary art when selecting books.

The Nested Context of How and Why Elementary School Teachers Selected Books for the Read-Aloud

Systems theory was a useful resource for understanding the phenomenon of teacher decision-making and the read-aloud as literature curriculum because it highlighted that any human activity—whether internal or external—is in fact allowed, encouraged, shaped, and constrained by the particular social situation in which it occurs. The findings reported up to this point have been decontextualized and provided an understanding of the teachers' decision-making process in terms of the teachers' desires for the read-aloud. The decontextualized analysis allowed me as the researcher to see the previously invisible thinking of the participants. Recontextualizing the decisions allowed me to consider the sources of influences that the participants themselves might not have considered. Systems theory analysis was necessary to recontextualize the decisions and document how purposes and processes for selecting books were integrated. The selection process might influence the purpose of the selection and the purpose might dictate the process. Systems theory analysis was also necessary to demonstrate how curricular

decisions were coproduced by cultural values and curricular ideologies. During the think-alouds and reflective interviews, the teachers in this study did not consciously describe what influenced their book selections, which might indicate that they did not realize how cultural and curricular ideologies and factors influenced their choices. However, through a representative sample of analyzed data, I report the findings regarding the nested nature of teachers' book choices.

The most global level of contextual surrounding is the macrosystem. This is the most distant from the experiences of individuals and includes abstract aspects of culture. In describing how and why teachers selected books for the read-aloud, the macrolevel of influence included the general trends in children's literature publishing across the globe, general cultural values and influences, book awards, literary popularity, and media connections. The intermediate level is the mesosystem of the social institution of school. At the mesolevel, teachers' decisions were influenced by the purposes of elementary schools, current philosophies that drove school practice, curricular ideologies, and their advanced literary education. The immediate level of influence is the microlevel. Teachers' value judgments and books selections were impacted by their personal microsystems of lived and literary experiences.

In this section, I report the findings constructed during a systems analysis of Dorothy's decision-making process and purposes for selecting *Heidi* and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. This representational finding was used to demonstrate the nested nature of Dorothy's book selections. Dorothy described,

I chose The Wonderful Wizard of Oz because I didn't want the kids to miss out on a classic. I don't know if they would read them on their own with all the new stuff like Diary of a Wimpy Kid (Kinney, 2007) that comes out that pulls at their attention more than classic books do. Since they are classics, it's part of the

culture and all that. They need some exposure to it. I started reading Heidi. I read Heidi because I had an older copy, so it was more symbolic. Heidi was one of my favorite movies and classic stories that I read when I was little. I found that once I started reading it, it wasn't quite as flowy or understandable as a read-aloud for them. They weren't engaged as much, so I felt the need to find a new one.

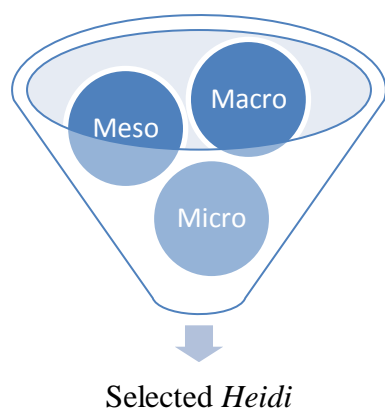
The category of *classic* is a macrolevel influence. These are books that have endured through time, indicating that they are culturally valued as works of art. Dorothy acknowledges this macrosystem when she said, “Classics are a part of culture and [students] need some exposure to it.” Dorothy’s conversation revealed that she professionally valued the works of art that her culture has continued to publish as classics because she “really didn’t want the kids to miss out on a classic.” The fact that she chose to read an old copy that belonged to her mother as a symbolic representation of value also demonstrated the nested nature of this decision. There was a direct link between the macro- and microlevels of this decision. Culture values classics. She valued her mother’s copy and hoped reading that copy conveyed the enduring value of the book to the students.

From Dorothy’s perspective, the decision to read a classic also aligned with the mesosystem because she believed one of the purposes of school reading was to share books students did not read independently. She also acted on her ideological belief that school is about the past; by sharing a classic book, students would construct understanding about what was important in the past. This demonstrated that she believed one of the purposes of school was cultural transmission.

The curricular concept of cultural transmission reveals some tension that exists between the mesosystem of school reading and the macrosystem of general publishing of children’s literature. General publishing trends create and market new books for children

to read; whereas teachers and school curriculum may want to share older books with students. Dorothy's interpretation of the mesosystem of school purposes and her personal microsystem led her to decide that not all books published and promoted by the macrosystem were books she valued as read-alouds. One of her purposes for reading a classic was to expand students' independent reading beyond the new popular books like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. This choice and rationale illustrated that Dorothy's interpretation of the school curriculum, which I categorized as mesosystem, led to a decision that might be a reaction against the macrosystem. The school purpose of introducing books that students would not normally read guided her decision more than current trends in publishing and marketing popular literature children can relate to.

Her decision to abandon *Heidi* was a microlevel decision (see Figure 2) because it was not easy for her to read aloud or comprehensible and enjoyable for the listeners. Despite the fact that it was published and valuable at the macrolevel and it supported Dorothy's interpretation of mesolevel values, she abandoned it because of microlevel concerns.



Macrosystem

- Books that have endured through time are culturally valued
- Only a select few publications are valued through time
- Teacher did not look beyond the corporate book store for her selection

Mesosystem

- One of the purposes of school is to expose students to cultural values—cultural transmission
- Read-alouds should share books students do not read independently
- Read-alouds should be comprehensible
- Read-alouds should be enjoyed

Microsystem

- Teacher enjoyed as a child
- Teacher used mother's old copy
- Teacher found the text hard to read

Figure 2. Selected *Heidi*.

Dorothy continued to describe the nested context of her decisions when she explained what she did after choosing to abandon *Heidi*.

I went to Barnes and Noble to try to find some more classics. I bought The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Winnie the Pooh (Milne, 2009), and Black Beauty (Sewell, 2004). I chose those because they're ones that I knew and appreciated when I was a child. I felt like they were at a fourth grade level students could connect to and enjoy. I have a lot of students who live on farms that have horses, so I thought they would connect with Black Beauty. I felt like most kids had seen or heard of The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, so it's a little more popular than Heidi or some of the other classics.

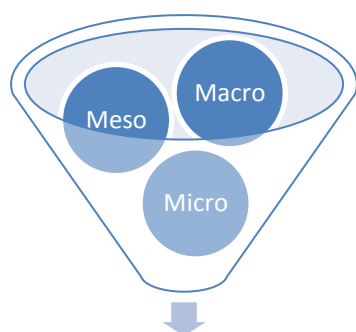
When Dorothy went to the local corporate book store to select her book, she was dependent upon macrolevel publishing trends and text availability. Her selection options were narrowed by what books the bookstore had shelved in the *classic section*. Standing

in front of the narrow selection of books, she made the microlevel selection based on her personal experiences with books and the interests and background of her student audience. She selected *Black Beauty* because she had a positive childhood experience with it and because she taught in a rural community where students owned and valued horses. She selected *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (see Figure 3) and *Winnie the Pooh* because she had positive childhood experiences with them and because she thought the students would have experienced the movie versions of them and thus enjoy them. The fact that her decision was influenced by the popularity of the movie versions of the books further demonstrated the nested nature of a book selection as it was influenced by macrolevel cultural entertainment values. Students' macrolevel entertainment experiences provided connections that made the book more accessible to the listeners. She went on to share,

Concerning Winnie the Pooh, I knew they've all seen the movies and are familiar with Disney, so they could make that connection to the classics. After I discussed abandoning Heidi and did book talks on the three new books, we voted as a class. It was actually a really close vote with The Wonderful Wizard of Oz winning by two votes.

Dorothy's selection of *Winnie the Pooh* also revealed an interesting connection between the macro and mesolevel of text categorization based on age of reader and listener. The Disney marketing of *Winnie the Pooh* has targeted young children, promoting the belief that the *Winnie the Pooh* stories are for young children, which makes them unpopular with intermediate students. However, the book had a Lexile score of 790 that translated into a 4.6 reading level, which made it an appropriate fourth grade read-aloud choice at the mesolevel. When Dorothy did her book talks, she had to work against the macrosystem to inspire fourth grade listener interest. She described,

At first they didn't want to read Winnie the Pooh because they saw Winnie the Pooh as really childish and they believed they were beyond that kind of thing. But after I explained the story and the author and how it was different than what you see on Disney cartoons and movies, then they thought about it and it was one that received votes when they were deciding.



Selected *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Macrosystem

- Local corporate bookstore selection—Publishing trends and text availability
- Movie versions of books—Cultural entertainment values

Mesosystem

- Reader response theory
- School in a rural community
- Student choice
- Value of books

Microsystem

- Positive personal experiences

Figure 3. Selected *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Dorothy's process of having students vote for the book after her booktalks reflected a mesosystem practice of giving readers and listeners their choice of reading selections. Dorothy used the macrosystem to select books that students had experienced as entertainment; however, this created tension in the actual reading experience when reading *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. She said, "It's working pretty well and they're engaged because they are able to make connections to the movie. Sometimes I wonder [if this is a good literary experience] because they make so many connections to the movie rather than focusing on the book." Dorothy was pleased that her striving readers were making connections but she was concerned because the discussions seemed to favor the

movie over the book. She understood that at the macrolevel, movies give value to books; whereas, she wanted her students to value the book for literature's sake.

Through this examination of Dorothy's descriptions of her book selections, we saw that teachers' book selection processes were co-produced in a nested context. Systems analysis helped us see that although teachers might have autonomy in selecting books for the read-aloud, their decisions were co-produced by the meso and macrocontext in which they were made. The following is a summary of findings regarding how and why elementary school teachers selected books for the read-aloud:

1. Elementary school teachers' decisions were co-produced in nested context.
2. Teachers were not aware of all the influences that might affect their decisions.

Chapter Summary

The findings demonstrated that selecting books was a complex process. Teachers in this study used resources they valued, e.g., recommendations and genre conventions, to narrow their choices. Their personal art orientations influenced the questions they asked and the types of answers they sought. Perhaps unconsciously, they were influenced by the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels of the systems of the elementary educational world. Although the three teachers often believed their book selections were simple choices, analysis revealed the complexity of each book choice.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Overview

This study originated with my experiences facilitating read-alouds as an elementary school teacher. I felt unprepared to choose books for read-alouds and wondered if there was a process other teachers knew about and I had not learned. I feared I limited students' experiences with books based on my personal tastes and biases. I recognized teachers' purposeful decision-making was a vital component to successful teacher practice. I also realized elementary school teachers often had decision-making autonomy when selecting books for the read-aloud. Therefore, I designed a study to investigate the processes teachers used during the selection of books for read-alouds.

The overall purpose of this study was to examine and describe elementary school teachers' book selections for read-alouds. The following research questions framed my descriptive study:

Q1 How do elementary teachers select books for the read-aloud?

Q2 For what purposes do elementary teachers select books for the read-aloud?

Elementary school teachers have few guidelines for selecting books for the read-aloud. No common children's literature canon guides book selection. Thus, teachers use their own judgments. In addition, literature is generally not acknowledged as a content

area in elementary school. Teachers may not have common goals and objectives for read-alouds. Some teachers may consider the read-aloud experience a literary event and others a literacy lesson. Teachers may not even be aware of when the read-aloud is literature curriculum or other content.

Many factors may influence a teacher's selections. The findings of this study might help teachers develop processes for purposeful book selections for the read-aloud. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the research procedures, implications of the methodology for researchers, and a discussion of the findings related to the research questions by sharing a hypothetical scenario. Each section of the scenario is followed by discussion of findings with correlating implications. I end this chapter with considerations for future research.

Overview of Procedures

I used a phenomenological approach to investigate the research questions. I purposefully selected three participants who completed a graduate children's literature course. In the course, they were taught about the importance of literature in the classroom. . I hoped to see how the course equipped them to use read-alouds for literature experiences. Video and audio recordings captured data during the graduate level children's literature course. I also recorded four hours of read-aloud observations per participant. In addition to the observations, I recorded four think-alouds and reflective interviews per participant that provided approximately eight hours of teacher self-report data over a 14-week period. I also collected data through artifacts and the research journal.

I provided the first layer of video analysis each week by watching the recordings and creating video running record summaries. The participant and I watched and discussed researcher-selected segments of video during the reflective interviews. I transcribed the think-alouds and reflective interviews each week. The transcription process immersed me in the data. I used open coding to break the data apart for inspection. During this step, I recorded emergent themes, descriptors, and questions in separate columns of the transcriptions, which I then shared with participants. These emergent themes, descriptors, and questions were the beginning of the typification process and came from the data as well as my personal and theoretical understandings. The recordings and transcriptions became resources for exploring participants' processes and purposes.

After completing the read-aloud observations, think-alouds, and reflective interviews, I reduced the data for repetition and organized it by book title. I used my researcher journal and transcriptions to write a textual description of each participant's selection process. The textual descriptions were shared with the participants as part of member checking. When participants responded with clarifications or corrections, I incorporated them. At this point in the analysis process, I also shared the textual descriptions and corresponding transcripts with a peer to check internal validity and enhance trustworthiness.

I then returned to the transcripts and analyzed them through the theoretical lenses described in Chapter II: Theoretical Orientations to Art and Dimensions of Literary Art. I coded and reduced the data for these theories separately and wrote decontextualized descriptions that were peer checked. I then analyzed the transcripts through the

theoretical lens of systems theory. This analysis helped me reassemble the parts and enabled me to write a recontextualized description that was peer checked. These three theoretical lenses offered distinct layers of understanding I used to organize the findings I presented in Chapter IV.

Using the entire set of data, I wrote the composite description and findings found in Chapter IV. During this time, I revisited digital recordings, studied artifacts created in the master's level course, reviewed transcribed data, sifted through the researcher journal, discussed the findings with peers, and consulted the research questions that guided the description of the phenomenon.

Implications for Researchers

Think-alouds provided one form of access to the unobservable processes of book selection. Throughout this study, the selected elementary school teachers performed both retrospective and concurrent think alouds (Hannu & Pallab, 2000). First, they described their considerations, questions, and purposes for selecting each book. Transcriptions of the think-alouds, complete with emerging themes, were sent electronically to the participants (i.e., member-checking) so they could determine the accuracy of the description, offer clarification, and provide further explanation during the reflective interviews. As the participants became more experienced with the think-aloud protocol, they became more descriptive and provided richer data on subsequent think alouds.

Video-mediated, reflected interviews provided another type of access to the unobservable processes of book selection because they provided space for teachers to talk about purposes for their book selections. In these semi-structured interviews, teachers answered questions that arose during my observations and provided further explanations

of concepts and processes mentioned in the think alouds. We watched a pre-selected video segment of the observed read-aloud to inspire reflection on the selection process. For example, during my observation of Dorothy's read-aloud, the class discussed the setting of *Bud, Not Buddy* as a salient feature of historical fiction. After viewing this video segment, she talked about how she selected books that clearly demonstrated genre characteristics.

Adhering to phenomenological methodology, I depended upon teachers' self-report as my means of collecting data. A limitation of self-report is that teachers can reveal only what is conscious to them. They may not be aware of ideological and cultural influences on their book selections or of hidden curriculum they are promoting with their choices. I countered this limitation in two ways. First through reflective interviews, I prompted teachers to question their own thinking. Second, by applying systems theory analysis, I examined influences they had not acknowledged.

I learned that the teachers in this study did not have a strategic procedure for choosing books. However, through the research process, they articulated desires for such a process. Prior to this study, their decisions were unexamined and unguided by any curriculum or tool. That is why I created a tool--a series of questions that might help teachers think about their purposes and examine their decisions. This tool (see Table 5) is actually a summary of the findings with implications. This tool has yet to be tested and may need refinement. However, it is an attempt to put what I learned about purposeful book selection into a usable form.

Table 4

Read-Aloud Book Selection Tool

Questions to Ask about Book Selection		Book Titles to Consider
1	What is my pragmatic purpose for this read-aloud? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moral • Social • Political • Psychological • Cognitive • Pleasure 	_____ _____ _____
2	What makes this an important purpose? What influenced my decision to plan for this purpose? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural influences • School influences • Personal beliefs and values 	
3	What makes this purpose developmentally appropriate for the listeners?	
4	Which dimensions of the book support my pragmatic purpose? <div> <div>Author</div> <div>Theme</div> <div>Content</div> </div> <div> <div>Style</div> <div>Form</div> </div>	
5	What art approach to literature will I take? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective (consider the text as a whole) • Expressive (consider the author and writing style) • Mimetic (consider how the text represents and reflects students' lives) 	
6	Where will I find my best recommendations? <div> <div>Award lists</div> <div>Book Blogs</div> <div>Booklists</div> <div>Book Reviews</div> </div> <div> <div>Online networks</div> <div>Past Experience</div> <div>Peer Suggestions</div> <div>Professional org.</div> </div>	Final book selection _____

Discussion of Findings with Implications

While two research questions guided this study and analysis, the findings demonstrated that the two components of selection were often intertwined and inseparable. The “how” sometimes influenced the “purpose” and vice versa. For a

discussion of the composite findings, I created a hypothetical scenario of the book selection process. Each section of the scenario illustrates a sequential step of the book selection process as I perceived it through the review of the literature and the analysis of data. This discussion is organized into three components: hypothetical scenario, discussion of the findings, and implications. The text of the hypothetical scenario is presented in single-spaced blocked text in **comic sans** font. In the scenario, I write a personal think-aloud for selecting a read-aloud for second-grade listeners. The text of the discussion and implications are presented in with direct quotations from the participants.

Step One: Select a Pragmatic Purpose for the Read-Aloud

Effective teacher practice is impacted by purposeful decision making. The first step in the book selection process was to identify a purpose. These purposes focused on audience response and the desired effects of literature and the read-aloud. Through analysis, I labeled these purposes pragmatic. I further typified the pragmatic purposes teachers in this study into the following six purposes (see Table 3): moral, social, political, psychological, cognitive, and pleasure.

I identified my purpose for the read-aloud. For this selection, I chose the cognitive purpose of "educating the imagination." By selecting this purpose, I rejected every book that was explicitly didactic or written to share information. I also eliminated the books that lacked the creative imaginative dimension.

The findings of the data collected in this study illustrated that the first step of selecting a purpose did not determine whether the read-aloud would be an aesthetic experience. Choices made for pragmatic purposes fell on an aesthetic continuum. Educating the imagination might be a more aesthetic purpose than a choice made to share

math content. Not all teachers, including the teachers in this study, seek aesthetic experiences for children. Literature has become instrumentally valued (Galda et al., 2000) as teachers attempt to transmit knowledge, skills, or values and ignore the transactional nature (Rosenblatt, 1978) of reading. Analysis of teachers' processes and purposes for selecting books for the read-aloud confirmed that, even with a graduate level class that demonstrated the use of children's literature for literary purposes, teachers in this study often selected books with instrumental intent and planned read-alouds for pragmatic purposes that diverged from literature transactions. These instrumental purposes often perpetuated adult norms that were based on various social, academic, and personal values designed to tell children what they should value and how they should think, feel, interact, and live. For example, many selections in this study (see Table 3) were chosen for the lessons they could potentially transmit.

This is important because educational decisions are stronger when they are purpose-driven. Selecting a purpose might enable teachers to make read-alouds a more intentional component of the curriculum. Stating specific pragmatic purposes might help teachers be more aware of where their read-alouds fall on the aesthetic continuum.

Step Two: Evaluate the Purpose through Systems Thinking

Effective teacher practice is impacted by reflective decision making. The second step calls for the teacher to evaluate the selected purpose for unexamined influences. Teachers do not always recognize when personal values and beliefs (microlevel thinking), educational purposes and trends (mesolevel thinking), and cultural values and practices (macrolevel thinking) influence their purposes. Teachers' decisions might align with or push against particular values. By examining the selected purpose through

systems theory, teachers can become aware of the diverse factors that might be involved in their decisions.

In choosing the purpose of educating the imagination, I aligned with a macrolevel agenda that supported innovation, inventiveness, problem-solving, and the world of arts. I believed students need an educated imagination in the world outside the walls of school. Being aware of how this purpose aligned with the cultural influences validated my decision. I felt like an educated imagination would equip students to stimulate change in the world.

Although my decision to read aloud for the purpose of educating the imagination reflected a cultural philosophy, it pushed against the mesolevel context of traditional school culture that puts the arts at the rim, rather than at the core, of education. School culture today seeks measurable effects visible through higher test scores in literacy, math, and other validated content areas, but not usually in literature. A book selection that honors art and the imagination pushed against the idea that the arts are somehow intellectually undemanding.

My microlevel purpose was strongly motivated by personal values. I valued the development of the thinking skills in the context of an art form. I wanted the read-aloud to educate the imagination and contribute to students' aesthetic frames of reference. Therefore, I wanted to select a book that students could interact with to make such experience possible.

Purposes for read-alouds and specific book selections are always situated and must be understood in context. Because this study explored book selections for read-alouds in elementary school classrooms, the teachers were influenced by the institution of school. However, many were unconsciously influenced by culture and their own personal beliefs, values, and experiences. System theory analysis of the data revealed

that teachers' perceived autonomy in book selection might actually be the result of unquestioned influences of school and from the world outside the school walls.

Although the participants in this study did not describe how macrolevel culture influenced their purposes for the read-aloud, through system's analysis, I saw where their purposes adhered or pushed against cultural norms and values. For example, Alice selected and read *The Hundred Dresses* for the psychological and social pragmatic content of bullying. She said, "Part of our character building curriculum is to introduce the terms bully, bystander, victim. It's a great book to start the year with in terms of how we treat our classroom family members." Bullying has become a school problem acknowledged by the public outside the school walls. Cultural behavior often includes bullying although it is a behavior not verbally condoned. Alice's choice attempted to change the cultural norm of bullying. Her purposes aligned with the cultural values of kindness, tolerance, and acceptance.

Hope's choice to read *Esperanza Rising* was a push against the culture of the local community. She said,

We have many migrant workers in [our community] and a high Hispanic population, but we have mostly White kids in our classes. There is still a lot of racism in our district and immigration fights. [The local middle school] is a pretty integrated middle school. When it first opened there was a huge fight. Parents would say, "My kids aren't going to school with those kids." They would say racial slurs against the Hispanics. I think one of the reasons I really like this book is because in the beginning the kids really identify with Esperanza. They feel like they could be Esperanza who is this beautiful, little, rich girl who gets everything she wants. But then she has to go to America and become a migrant worker. To me, it is really powerful when listeners have a chance to connect the people they demean and who they think are beneath them to a literary girl they admired.

Hope chose this book to inspire change and help students develop a more accepting view of immigrant workers and Hispanic people.

The mesolevel school culture is often shaped by a stated curriculum and the traditions of a local school or grade level team. Dorothy's choices to make her read-alouds literature curriculum were a push against the school's literacy skills curriculum. She believed she was given "the literature curriculum" when she was handed the basal. She said, "Everything I was supposed to read was right in front of me. I was convinced that students were getting what they were supposed to be getting because they had this big basal book." Through the master's level children's literature course, she learned she needed to supplement students' literary experiences beyond the stated literacy curriculum. She shared,

All day they were doing skills and never experienced literature. I didn't realize how much they were missing. They saw other students reading books and they would pick up books and pretend to read because they thought that is what they should be doing. Now I see children deserve the chance to savor much of the literature they read and hear.

Dorothy's choice to make read-aloud a literature curriculum pushed against the curricular ideology and norms of the school.

All three participants mentioned microlevel personal values and experiences that guided their purposes for read-alouds and specific selections. During a reflective interview, Hope shared a metaphor that described the power personal values and experiences had on her read-aloud purposes and selections:

When I was in college and picking flute solos, I would always pick the flashy, really loud, exuberant ones. In a concerto, you have the fast and flashy first section. The third movement was always my favorite because it is really loud and flashy. The middle movement was a pain to practice, slow, drawn out. I always had to just get through the middle movement because it was the quiet, slow, beautiful graceful one.

When I think of my read-alouds, The Watsons Go to Birmingham is like the first movement, meaty but good. There is a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom and The Tale of Despereaux are like those flashy ending movements. And Esperanza

Rising is like that middle movement, more legato andante. Still-and gorgeous. It is beautiful and fits a lot of people's personalities. Esperanza Rising is probably more like sitting still and being quiet and graceful. Students need all of them. You can't take the middle movement out of the concerto, if we did, the third movement wouldn't make any sense.

In her effort to provide students with meaningful literature experiences, Hope extended her choices beyond the microlevel influences of personal taste.

This is vital because examining stated purposes for unexamined influences enables the teacher to be proactive in their curricular choices and may expose hidden curricular components of the read-aloud. System thinking is one tool for being a reflective teacher better equipped to make informed, purposeful decisions.

Step Three: Evaluate the Purpose Through Developmental Thinking

Read-alouds are planned for specific audiences that have specific emotional, social, and cognitive needs that can be understood from a developmental perspective. Applying best practices to the book selection process requires teachers to evaluate the purpose of the planned read-aloud in light of the developmental level of the listeners.

I asked myself, "Is educating the imagination a developmentally appropriate objective for second and third graders?" Yes, imaginative capabilities are demonstrated by even young preschoolers. I wish to sustain the imaginative capabilities of elementary school students rather than have them dry up under the relentless impact of "serious" academic schooling.

The teachers in this study considered the developmental needs of the students when they planned the purpose of the read-aloud and selected specific texts. When Alice talked about *Stone Fox*; *Shiloh*; *Sarah, Plain and Tall*; and *Courage of Sarah Noble*, she said, "They're just very age-appropriate. They address things that kids are doing, thinking about, and struggling with."

Hope believed the theme of misfit character was age appropriate. She said, “Misfit characters create relatability for fourth graders because they are becoming more self-aware. These misfit, underdog characters inspire the fourth-grade listeners to root for them.” Hope selected books she believed matched fourth graders’ developmental levels.

Developmental evaluation might include asking two questions Nodelman and Reimer (2003) recommended asking:

1. What does the listener need to know about life to construct meaning from this text?
2. What does the listener need to know about literature to construct meaning from this text? (p.19)

The first of these two questions extends beyond general developmental considerations and questions what specific life experiences or content knowledge is necessary to construct meaning and build interpretations from specific texts. When Hope discussed *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* and Dorothy discussed *Heidi*, they both expressed how lack of background information hindered aesthetic response.

Concerning the second of these two questions, all three participants shared how students’ engagement and aesthetic responses increased the more they knew about how literature worked. Dorothy shared that after she taught students how to use visual design elements to interpret text, “They’ll notice and name visual design elements and they say ‘This one is breaking the frame.’ ‘Did you notice there are butterflies on every page?’ Their eighth-grade book buddies are amazed at the fourth-graders understanding of visual design elements.”

Considering the listener is an important step in selecting books for aesthetic read-alouds. This matters because the transactional nature of reading requires teachers to choose books that invite response from within the realm of students' developmental experiences.

Step Four: Consider Various Dimensions of Literary Art

The book selection process is an evaluative process. Therefore, the next step in the decision making process is to consider what dimension of literature to explore that best supports the chosen purpose. Literary dimensions might include author, genre conventions, content, theme, form, and potential for prosodic performance. At this point, the teacher would be asking herself, "What features of a book can help me reach my desired purpose for this read-aloud?"

I asked myself the question: for the purpose of educating the imagination is which of these is more important for me to attend to: content, theme, form, author, or genre conventions? Although any of these literary dimensions could support my purpose, I believed genre consideration may be the most effective consideration. I could have looked for books with a theme of inventiveness, or I could have selected a specific author who is known for imaginative stylistics. But for this decision, I chose to look for a book in the fantasy genre. Selecting fantasy narrowed my choices but still offered too many possibilities. I further narrowed my selection by considering the dimension of linguistic form. I wanted the book to invite sensory engagement and lend itself to a read-aloud performance.

Analysis of the teachers' descriptions of why they selected specific books revealed that teachers' literary value judgments included consideration for various dimensions of literary art. The teachers in this study considered the content dimension for 77% of the books they selected during this study. Most of their content evaluations demonstrated an

alignment with personal, school, and cultural values. Dorothy and Hope pushed against cultural popularity when they did not include current popular works of fiction such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. They did not value the content of this book for school purposes. During spring break, Hope read several Sharon Creech novels for the purpose of selecting a new book to read aloud. She purposefully chose not to read them because they included kissing. After describing the content, theme, and format she appreciated, she said,

But then there was kissing. I just didn't want to deal with the kissing. If it hadn't had it in there, I would have read it to the students. Fourth grade is too young. They're already talking about kissing and they're infatuated with it and I don't want them to think it's okay at this age.

Hope's microlevel evaluation and her perceptions of mesolevel school purposes caused her to push against the cultural influences that model young people physically expressing romantic emotions. Content evaluation at the micro- and meso-level caused Hope to reject Creech's novels read-alouds.

The teachers in this study considered the thematic dimension for 50% of the books they selected during this study. Among the themes participants in this study mentioned were friendship, misfit, responsibility, life's challenges, and quests. The participants personally valued these themes due to their own cultural experiences and values. They were also the kinds of themes they felt aligned with the purpose of school. Hope often selected books with an explicit quest theme. She shared, "I also chose *The Tale of Despereaux* to emphasize the quest theme that is common in literature. When I read it I also add in fairy tales and folk tales. We do a whole unit and get into the whole quest and archetypes." Due to her cultural experiences, Hope personally valued the quest theme because of the how there is a "hero overcoming some HUGE odds to save

somebody or make the world a better place.” She believed this theme would speak to the fourth graders as they went on personal quests throughout their lives.

The teachers in this study considered the form of 50% of the books they selected during this study. Participants in this study mentioned the following elements of form: genre conventions, visual design elements, symbolism, and plot structures. These were elements of form the participants personally valued due to their own cultural and educational experiences. These considerations were highly influenced by their mesolevel experiences of master’s level education. Their course experiences helped them construct understanding of visual design elements using the postmodern picturebook, *Voices in the Park*. After these experiences, they chose to read *Voices in the Park* and other picturebooks. Their course experiences helped them construct understanding of genre conventions. For Dorothy, this became her purpose and process for selecting books. Hope studied symbolism, extended metaphors, and plot structures; she shared, “I use read-alouds to show them the process of how you dig apart the layers and how you look for deeper meaning.” Hope’s own micro- and mesolevel experiences inspired her to evaluate the literary dimension of form for her read-alouds.

The teachers in this study only considered the author in 9% of the books they selected during this study. Alice designed units of study by author. She reported, “Author studies provide students opportunities to be immersed in a selected author’s particular works.” She enjoyed selecting Chris Van Allsburg’s, Jan Brett’s, or Patricia Polacco’s books for these studies. One of the reasons she reported for enjoying Patricia Polacco’s works was because “I saw her at CCIRA and really liked her. She’s a beautiful linguist. She’s just a hoot. She was so colorful. She is just this cute little lady.” Micro-

and meso-experiences with authors and their books inspired teachers in this study to select specific books for read-alouds. The authors that Alice chose to study had gained cultural popularity and published multiple books. The publishing and marketing industry greatly influenced participants' considerations of specific authors.

The teachers in this study considered the prosodic potential of all (100%) their read-aloud choices. This consideration reflected strong micro- and mesoinfluences. Hope realized she tended to select books that followed her natural speech patterns and aligned with her personality. Alice also mentioned she selected *The Cricket in Times Square* because she could “do the voices well.” One of the mesolevel purposes of the read-aloud is to engage students in literary experiences. Participants in this study believed that dynamic performances were an important aspect of literary engagement. Dorothy even feared that her read-alouds were not effective because she was not a “dramatic reader.” These beliefs aligned with cultural views of performance arts.

This matters because considering literary dimensions enables teachers to narrow selections by identifying specific selection criteria. It helps teachers purposefully examine books which may lead to selecting books that have greater potential for inviting listener response.

Step Five: Develop a Stance

No matter what literary dimensions are considered, any book can be presented as a work of art. My analysis of participants' descriptions of their book choices revealed that literary selections were made from all four basic artistic orientations: pragmatic, mimetic, expressive, and objective (see Table 3). Teachers began the book selection process by selecting a purpose that was framed by a pragmatic art orientation. They

narrowed their book options by identifying specific literary dimensions that best met their purposes. They defined their stance by considering a complementary art orientation. Each orientation lent itself to specific purposes, literary dimensions, and aesthetic/nonaesthetic tensions. An objective approach guided toward a book valued as a work of art. An expressive orientation guided toward a book valued for the expressive stylistics of the author. A mimetic orientation guided toward a book valued because its content and theme imitated or reflected perceived realities.

I believed an objective or expressive approach to art would suit my declared purpose. I wanted the book to present qualities of sound, sight, taste, and touch so that the students could experience them during the read-aloud. I looked for a work of art that would invite readers to imagine. I adopted an aesthetic stance toward the read-aloud.

Approaching the book as a work of art does not ensure the teacher's purpose is aesthetic in nature or that students will have an aesthetic experience. I learned from participants that read-aloud experiences operated along the aesthetic continuum. When the purpose of the read-aloud was to teach a social curriculum (pragmatic purpose), a mimetic orientation was often instrumental. On the aesthetic end of the continuum, mimetic orientation invited an aesthetic experience or response by facilitating strong personal connections as exemplified by Crystal's experience with *Esperanza Rising*. Expressively oriented choices highlighted the aesthetic/non-aesthetic tension when the purpose of the read-aloud shifted from experiencing and appreciating the literature to getting to know the author. Objective orientation could lead to nonaesthetic experiences when teachers selected the book to teach literary structures and features rather than appreciated or enjoyed them.

Theoretical art orientation analysis revealed that certain purposes aligned with particular art orientations more readily than others. Consideration of specific dimensions of literary art also aligned more readily to specific orientations than others. Table 5 summarizes the understanding of the connections I constructed through the data analysis process. Notice how each pragmatic purpose lent itself to exploring particular dimensions of literary art and art orientations.

Table 5

Purpose Guides Stance

Pragmatic Purpose	Literary Dimension	Art Orientation
Moral	Content/Theme	Mimetic
Social	Content/Theme/Author	Mimetic
Psychological	Content/Theme	Mimetic
Political	Content/Theme/Author	Expressive, Mimetic
Cognitive-Literary	Form/Genre Conventions	Objective, Expressive
Cognitive-Literacy	Form	Expressive
Cognitive – Historical	Content/Theme/Author	Expressive, Mimetic
Cognitive-Mathematical	Content Content	
Cognitive-Reasoning	Content	Expressive, Mimetic
Cognitive-Imagination	Content/Form	Objective, Expressive, Anti-Mimetic
Pleasure	Content/Theme/Form/Author	Mimetic, Expressive, Objective

This was vital because book selections would be more purposeful if teachers consciously thought about their art orientation and their stance on the aesthetic continuum.

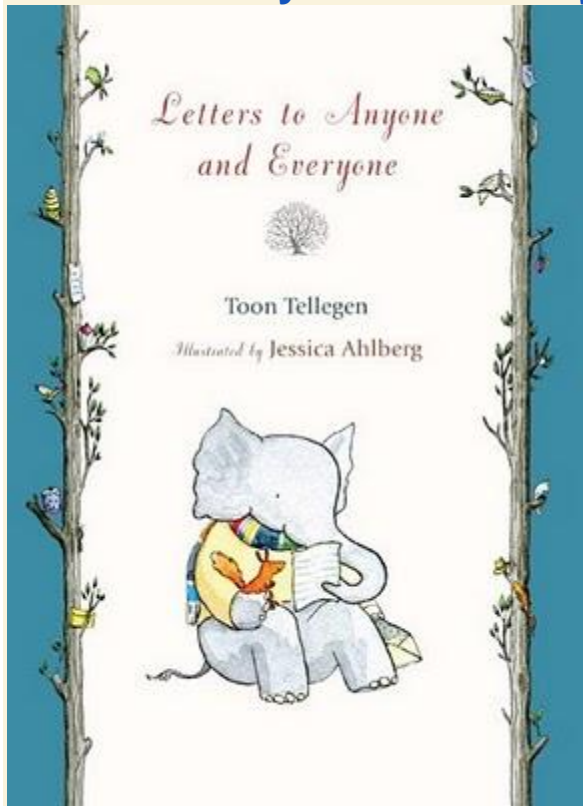
Understanding complementary art orientations might help teachers know where they want to stand on the aesthetic continuum for a specific read-aloud. It might help teachers connect their purposes, text evaluations, and personal orientations toward art as they intentionally selected books for read-alouds. In this study, analysis of the data revealed secondary art orientations as I defined them but teachers did not declare a stance on the aesthetic continuum. They seemed unaware of when they were using books aesthetically or instrumentally.

Step Six: Use Various Resources for Selecting a Book

At this point, having identified a purpose and some selection criteria, a teacher can begin to consider specific book titles. Because 5,000 new books are published each year, a teacher cannot possibly know them all. There are a variety of resources a teacher could consult: professional journals, reviews, recommendations, experiences, award lists, and networking sites.

Most Friday evenings, I celebrate my week by surfing through a week's worth of children's literature blogs. Sometimes I read them just for fun, but when looking for a specific read-aloud, I use the blogs as a resource for selecting a new book. The following blog (Taylor, 2010) brought the book *Letters to Anyone and Everyone* to my attention.

Letters to Anyone and Everyone, by Toon Tellegen



[Letters to Anyone and Everyone](#), by Toon Tellegen, illustrated by Jessica Ahlberg (Boxer Books, 2010, 156 pages, elementary on up).

Some books just shout "Give me as a gift!" This is one of them. It is beautiful as an object--small yet solid, with a book mark ribbon--just plain nice to hold and admire.

And then there are the words and pictures inside. The book consists of twenty three small stories, each with an epistolary core. The letters in each episode are written by a group of animals--snail, elephant, squirrel, ant, and others--and are delivered by the wind from door to door. They aren't long stories, or long letters, and they are written very simply, but they are funny, piquant, and heartfelt.

Here's the first letter:

Dear Snail,

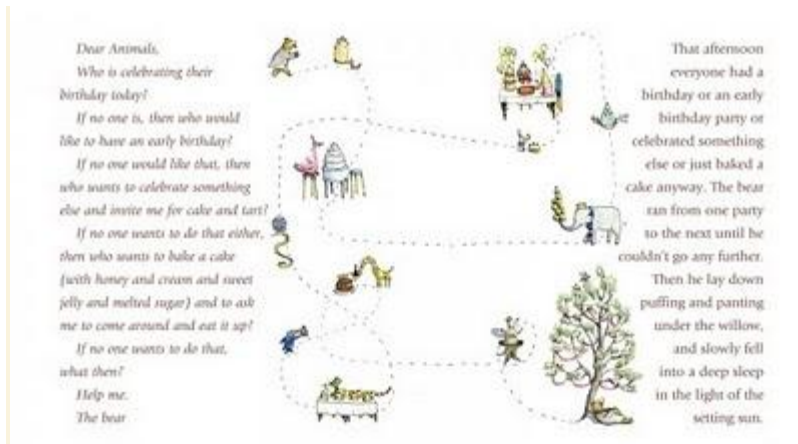
May I invite you to dance with me on top of your house? Just a few steps? That's what I want most of all.

I promise I'll dance very delicately, so we won't fall through your roof.

But of course, you can never be really sure.

The Elephant

My favorite, though, is the squirrel's letter to the ant. Or perhaps the squirrel's letter to the letter, or maybe his letter to his table, and the note the table writes back. Or perhaps the bear's heartfelt letter to all the animals, driven by his desperate desire for cake:



I could go on, but won't.

There are lots of cakes, lots of friendships, lots of meditations on life. There are lots of things that are impossible and illogical, but which I had no trouble accepting--after all, if you accept the premise that an ant can write a letter, why not a table? Ahlberg's small and precise drawings capture beautifully the pointful-ness that is embedded even in the shortest of these stories, and bring to life the characters and their letters most beautifully.

I first tried this book while browsing in a bookstore, without much time to ponder--it didn't grab me. But second time around was very different. I got a Cybils review copy in the mail (thank you, Boxer Books!), and read it peacefully in front of the fire--and found it utterly charming. The perfect audience, though, is a tad hard to pin down. It works beautifully as a book to read out loud to an empathetic older child (say five or six), who might well pick it up to be enjoyed independently in after years. I think this would also be a lovely book to read to an infant--peaceful for the reader, as well as the baby! But I think they have grown-up appeal as well, for the right reader--anyone who can understand why one might feel that writing a letter to one's table might be a nice thing to do....the reader who finds piquancy in just about all aspects of daily life.

Figure 4. Review by Taylor (2010) of *Letters to Anyone and Everyone* (Tullia, 2010).

When Taylor (2010) mentioned that "there are lots of things that are impossible and illogical, but which I had no trouble accepting -after all, if you accept the premise that an ant can write a letter, why not a table?" I thought this might be a book that would give the imagination space to play. I was also pleased that she said, "It works beautifully as a book to read out loud to an empathetic older child (say five or six)." This gave me hope regarding prosodic potential.

Next, I went to my favorite reviewers to find some reviews. I have a list of reviewers tagged who align with my literary views. When I'm looking for a book to educate the imagination, I go to reviewers who value the imaginative dimension of literature. For example Margaret Perry of Little Lamb Books prefaces her reviews with Sir

Phillip Sydney's quotation, "The best children's literature instructs through delighting and engaging a child's imagination." She tells her readers, "When selecting stories and books to review, I do not look for morals right sentiment, and black and white rigidity—rather I look to something that is delightful." I realize that my book reviews limit my choices because I generally don't read reviews written by authors who tend to take an instrumental approach to literature written for children.

The following is an abridged version of Perry's (2010) review of *Letters to*

Anyone and Everyone:

These stories concern the writing of letters (a practice I am always in favor of), and some are wonderfully charming and delightful. Others--like the "letter to a letter" are very odd, and require a great deal of stretching for the imagination. Not entirely to my taste, but I do think kids could really love them.

It celebrates friendship and whimsy; it represents simple pleasures and enduring virtues. And, like *The Little Prince*, he has created a world in which the strange and wonderful imagination of a child (for a child's imagination is *strange*) can run free.

I was pleased to see that "he created a world in which the strange and wonderful imagination of a child can run free." Because I know that children's literary tastes are different from adults, I was actually pleased that the book was "not entirely" to Perry's taste.

My next step in the review process was to go to my book networking site (goodreads.com) and see if any of my friends had ranked this book. Thirty-one goodreads members had ranked this book. It earned a ranking of four out of five stars. Unfortunately, none of my personal friends had reviewed it. Although, this fact did not help me decide to read the book, I was excited because I enjoy being the first of my friends to review a book. It feels as if found a hidden treasure.

I then went to the local library. Unfortunately, they did not have it in their circulation, but the children's librarian helped me request it through inter-library loan. The librarian was excited that I

was looking for Tellegan's book because she enjoyed his first book, *The Squirrel's Birthday, and Other Parties*.

Teachers in this study preferred resources for choosing books for read-alouds. Some teachers mentioned multiple resources that led to specific book choices. In this study, the following resources were most often used as tools for self-selected book selections:

- Nineteen percent (19%) of the books were selected because a peer recommended the specific text.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of the books were selected because a professional resource (text book, reference book, children's literature professor) recommended the specific text.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) of the books were selected because of the genre conventions they modeled.
- Fourteen percent (14%) of the books were picked because of the author.
- Nineteen percent (19%) of the books were found at the library.
- Ten percent (10%) of the books were selected because of how they connected to other content curriculum.
- Eighty-two percent (82%) of the books were selected because of previous personal and/or professional experiences with the book.

However, these more popular resources represented only a few of the resources available to teachers. Although Alice had access to a literature curriculum, few teachers had this resource.

Of the three participants, Dorothy (who was a new teacher) used the broadest array of resources to make her selections. Dorothy was also the only participant in the study who searched for new books during the current study despite her uncertainty about how to choose and her sense of feeling overwhelmed by the possibilities. Before taking the master's level children's literature course, Dorothy depended upon her peers for book recommendations. After gaining more pedagogical content knowledge, she chose "new experts" to help her make her decisions. She used Amazon.com as a search resource when selecting novels written in verse and other books. She referenced her literature text books and professional readings when looking for model genre texts. In addition to using literature textbooks as her new "experts," Dorothy used other professional resources. For example, when selecting books for her Native American literary unit, she used the recommendation from Seale and Slapin's (2005) *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience* and recommendations from www.oyate.com--the web site for a Native American organization working to see that Native American lives and histories are portrayed honestly. As she gained more experience selecting books for her read-alouds, Dorothy still used recommendations as a process for selection but her sources for the recommendations shifted.

Teachers discussed three distinct kinds of experiences that guided their book selections: personal experiences they had reading books as children and adults, experiences they had with specific books in their professional development, and experiences they had sharing books with students in previous read-alouds. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the books selected over the course of this study were selected because

the teachers had previously used them as read-alouds with perceived success. Hope said, “When I find a good book, I want to keep it.”

As veteran teachers, Hope and Alice often considered previous successful read-alouds a strong criterion for choosing books. In contrast, even though Dorothy as a second year teacher reported a successful read-aloud with *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, she chose not to reread it during the course of this study.

Veteran teachers’ dependence on past read-aloud experiences created a contradiction between what they said they valued and how they behaved. For instance, Hope’s past read-aloud experiences overruled her knowledge that students would not have background knowledge to fully comprehend a book. The first year she selected this book as a read-aloud, it was embedded in a Civil Rights study unit. She had also extensively analyzed this work as part of her master’s level children’s literature course. Although the Civil Rights study unit was eliminated from the stated curriculum, Hope still chose to read the book. She reported, “My kids now don’t have the same background, so it’s kind of hard to read this now. I try to fill in the background information as I go.” Her mesolevel experiences facilitated previous read-alouds with this text and her personal scholarly experiences with this book in her professional training (mesolevel) guided her decision to read this text despite the fact that students no longer had the necessary background knowledge for literary interpretation.

Another contradiction between teachers’ attachment to previous successful read-alouds and their stated philosophies was evident when Hope said, “I’ve only taught five years [in fourth grade], but I don’t want to get in a rut. I don’t want to be that teacher that

teaches the same book for 10 or 20 years in a row.” Yet, she did not choose a single new book for the read-alouds in her class during this current study.

Prior to this study I, like Alice and Hope, primarily used peer recommendations and experiences as my resources for selecting new books. Now I am aware that it is important for teachers to educate themselves about the wide variety of resources. Reviewing many resources enables a teacher to become more aware of which experts align with a teacher’s personal stance.

Summary of Implications

Because teachers’ purposeful decision-making is a vital component of successful teacher practice, conscious decisions can enable teachers to make planned changes and adjustments to both beliefs and practices. They can also become more aware of how their decisions impact students as learners. Using a book selection process leads to more purposeful decisions for the read-aloud. As demonstrated from the findings, the following process can help teachers select books for the read-aloud:

Step One: Select a Pragmatic Purpose for the Read-Aloud

Step Two: Evaluate the Purpose through Systems Thinking

Step Three: Evaluate the Purpose through Developmental Thinking

Step Four: Consider Various Dimensions of Literary Art

Step Five: Develop a Stance

Step Six: Use Various Resources for Selecting a Book

Directions for Future Research

Future research in the area of teachers’ book selection processes and the development of elementary literature curriculum should extend and expand on the

findings of this study to enhance elementary students' aesthetic experiences with literature and the development of elementary school teachers' literature pedagogical content knowledge. I would be interested in answering the following additional questions:

- How does having a book selection process impact elementary school teachers' read-alouds?
- How can elementary school teachers develop a clearer understanding of how instrumental and aesthetic uses of literature are related? Is there a way to help teachers understand the difference?
- How can systems theory be used to better understand the types of decisions teachers make in the classrooms?
- Is there a place for defining the rules for doing literature in the elementary classroom?
- What read-aloud practices enhance or inhibit literary experiences and appreciation?

Conclusion

The findings of this study and correlated implications helped me feel more equipped to choose books for read-alouds. The process of reviewing the literature and analyzing the data provided by the participants in this study helped me outline a process for selecting books. System thinking and purposeful planning were powerful tools in helping me examine my personal tastes and biases as I sought to expand students' experiences with books. My new knowledge of art orientations and various dimensions of literary art made me more metacognitive about my personal aesthetic judgments. I

look forward to putting this knowledge into practice as I intentionally select books for read-alouds.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO
Institutional Review Board (IRB)



June 24, 2009

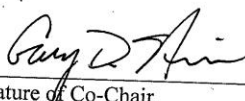
TO: Gary Heise
School of Sport and Exercise Science

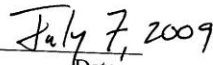
FROM: SPARC

RE: Exempt Review of *Literature Text Selection beyond Sentiment: a Descriptive Case Study of Elementary Teachers' Selection Processes*,
submitted by Stacy Loyd (Research Advisor: James Erekson)

The above proposal is being submitted to you for exemption review. When approved, return the proposal to Sherry May in SPARC.

I recommend approval.


Signature of Co-Chair


Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is exempt from further review.

IT IS THE ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE STUDENT OF THIS STATUS.

Comments: e-mailed - July 6, 2009 / Revisions ATTACHED

25 Kepner Hall ~ Campus Box #143
Greeley, Colorado 80639
Ph: 970.351.1907 ~ Fax: 970.351.1934

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH



Informed Consent for Participation in Research

University of Northern Colorado

Project Title: Literature Selection beyond Sentiment:

A Descriptive Case Study of Elementary Teachers' Selection Processes

Researcher: Stacy Loyd, Ed.D. Student: Reading Department

Phone Number: 970-690-3676

I am researching the elementary teachers' Literature text selection processes. If you grant permission and are selected as a research participant, I will ask you to do 8-12 recorded think-alouds of your Literature selection processes followed by recorded interviews as needed. Per the consent of the school principal and parents of the students in your class, I will observe and record read aloud events spring semester 2010 and conduct consecutive interviews to discuss your book selection processes for those read-alouds.

You will also be asked to keep a log of the texts you select for classroom literary events during 2009-2010 school year.

I plan to audio record the interviews and audio and video record the read aloud observations for later transcription and analysis. The audio files will be stored on a password protected computer stored on UNC campus and destroyed when the research report is completed. All paper documentation will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed when the research report is completed. To further help maintain confidentiality, your name will be replaced by a pseudonym of your choosing. All interview transcriptions will be provided for your review and edited according to your requests.

I foresee no risks to participants beyond those that are normally encountered in a literature classroom that is being observed and recorded and in professional conversation that is audio recorded. Risks will be minimized by my observer non-participant place

within the classroom, and your ability to communicate to me or to the course instructor any discomfort caused by my presence at any time.

Your contribution will enhance the opportunity for new understanding in the field of reading to be constructed. The significance of this study lies in its attempt to examine the intentionality and metacognitive processes teachers use when making Literature text selections within an aesthetic framework. This research promises to illuminate the possibilities for equipping teachers to evaluate and select books based on Literature analysis ensuring that elementary students' classroom literacy events are a designed literary experience. This study may provide the impetus for redirection attention to the aesthetic nature of Literature in the elementary classroom and enhancing literary content knowledge for elementary teachers.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907

Please feel free to phone me if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

Stacy Loyd

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C
STUDENT ASSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



Dear Fourth Grade Student,

As you know, your teacher has read some exciting books to you this year. I am a student at University of Northern Colorado researching teacher read alouds. With your permission, I would like to observe and record the read alouds during the coming semester. I will be researching your teacher and how she chooses books to read to you. Without you listening there wouldn't be a read aloud, so I need your permission to observe and record these read alouds.

I plan to audio and video record the read aloud observations and then I'll type up everything that happened to help me understand what makes a good read aloud. The recorded files will be stored on a password protected computer stored on UNC campus and destroyed when the research report is completed. All paper documentation will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed when the research report is completed. To further help maintain confidentiality, all names and locations will be replaced by pseudonyms.

I don't think the read alouds will change except that I'll be there to enjoy them too and I'll be recording them. If my being there or recording bothers you at any time please tell me, your parents, or your teacher and I will stop.

If you say yes, I will be able to help future teachers do a good job of picking books to read to their students. But remember, this is your classroom and if you don't want me visiting and recording during your read alouds your decision will be respected.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

Stacy Loyd

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM



Dear Third Grade Parents,

As you know your students have been experiencing some exciting literary events this year. I am a doctoral student at University of Northern Colorado researching teacher read-alouds. With your permission, I would like to observe and record the read-alouds during the coming semester. Although my research centers on how the teacher chooses books for the read-aloud, the interactive nature of the read-aloud requires me to get your permission to video and audio record these special read-alouds.

I plan to audio and video record the read-aloud observations for later transcription and analysis. The recorded files will be stored on a password protected computer stored on UNC campus and destroyed when the research report is completed. All paper documentation will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed when the research report is completed. To further help maintain confidentiality, all names and locations will be replaced by pseudonyms.

I foresee no risks to participants beyond those that are normally encountered in a literature classroom that is being observed and recorded. Risks will be minimized by my observer non-participant place within the classroom, and your ability to communicate to me or to the Mrs. Schwolert_ any discomfort caused by my presence at any time.

Your consent will enhance the opportunity for new understanding in the field of reading to be constructed. This research promises to illuminate the possibilities for equipping teachers to evaluate and select books for more artistic read-aloud experiences.

Consent is voluntary. You may withdraw consent at any time. Your decision will be respected. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would consent to this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907

Please feel free to phone me if you have any questions or concerns about this research and please retain one copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

Stacy Loyd

Child's Name _____

Parent's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date