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Children and literature: an investigation of the characteristics of literature that appeal to children

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University of Wollongong

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CHILDREN AND LITERATURE

An Investigation of the Characteristics of Literature that Appeal to Children.

A Major Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

MASTER OF STUDIES IN EDUCATION

from

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by Narene Burrow B.Ed.

Centre for Studies in Literacy
1988
Dedicated to

my family

with love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the children of year 3 who were my co-researchers in this study.

To the many colleagues and friends who have helped in this study I am also grateful: To Peter for his invaluable direction and support; to Jan and Brian for their guidance and assistance; to Leeanne and Mandy for their help with data; to Paul for his support and encouragement; to my fellow university students for their assistance in keeping me on the right path; and last because most important, to my family for their endless patience and assistance throughout this time consuming study and report writing.
The day I read a book
I can't remember when
But one of these days
I'm gonna do it again.

Jimmy Durante
(in Whitehead. 1977, p.xvi)
ABSTRACT

Literature is a part of children's heritage and invaluable for enjoyment and learning.

This study investigated the characteristics of literature that appealed to children in year 3 at one school, as an aid to introducing them to further literary reading.

Using a Naturalistic Research Paradigm involving participant observation, interview, discussion and written response, these children were employed as co-researchers. They were found to be very vocal about their reading preferences and an abundance of appropriate data was collected.

Books were found to have external as well as internal appeal, with presentation being a major factor in choice of an unfamiliar book. Peer and adult recommendation also influenced book choice as well as interest topics and previous enjoyment of similar books.

The children demanded action, challenging vocabulary with humour and happy endings in the books they selected. Many other factors also influenced enjoyment in reading, combining to give these children a love of literature and an eagerness to pursue their reading.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"Exploring children's books, discovering literature, and presenting it to young readers - these are fascinating tasks for adults today" (Glazer and Williams, 1979, p.xi). This investigator has been privileged to undertake such tasks in Primary Schools, although at times with doubtful success.

Books which were felt exciting and of value often received little acknowledgement from children. How could children be directed successfully to Literature? "Somehow we have to bring children to an understanding of all this potential that lies in literature" (Chambers, 1973, p.25).

The "tacit knowledge" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982) of the investigator (her feelings about the situation which Lincoln and Guba state is meaningful) suggested that it was possible to find what appealed to children in other books and use these factors as an introduction to further quality reading.

1.1 Study Focus

A question was formulated for study which it was felt would be of great value within the area of children's literature, having far reaching implications within homes, schools, libraries, and indeed as far as book authorship, publication and sales — "What were
the characteristics of literature that appealed to children"? This involved a search for what it was with which children engaged in their encounters with literature. Literature, for the purposes of this study being defined as books which children could read and understand that were considered to have quality of language, thought and action (based on Huck, 1979).

"There are many kinds and variety in literature for the young ..." (Stewig, 1980, p. 3), so due to physical limitations it was found necessary to restrict the area as did Winch (cited in Hanzl, 1988, p. 3) to "fictional and poetic writing, including traditional literature such as myth and legend and fairy tale and exclude the area of factual writing, important though it is".

1.2 **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to search for common factors which appealed to children in the literature they were reading.

1.3 **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of the study were:

* to investigate several aspects of children's reactions to literature
  - the elements that attract children to books
  - the elements children like in books
  - the elements children do not like in books;
to compile these factors into a comprehensive list revealing common characteristics that appeal to these children:
* to determine why so many adult selected books were either not read or not enjoyed by these children;
* to share findings through report and discussion to aid in further adult understanding of children's personal reading;
* to provide suggestions for adults for introducing literature to children.

1.4 Theoretical Basis of the Study

Literature is important for children. "'real literature' adds to the quality of one's life; it arouses feelings, stimulates thought and develops insights" (Hornsby, 1986, p.8). To introduce children to literature what appeals to them must be considered. "Children are the ultimate critics of what they read, and their preferences should be considered when evaluating and selecting books to share with them" (Norton, 1983, p.97). This study aimed to find, through naturalistic investigation, the features of literature which appealed to a group of children.

Naturalistic inquiry methods were preferred as the way in which to "get into children's heads" with the researcher available to query and observe them as they used books within their natural environment, the
classroom.

This classroom environment echoed the theoretical stance of the investigator, involving a wholistic approach to learning where children learnt in as barrier free an environment as possible, through active participation in language as a whole, including literature. Books were dealt with as a whole, and not broken into fragmented units, although elements of books were discussed. Naturalistic inquiry became a part of this environment.

Methods in a Naturalistic Paradigm involved no manipulation on the part of the inquirer and no prior restrictions imposed on the outcomes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The alternative, a scientific or "rationalistic paradigm" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982), required a more contrived setting, with more control, more discipline and freedom from bias, and was not applicable to this study.

Within the Naturalistic Paradigm descriptive research involving participant observation was undertaken. To ensure the trustworthiness of data, collection was made through several methods: observation; interview and discussion; and written response and records (as suggested by Cohen and Manion, 1985, and Walker, 1985).
1.5 **Setting**

Due to limitations of time and physical ability, the study was confined to year 3 at one school. Most activities took place within the school grounds, in the classroom, library and other suitable areas near the classroom, although the children did undertake reading and some written response at home.

1.6 **Participants**

The year 3 used in the study varied from avid readers to children still mastering reading. All of these children, however, appeared to gain enjoyment from a variety of books, being read to in class, undertaking regular sustained silent reading and completing literature activities.

The sixty children in year 3 were included for some written response, the investigator's class of thirty one children was used for observation and discussion, and for more intensive work (interview, intensive discussion and peer debriefing) a group of six children was employed.

1.7 **Conclusion**

This study investigating what appealed to children in literature involved children within the classroom discussing their own reading, using naturalistic data collected through observation, oral and written response.
The following chapters include a review of literature related to the study, a description of the methodology, and the results of the study undertaken. The final chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the study and conclusions and recommendations which can be drawn from these.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

What [the child] does need are the right books at the right time so that he/she may find in literature a true point of balance in an often disordered life. It is for us as parents or teachers, librarians or publishers, to recognize this need and to know how best, how most imaginatively to fulfill it.


Literature pertaining to this study was reviewed in three areas.

* Children's Literature, including Literature in the classroom;

* Early Studies in Children's Literature;

* Naturalistic Research Paradigms (Chapter 3).

This review of literature continued throughout the study.

2.2 Children's Literature

2.2.1 Choosing Books for Children

Support for earlier observations which instigated this study, where many adult chosen books were rejected, came from Huck (1979), "Occasionally one hears the criticism that the award books are not popular with children. This is true of some of them ..." (Huck, 1979, p.18) and Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977).

Books are written for children, but adults buy them. Editors decide on manuscripts, reviewers
make judgements, teachers and librarians exhibit books, recommend them, and otherwise guide children's reading. Parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts select a choice volume for a favourite child. But how can adults know what book a child is going to enjoy? ... A book may be judged a juvenile classic by experts in children's literature, but [the child] can turn it down with stony indifference which leaves adults baffled and grieved. Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.18.

Hollindale (1974) also referred to "... the book which is admired and highly praised by adults but does not arouse in most children the kind of enthusiasm it is held to deserve" (Hollindale, 1974, p.153).

Whitehead (1977) reported a "discrepancy between adult assessments of what is suitable for children and the opinions of the children themselves" (Whitehead, 1977, p.13).

Whilst supporting the premise upon which this study is based the literature failed to suggest suitable methods for selection of books for individual children. This study aims to detail such methods.

2.2.2 Appeal of Books for Children

Smith (cited in Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.30) states that "a child's choice in his reading will always depend on his elders ... Mistaken ideas among adults about what books a child likes or should like, must prevent the very object they intend, a love of books and reading." Children can be discouraged or become disinterested when forced into attempting books
which have no appeal for them.

What a great responsibility adults have, to provide for children a rich choice of literature. "Parents, teachers, and librarians as well as authors, illustrators, and publishers are potential judges of books for children" (Harris, cited in Haviland, 1973, p.400). Stewig (1980, p.9) shows the teacher as "a selector", "a presenter" and "a recommender" of books.

To successfully present books adults need to understand what it is within books which attracts the children with whom they are in contact and they need to know what elements in books help these children to appreciation and enjoyment of books - the focus of this study.

2.2.3 What Should be Recommended

It became obvious from the readings that "... quality of literature alone ... does not ensure acceptance by a particular child" (Glazer, 1979, p.43).

How, then, could adults aid children in their choice of reading material? How could they know which books to recommend? Huck asks, " from the over forty thousand books now available for boys and girls ... how can we distinguish the trees from the forest?" (Huck, 1979, p.4).

"... We would wish every child to experience to
his or her full capacity the enjoyment, and the broadening of horizons, which can be derived from literature" (Townsend, cited in Haviland. 1973, p.100).

Children need contact with literature. It "takes children by the hand and leads them into language of the best kind" (Winch cited in Hanzl. 1988, p.3). It "stirs young emotions" (Winch cited in Hanzl, 1988, p.9), "provides an imagined world in which social, ethical, moral and spiritual values can develop" (Hanzl, 1988, p.10) and provides enjoyment in the "stretching of the imagination ..." (Hanzl, 1988, p.12). Literature "admits us to experiences other than our own" (C.S.Lewis cited in Chambers. 1977, p.24), it is "a metaphor for living" (Saxby, cited in Hanzl, 1988, p.8).

Children need to be encouraged to this literature, which has such potential value for learning, understanding and enjoyment. This study aimed to provide suggestions for accomplishing this.

2.2.4 Introducing Literature to Children

In investigating in this study what appealed to children in books there was no suggestion that the books presented should be restricted to only those which fitted these requirements, but that children's preferences be considered in choosing and presenting
books to them.

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977, pp.20,21) commented that adults "should not feel restricted to children's immediate interests in choosing books ... teachers, parents and librarians should keep children exploring both the best of the old books and the most promising of the new." Glazer and Williams (1979, p.34) added that "the likes and dislikes of children do not determine the quality of literature ... Books must be judged as literature on their own merits, and children should be given excellent literature."

Writers on Children's Literature (Chambers, 1973; Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977; Norton, 1983) agreed that the common child desired characteristics of books could be searched for in "good literature" and these books then presented to the children to extend their reading interests. "Literature can both develop and extend children's interests" (Huck, 1979, p.27), so working from "the known to the unknown" (Chambers, 1973, p.34) "bridges" (Chambers, 1973, p.130) could be built to further reading.

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) suggested "... discover some common elements in the books he enjoys" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.31) and Chambers (1973) suggested to - "find common ground, a point of departure for the child into the unfamiliar" (Chambers,
1973, p.34).

"... Literary reading begins where the reader is and goes on from there" (Chambers, 1985, p.16). Adults must find where the reader is, what it is that appeals to him/her in what he/she is reading (the purpose of this study, and something which was not available in the relevant literature), and use this as a starting point for introduction to further reading.

In the words of Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977, p.18) "through this gradual induction into better and better literature, children can catch the theme and savour the beauty or the subtle humor or the meaning that eluded them at first".

2.3 Early Studies in Children's Literature

Early studies provided suggestions for characteristics that children preferred in books.

Friedlaender (1942, cited in Whitehead et al, 1977, p.209) reported that "... the most popular books are ones which offer children fantasies corresponding to those characteristics of their own ... life and in the least disguised manner". Terman and Lima (1925, cited in Whitehead, 1977, p.207) stated that "there are certain elements in Literature that children always desire, the first is action; the second is human interest; and the third is imaginative appeal".

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1977) had their theories
about children's preferences: "No genre so satisfies the child's boundless imagination as does fantasy ... children need also the therapy of laughter ... one of the most enticing baits to reading are animal stories ..." (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.32).

Huck (1979) suggested that "Humour, make-believe, suspense, and action are the qualities that children enjoy most in their reading" (Huck, 1979, p.23).

Literature provided only these broad characteristics and genres that children preferred. Within this study it was planned to provide specific favoured characteristics of books to extend this information.

2.4 Conclusion

From their experiences in book discussion, and in working with children, Chambers and his associates (Chambers, 1973, 1985) gave warning "... we should examine carefully how we arrive at our decisions about the books we bring to children" (Chambers, 1985, p.31).

Haviland, however, added, "Is it not the adults responsibility to make it possible for the child to find and enjoy the best? Shall we not always be right in stressing that children know what they like but not all they are capable of liking?" (Haviland, 1973, p.99).
Children need good literature and it is the responsibility of caring adults to provide access to and encourage them to association with good literature.

There must then be a starting point for introduction to this literature. The qualities which were known to appeal to children in other books (the purpose of this study), found in good literature, could be the necessary "bridge" (Chambers, 1973, p.13) to enjoyment of literature.

"Literary reading is the single most important cultural and educational activity we all—adults and children—engage in" (Chambers, 1985, p.16).

This study intended to provide suggestions to help children to further enjoyment of literature, their valuable "birthright" (Chambers, 1985, p.10).
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This study involved the preferences and opinions of year 3 children in one school. Using a naturalistic paradigm, methods were chosen to suit the setting, the subjects, the objectives of the study and the theoretical beliefs of the investigator.

Data was collected through participant observation, interview, discussion and written response, using notetaking procedures and audio taping.

3.2 Rationale for Using Naturalistic Research Paradigm

The research paradigm should be "judged by degree of fit to the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.6). This study involved children's ideas, opinions and preferences in their "real world" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.14), suiting well the Naturalistic Paradigm.

"For human/behavioural inquiry, the naturalistic assumptions provide a better fit to the phenomena being studied than does the rationalistic" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.10).

The five axioms of Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.11) fitted the study in which this
investigator engaged:

**TABLE 1**

**Naturalistic Inquiry**

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<th>Axioms</th>
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<td>The assumption of multiple realities, dealing with constructions that exist solely in the minds of people</td>
<td>The likes and dislikes of these children regarding books existed solely in their minds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assumption of investigator-respondent interaction, these inevitably influence one another</td>
<td>Within the participant observation in this study this interaction was inevitable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assumption of non-generalizability, human behaviour is time and content bound.</td>
<td>This study was of these particular children at this time and in this setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assumption of multiple shaping - an action may be understood in terms of multiple interacting forces that shape it and are in turn shaped by it.</td>
<td>These children's actions and opinions were influenced by their peers, who were in turn influenced by them. Their own reading and adult contact also influenced them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The assumption of value boundedness - all of us exist in a value context, think in terms of concepts that are in part value determined, use methodologies that are rooted in values and do our research in situations that are also value rooted.</td>
<td>The teacher/participant observer had her own values which played a part in this study. This necessitated the use of credibility measures (detailed on page 23) to ensure that data was reliable.</td>
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Based on Lincoln and Guba, 1982,p.17.

"A key decision in any research project is the
selection of methods" (Walker, 1985, p.46). Decision in this area came from the situation and the task to be undertaken. It was necessary to find out within the classroom and class time what factors appealed to these children in books. Observation with clarification by asking (orally or in writing) or asking and reinforcing this with observation, fitted both the task and the setting, and could be undertaken within normal classroom routine.

"The naturalistic paradigm involves ethnographic or phenomenological investigation" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.2). Cohen and Manion state that Ethnographic Research Methodology fits naturally to the kind of action found in schools and classrooms (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.36). Ethnography involves the researcher in recording data collected from observations during the course of the study and analysing data as it is collected to focus further data collection.

Within a naturalistic paradigm the investigator took on the roll of ethnographer, using an ongoing observational approach to collect and record all appropriate data.

The data collected in this study was not contrived, but fitted naturally with the normal action taking place within the classroom.
3.3 Subjects of the Study

The subjects used in the study were year 3 students from one school, aged between 8 and 10 years, living on the outskirts of the Wollongong City area.

They came from varied backgrounds, some working class, some unemployed, some professional families. A percentage of the children were first or second generation Australians, a few had come to Australia recently, others were from established Australian families. A small percentage were from single parent families, or within the family of a second marriage.

These children had access to a large and well equipped school library, an extensive class library, and a town library of which they were all members. Many also were encouraged to read at home, and all had books of some sort at home. They also had access to the school bookclub, from which many bought regularly.

In the two year 3 classes, both of which were used for some early scene setting written investigation, there were sixty one children. Thirty one of these children were in the class of the investigator, and it was these children who were used in observation and discussion. Of these thirty one children, six were selected for more intensive work.

For this group of six it was attempted to have a balance of personalities, backgrounds and interests.
These children were chosen because of ability to communicate orally and in writing, and willingness to participate. They were:

* John, aged 9, interested in football, up till a few months ago admitted that he did not read books.
* Tim, aged 8, interested in football, became immersed in whatever he was reading, and was very vocal about preferences.
* Jane, aged 9, of Dutch decent, interested in dance, quietly confident, tried hard to work through whatever task was given.
* Sue, aged 8, interested in soft toys, very shy, but a confident reader with a lot to contribute if given the opportunity.
* Cara, aged 9, Polish background, very competitive in schoolwork, read a lot, but found it difficult at first to join in discussion.
* Fiona, aged 8, main interest reading, Maltese background, read a great deal and was encouraged by her parents. She was often so enthusiastic she found it hard to let others have a turn.

Tim, unfortunately, was unable to take part in some of the study, due to a stay in hospital followed by a family holiday. However, in the short time he did participate, he contributed a great deal.

These children participated so willingly in the
small group work that it was difficult to stop.

3.4 Procedure

This study began when concern was first felt about children's reading many years ago. However, the compulsion to formulate a question on a specific problem for intensive study in March, 1988, caused closer consideration of this area.

The area of interest had been selected and a question was formulated within this framework to reduce the project to manageable proportions. The question became: "What were the characteristics of literature that appealed to children in Year 3 at one school". The setting was chosen from necessity, the school and class where the investigator was working.

Following question formulation the principal was approached for permission to work within this setting. His support and encouragement provided the incentive needed to begin the study.

Reading of appropriate literature helped with decisions about the extent and range of information required to reach research objectives, and provided a balanced framework within which to operate.

Choice of methods followed naturally from the classroom setting and the information required. Observation, interview, discussion and written responses were all a part of classroom procedure, and
would provide the desired data.

The data collected was regularly analysed to provide information to investigate in further encounters.

A final data analysis and interpretation concluded the study.

3.4.1 Data Gathering

Collection of data took about 12 weeks of intensive work. This began with the trialling of the first interview on a randomly selected group of six children. Having set the scene with this, intensive observation and recording of children's reading and elements of books which they appeared to enjoy was begun. Where possible the audio tape was used to help fill out written records.

Starting with general observations of children, their likes and dislikes, their use of class reading material, the library, books brought from home, children's preferences and interests were observed to gain an overall picture. As well there were general book discussions with the whole class and during group work where children recommended and discussed self chosen books with their class mates. Children also wrote about their favourite books in class and on home assignments.

This general observation, discussion and written
work provided points on which to focus and investigate further and observations changed from general to focused, with planned discussions of books read by the class such as "The BFG" by Roald Dahl (Appendix 1).

As the data received was analysed, observations, questions and written activities became more specific to investigate further points raised. "The real problem may not emerge with any clarity until the data appear and some preliminary interpretation is made" (Walker, 1985, p.45).

Throughout the study class group work focusing on literature and sharing continued and this became a good source also of what children wanted in a book.

3.4.2 Small Group

As observations became more focused the small group was selected, and used as a withdrawal group when the class was with another teacher. This group met about ten times over a four week period.

These children undertook an individual interview, general discussion of book likes and dislikes, specific book discussion, recommendation and questioning of each other as a form of peer debriefing where they had to justify opinions and choices to others in the group. They then participated in a final interview to tie together previous data.

Following an analysis of the data gathered a brief
report of results was discussed with the class, and they were asked to comment on this as a check on interpretation of results.

3.5 Credibility

As this study proceeded it was necessary to ensure that data collected was credible within this situation and with these respondents. This was tackled throughout the study as a part of the overall investigation.

3.5.1 Maintaining Credibility

Observation would provide much information about these children's reading preferences. Cohen and Manion (1985) warn that "exclusive reliance on one method ... may bias or distort the researcher's picture ..." (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.254) and "... the single method approach yields only limited and sometimes misleading data" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.260).

---

![Diagram](image.png)

**Fig. 1** Triangulation
Interview, questioning and discussion became a way of cross checking observation data (Fig. 1). Doubts about the dependability of such subjective methods and the data collected were allayed by Walker, "What might at first sight appear to be not very rigorous methods such as the open interview and unstructured observation, became more powerful when used in conjunction with each other" (Walker, 1985, p. 83).

Children's records of reading interests at home and at school, plus a variety of written book responses assisted also in reinforcing data. These many methods were mixed and used as appropriate to the time, as Faulkner states there is an "advantage to moving sequentially across all three" (Faulkner, 1982 in Walker, 1985, p. 81). "... In many projects the most significant findings have emerged from points at which different methods have complemented each other" (Walker, 1985, p. 79).

The use of this multimethod approach or triangulation (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p. 254) ensured the trustworthiness of the data collected.

3.5.2 **Respondent Validation**

A brief and simple analysis of the results of the study was presented to the subjects of the research, the children, and their reactions to these recorded. Thus "respondent validation" (Cohen and Manion, 1985,
p.263) was employed to further check the accuracy of findings.

```
interview
observation  written response
↓  ↓
data analysis
↓
report to children
↓
children's responses
-respondent validation
↓
credible results
```

Fig. 2 Respondent Validation

"In view of the apparently subjective nature of much qualitative interpretation, validation is achieved when others, particularly the subjects of the research, recognize its authenticity" (McCormick and James cited in Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.263).

3.5.3 Peer Debriefing

Justifying one's actions to one's peers is a searching and trying experience. Within this study a "peer debriefing" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.284) session such as this was undertaken by the researcher with other knowledgeable adults.

At this time the methodology undertaken was
scrutinized thoroughly as far as choice, suitability, implementation and data collection, with the investigator being required to defend all that was done.

Analysis of results and conclusions drawn from these had to be traced back through the data as proof of truth of statement, ensuring the honesty of the researcher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDY</th>
<th>PEER CHECKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Clearly stated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Scrutinized for suitability!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Is it reliable?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Traced back through data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>Is this what the data says?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3 The Investigator's Peer Debriefing

This process was invaluable for the investigator as she was held accountable for all decisions and actions. In this way "dependability and confirmability through the audit process ..." (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.17) was established within this study.
3.6 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection took place within the classroom under normal classroom conditions. Methods of collection were selected which suited these conditions.

3.6.1 Participant Observation

"... Most studies in a natural setting are unstructured participant observation studies..." (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.123). As a participant observer one can "observe, interview, converse, search documents, ... or simply 'hang out'" (Walker, 1985, p.83) - all of which were employed in this investigation, and which were already a part of general classroom activities.

"This form of research [participant observation] is eminently suitable to many of the problems that the educational investigator faces" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.122).

"The type of observation undertaken by the researcher is associated with the type of setting in which the research takes place" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.123). Within the setting of the classroom there was no interruption to class routine as the teacher/observer took on the role of teacher/investigator/observer, taking notes at times to record and analyze points.

Children at first queried the more detailed
recording of their conversations, but soon became accustomed to the extra note taking - evidenced by comments such as, "Did you get that?" and "Wait a minute, she hasn't finished yet."

As a participant observer the investigator encountered the complexity of the task of not only engaging in, but observing activities. She had to keep herself aware to tune in to appropriate actions and comments and train herself to notice even trivial things which may have had bearing on the topic.

Recording was time consuming but most important to observations as analysis would rely heavily on this information. Observation recording needed to be detailed so where possible the audio tape was used as a backup to notes to ensure that important points were not passed over in the stress of the moment.

Participant observation had its advantages and disadvantages within the classroom and these are summarized below and expanded within these notes.
TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>simple to administer over long periods</td>
<td>difficult to be fully objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easy to isolate salient points</td>
<td>need for a back-up system such as note book or tape recorder which was time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>method does not interfere with teaching procedure</td>
<td>easy to pass over things in time of stress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Through early experiences with participant observation, it was discovered that observation, recording and analysis led to further observation, recording and analysis in a continuous cycle (See Fig.4). Data needed to be reviewed briefly as it was collected to be aware of new questions to follow up (Spradley, 1980, p.34). "Research is a combination of both experience and reasoning" (Cohen and Manion. 1985, p.5).
Fig. 4  Participant Observation Cycle

Adapted from Kemmis, 1982, p. 11
Observations proceeded from overviews of the situation (descriptive observation) to more focused observations, narrowing the scope of what was being looked for, to more carefully planned observations with specific questions in mind (Spradley, 1980, p.128 - see Fig.5) for example - Do illustrations influence book enjoyment? Does the size of print matter? General descriptive observations however also continued until the end of the study.

Children were observed choosing books, reading, discussing and sharing their reading, recommending books to others on a one to one, group and class basis, and recording their likes and dislikes in literature.

Participant observation was a very valuable part of classroom teaching, albeit a very time consuming one.
3.6.2 Oral Responses

To add to the data collected from observations and follow up some of the ideas suggested, interview and discussion were undertaken.

3.6.2.1 Initial Interview

The aim of the initial interview was to set the scene for children and the investigator, and to establish interest in the area of book discussion. "... to set signposts, to indicate a tone, to set going a line of thought and analysis" (Walker, 1985, p.102). Although time consuming and limiting the number of children questioned, the interview allowed for questions to be changed or explained, added to or altered in sequence, more information sought or answers queried. "The interview is an arena of negotiation between the researcher and the subject" (Walker, 1985, p.109). Six children were used as informants, and asked to provide information about their reading. Questions were formulated to lead to the data required for a background to further observation, discussion and interview in this area. Variety of questions and type of answers was aimed at as well as allowing children to write and draw an answer (see Appendix 2).

An initial concern in interview was whether children of this age could vocalize their feelings as "the interview relies on the fact that people are able
to offer accounts of their behaviour, practice and actions..." (Walker, 1985, p.90). Huck's opinion was reassuring, "children have decided reading interests and in many instances they can articulate them" (Huck, 1979, p.27).

There was also concern as to whether they would hold back in answering, or answer to please, "... the difficulty of obtaining trustworthy information from the children's own statements..." (Whitehead, 1977, p.2) - because of this it was decided to interview as part of relaxed conversation with the child, using the child as co-researcher.

3.6.2.2 Conducting the Interviews

To establish an atmosphere of co-operation and rapport, each interview began with an explanation of the purpose and of recording procedures.

It was necessary to back up written records with a tape, not only to provide aspects of personality and enthusiasm, but information to supplement time restricted written records. Children were acclimatized to the tape recorder, however scribing of their answers proved a distraction, so it was kept to a minimum. This written record was important, however, for further probes and questioning as well as for markers in interpretation of the tape. "Note taking draws the researcher into interpretation early in the study"
The interview was first trialled with six children of varied ability and interests from year 3, chosen only because they were available at the time.

The initial study interview was pursued with the six children chosen for intensive work in the manner described above. These interviews were analysed for points to be investigated further in later discussion, interview and observation in the classroom and to provide ideas for the following investigation (see Appendix 3).

Walker summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of interview as discussed above, and listed in Table 3 on the following page.

The interview was found to be an appropriate method as queries could be followed up immediately, and children seemed more at ease in the situation. As Tuckman states, it provides "access to what is inside a person's head. [it] makes it possible to measure what a person knows ... what a person likes or dislikes ... and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher in direct contact with child</td>
<td>time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child familiar, therefore more at ease</td>
<td>may be carried out with some form of recording with attendant disadvantages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher can get to the root of problems</td>
<td>frequently difficult to get younger children to explain their thoughts and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher able to seek information he/she wants directly and not through a realm of superfluous information</td>
<td>can work in lesson time or outside lesson time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can follow up problems immediately they arise and get information while minds are still fresh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Walker, 1985, pp.56.57

3.6.2.3 Book Discussions

"Book discussions can help you to gain insight into children's values and can permit you to observe children's responses" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.530).

The children in this class were involved in discussion of their own reading. This discussion, as with observation, started as general book discussion, then became more focused, discussing points raised, and eventually specific questions were discussed. This
process at times took several lessons, at others occurred in one lesson.

Free flowing discussion, general class questioning and discussion about choice of books, preferences and reasons, took place as a class group, or smaller groups used for language work. Some topics discussed are listed in Appendix 4. Many points for discussion came from previous discussion, interview and observation (Appendix 5). Note taking and where possible the audio tape were used during discussion (details in section on interview) for recording of appropriate data.

Discussion proved an invaluable part of this study, providing a vast amount of data.

Direct questioning helped to find answers to key questions (see Appendix 6) and led to further discussion as children expanded answers. The investigator tried not to intervene in answers, but saw her task as providing further questions to extend or clarify answers given. Children's questioning of each other during book sharing time (a daily event) also proved enlightening as they asked about things that they were concerned about in books.

Brainstorming sessions where children suggested characteristics that appealed or did not in books also helped to provide appropriate information. Children shared ideas here which lead others to think further
about things not yet considered (Appendix 7).

Individual book conferences with the class teacher, discussing various aspects of books read (Appendix 8) were a part of class language work and provided opportunity to question children specifically about their reading.

An attempt to counteract concern with the trustworthiness of children's own statements (answering to please, or holding back) was made with peer debriefing later in the study using the small group and class language groups. Here the child was required to justify his/her statements through answers to peer questions.

The small group of six selected children met regularly to share and discuss books they had read, particularly what appealed to them in these books.

They also questioned each other about the comments made and books shared in these sessions, although time was always limited. On occasions the investigator brought to this group summaries of class discussions to check interpretation with them (Appendix 9).

Work with this small group was invaluable for data collection and checking, and it was these children who helped keep the focus on the task at hand.

3.6.2.4 Final Interview

The aim of this follow up interview was to explore
in greater depth the factors which appealed to children
in the books they read.

The format for this interview came from
discoveries during the study, and appropriate questions
were selected and modified from Chambers (1985,
pp.170-173). In interviewing individual children an
attempt was made to delve further into aspects of their
reading.

Basic questions were planned for this interview
(see Appendix 10), but these were adapted, rephrased,
order changed or whatever was necessary to suit the
child and the task.

Each child brought a book to the interview which
he/she wanted to discuss and questions asked were
related to this. This interview was very informal and
was a way of completing work with this group.

3.6.2.5 Audio Taping

Using a National Panasonic Cassette Player where
possible written notes were backed up in interview,
discussion and other observational work.

The children were quite used to the presence of a
tape recorder, and it successfully monitored all
conversation (plus a lot of background noise),
providing a great deal of material with little effort.

The tape could be left with a group if the
investigator was called away, and helped in recording
aspects of personality and enthusiasm as well as activities.

Three tapes were used, providing masses of material. These tapes needed to be transcribed, or summarized, which was very time consuming and it was necessary to be selective about notes taken, using sketchy observation notes as a reference.

The tape, however, was invaluable for adding detail to observations.

3.6.3 Written Response and Records.

"For some children, the written response may be the fullest expression of their responses to literature" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.552).

Children's written responses, where more time was available to consider and sort out ideas provided much varied and helpful data. These children undertook written book activities during class language groups, following silent reading time, as a whole class focus, and at home. Activities such as those listed in Appendix 11 involving responses to their own reading, a particular book, likes and dislikes were attempted.

Written records such as children's home reading records (Appendix 12), library records and children's own book rating cards (Appendix 13) were also used to establish background and as a reference for interpretation of data, although they were used
carefully as Chambers cautions that "what was taken was not necessarily read" (Chambers, 1973, p.89).

Children generally enjoyed the written responses, and data gained from these combined with and reinforced that gained from other observation work to provide an overall picture of the elements these children preferred in books.

The variety of methods used (see Figure 6) became an accepted part of classroom activity. Children participated willingly and at times encouraged the tiring investigator with their enthusiasm.

Methods were not undertaken in any order, but the investigator moved from one to the other, watching, listening, asking and collecting whatever data was available to become intimately familiar with children's preferences of elements in books.

Throughout this study children were used as co-researchers, investigating the question, various books and information which came up as the study progressed.
Fig. 6 Data Gathering Procedure
3.7 Constraints of the Methodology

3.7.1 Generalizability

Lincoln and Guba state that the "naturalist assumes that generalizations are not possible" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.8). Methods such as interviews, observations and written records, as in this methodology, "that yield qualitative data" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.15) result in "insights and information about the context in which they were collected but it is dubious whether they would apply elsewhere ..." (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.15).

Although the findings of this study may not be generalizable over a wider community, they will still have value as a reference guide for those in the position of recommending books to children. This study should encourage people to think more deeply about why they feel certain books are suitable for children, particularly to the extent of considering what appeals to the children in question.

This should lead to more success in encouraging children to read good literature.

3.7.2 Recording

Within participant observation the distraction of taking part in the activity which was being observed at times prevented the recording of points which may have had bearing on the topic. "The recording of
observations is a frequent cause of concern ..." (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.126).

It was not always possible to use the tape as a backup, as observations took place throughout the whole school day, five days a week. When the tape was used, however, it was still necessary to take notes to keep alert to points which needed clarifying then and there.

Transcribing from the tape, when tackled, was a forbidding task and it was necessary to summarize, being selective about information noted, interpreting subjectively from the investigator's own experience.

3.7.3 Subjectivity

It was not possible to be objective within the study. The investigator's feelings, opinions, knowledge of the children continually coloured the information received from them. At first it was attempted to keep all data external to the investigator, but this was not possible, and the queries, and background of the investigator became an important part of the study providing questions to pursue and helping to clarify data. This was qualitative research in a natural setting where Lincoln and Guba suggest to "be aware of value influences, even if you know you can't control them all" (Lincoln and Guba, 1982, p.10). The use of credibility measures (see p.23) ensured that data
collection was reliable and the influence of subjectivity was minimal.

3.7.4 **Children's Responses**

Oral and written responses revealed only what the children wished to tell. "both the interviewer and the respondent are bound to hold back part of what it is in their power to state" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.295) and "children are likely to write down what is expected of them ..." (Whitehead, 1977, p.2).

Children, however, seemed very open in their statements, and cross checking through questioning and observation, as well as peer debriefing ensured truth of statement.

3.7.5 **Interpretation of Data**

"What does one do with the mass of recorded data?" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.126). Data yielded from such unstructured responses (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.300) was difficult to interpret and required much 'soul searching' and peer discussion for the investigator.

In spite of these constraints, the study was very comprehensive, and a great deal could be gained from analysis of the data.

3.8 **Data Analysis**

"A book for children, however excellent in style, integrity and accuracy, is a failure if it lacks the elusive quality of personality which makes it
acceptable to its audience ... A test of the good children's book ... is that it receives the commendation of discriminating readers" (Chambers, 1969, p.66).

This study searched for what in children's books appealed to these year 3 children, for what made books acceptable to them. The enthusiasm and responses of these discriminating readers was surprising, as Stott states, "they [children] can often respond at a higher level then many people expect ..." (Stott cited in Chambers, 1973, p.89).

General observations were summed up in a statement by Glazer and Williams (1979), "no one can say with certainty what a child will like (Glazer and Williams, 1979, p.34) and Chambers (1985) "Children of all ages are as various in their reading of a book as are adults. In any group some will concentrate on one feature, some on others" (Chambers, 1985, p.152).

Cohen and Manion (1985) referred to qualitative data such as this, stating that the differences between different sets of qualitative data called for an "imaginative leap" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.266) and that "it is not to be expected that complete consensus among data can or should be achieved ... the very burden of the interpretative approach is that different actors in a situation will have different meanings and
that each meaning is equally valid" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.266).

To analyze data collected it was necessary for the investigator to read through the data, and in the light of her tacit knowledge and observations, to use her own judgement (an "imaginative leap") and check back with the children to ensure the trustworthiness of interpretation.

Each day's observation and discussion notes were analysed for factors to pursue further with children while the days events were still fresh in the investigator's mind. Children were regularly asked to comment (either as a class or small group) on interpretations made to ensure accuracy of interpretation. "With interpretive or qualitative data ... [the investigator] will endeavour to draw meanings or explanations from the data themselves or where appropriate negotiate meanings with the subjects who are their source" (Cohen and Manion, 1985, p.266). This respondent validation is detailed on page 24.

A final analysis of data took place when the study was completed, and a brief and simple summary of results presented once again to the children for comment (Appendixes 14 and 15):

"The 'great puzzle' is fitting together pieces of odd data ... to make a clear picture of the rapidly
changing child" (Glazer and Williams, 1979, p.7). The many notes, tapes, examples of children's written work (Appendix 16) were compiled into comprehensive collections or categories from which meaning could be constructed.

A clear overall picture emerged as the data collected was reviewed and it became obvious that a lot of the groundwork had already been accomplished when, prior to discussion, previous notes had been reviewed to find prominent points to follow up (Appendix 5).

Certain categories appeared which would be helpful, these are listed below, and are detailed in the Appendix.

Prominent Categories in Data:

# Questions repeatedly asked during sharing time (Appendix 17)
# Children's comments on why they chose a particular book (Appendix 18)
# Responses to a class read book (Appendix 1)
# Themes/genres constantly appearing in books (Appendix 19)
# General teacher observations (Appendix 5)
# Books children would like written for them (Appendix 20)
# Children's reasons for recommending books (Appendix 21)
# Comments on book covers (Appendix 22)

# Comments on illustrations (Appendix 23)

# Comments on print and language (Appendix 24)

# Children's suggestions as to what they liked in books (Appendix 7)

# Suggestions as to what they did not like in books (Appendix 7)

# Children's comments on books including length, blurb, size (Appendix 24)

# Procedural characteristics for choice of an unknown book (Appendix 26).

3.9 Conclusion

The study involved detailed data collection within a triad of methodologies. This ensured trustworthiness of data along with the credibility checks employed.

Data was analysed regularly and finally organized into categories for interpretation in the light of the objectives of the study.
4.1 Introduction

"...There is always the question of whether a particular book written for children will appeal to children" (Haviland, 1973, p.400).

Through this study what appealed to these children in a book was investigated. Data were found which revealed two main factors concerning children. Data from both of these combined to achieve the aim of this study, to find the characteristics of books which appealed to children.

The main factors concerning children were:

1) The physical features of a book, "The book object is a prime, but sometimes unrecognised cause of our response to a literary work" (Chambers, 1973, p.176);

2) The qualities within a book, information about story, character, language, genre, the areas about which the "experts" have mostly registered their opinions (Huck, 1979; Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977; Glazer and Williams, 1979).

The investigator thus found the features that would attract children to books and those that would keep their attention once they started reading. This information fulfilled the objectives of this study, which are detailed below.
4.2 The Elements That Attracted Children to Books

Data revealed that the presentation and actual physical parts of a book influenced choice. "The cover and illustrations within the book did make a difference in the children's choices" (Brown in Huck, 1979, p.29).

The following is a summary of points from the study relating to this, listed in random order.

* TOPIC - Many children chose books initially according to personal interest, for example horse stories, but once in their hands, books were judged according to some other elements listed.

* TITLE - Catchy titles attracted children's attention, leading them to investigate the book further, but not necessarily select it. These children had learned from experience that care in choice was important.

* COVER ILLUSTRATION - Children required an illustration on the cover to give an idea of the story inside, although comments revealed that they were sometimes disappointed (See Appendix 22).

* COLOUR OF COVER - Bright colours helped to draw the children to books.

* GENRE - An enjoyable experience with a particular genre led children to other books in that genre. Some children read many legends, others fairy tales, poetry, adventure stories, science fiction and many more. However, children also needed variety in their reading,
and would read a great variety of books, often returning later to a favourite genre.

* KNOWN AUTHOR - A favourite author was one of the biggest attractions for these children. If they had enjoyed a book by a particular author, they would often search the library for other stories by the same author.

* KNOWN ILLUSTRATOR - Children also had their favourite illustrators, and would borrow books to read solely because of the illustrator.

* RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHERS - Being told about a book by peers or an adult was an important factor in choice of books. This advertising of a book often sent them straight to the particular book for reading.

* SERIES - Having enjoyed a book in a series children often turned to others in a series, whether it had the same characters, same theme, or often just the same publisher (such as Puffin Easy Readers).

* BLURB - Reading of the blurb became a test of whether or not children would be interested in a story if it was a completely unfamiliar book.

* INTERNAL FEATURES - First impressions were important to these children, and they would often flick through the pages of a book to check for suitable words, length, size of print, illustration, setting out (details of what they required of these are in the next
section). These first impressions could encourage the child to read the book or cast it aside.

Figure 7 shows a summary of the above points, revealing what attracted these children to books.

Fig. 7 Elements that Attracted Children to Books

Children had a procedure which they followed in choice of an unknown book, using some of the above elements of appeal. They would look first at the title/illustration on the cover, then turn to the blurb, then flick through the pages for impressions of the internal features as listed above.

4.3 The Elements Children Liked in Books

"Today's children, like today's adults, read for many reasons: to dream, to learn, to laugh, to enjoy the familiar and explore the unknown" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.15).

These children were reading and enjoying a variety
of books, including fiction, poetry and legends. Within these books children discussed the aspects which they liked. These are summarized below.

* INTRODUCTION - Children agreed that they wanted the scene set at the beginning of the story so that they were not struggling to sort out the storyline.

* STORY - A story line within their experiential understanding was required.

* HUMOUR - They enjoyed simple humourous incidents, particularly if they were a bit cheeky, but did not require the whole book to be funny.

* ADVENTURE - Action was necessary in the story to keep interest.

* EXCITEMENT - Stories needed to be kept moving to keep the attention of these children.

* ANIMALS - Stories involving animals whether real, imaginary or cartoon seemed to have universal appeal for these children.

* ILLUSTRATIONS - Children agreed that different illustrations suited different stories, and were happy with colour, black and white, small or large or at times very few. They agreed, however, that younger children needed larger, coloured illustrations in their books.

* MYSTERY - A sense of the unknown to keep them wondering, seemed to maintain their interest in
stories.

* MAGIC - Magic that was not explained away by logic was very important to these children in their reading.

* SCARY - Children seemed to greatly enjoy stories that made them a little frightened.

* ENDING - A happy ending was required, although not without difficulty and doubt within the story.

Figure 8 is a summary of the elements that these children liked in books.

![Diagram](image)

Fig.8 Elements Children Liked in Books.

4.4 **Elements Children Did not Like in Books**

"They must not be bored ... words must live for them; so must people" (Haviland, 1973, p.132). This word "boring" was the main reason given by children for not liking a particular book.

Children discussed the things they did not like in books:
* NO INTRODUCTION - They agreed that they did not like "jumping straight into the story", they wanted an introduction to the scene and characters.
* REPETITION - Too much repetition of words and ideas made a story "boring" for them.
* "BORING WORDS" - Vocabulary which held no challenge or excitement did not impress these children. They resented over simplicity and unnatural text construction such as in some older style readers.
* "YUCKY PICTURES" - Illustrations which were too complex or interrupted the story line were annoying to children when reading.
* LENGTH - Some stories children felt were too long for what was in them, or for the children's level of reading.
* "BORING END" - An ending which left little hope or which dragged out or did not tie up lose ends in the story concerned these children.

Figure 9 summarizes the above points, showing the elements that these children did not like in books.
4.5 **Common Characteristics That Appealed to Children in Books**

"... We must admit that children are not alike, they do not all have the same needs" (Haviland, 1973, p.96). However, these children, through observation, oral and written response did reveal some common characteristics which appealed to them in books. These were taken from the previous three categories, in the light of the investigator's observations, reading, and "tacit knowledge".

These characteristics were:

1) The title, author, illustrator, topic, series or genre;

2) The presentation of the book, including colour, cover, blurb, illustrations, length and print;

3) Excitement, a sense of the unknown, a little fear, magic and humour in the story, adventure stories and
those about animals;

4) A good introduction and a happy ending, leaving them with hope, but not a "soppy" ending;

5) Challenging vocabulary which nevertheless was within their reading capabilities.

4.6 Conclusion

Data was found to fulfill the objectives of this study. Information on the first two of these is detailed above. The final objectives are dealt with in the following chapter.
5.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to find the characteristics of literature that appealed to the particular children involved in the study.

Objectives of the study included finding reasons for child rejection of adult selected books, providing ways of sharing the results found, and suggesting ways of introducing literature to children.

Children were found to be very vocal about their likes and dislikes and were valuable co-researchers providing a great deal of enlightening data. This study established that children did have opinions on the books they were reading, and that they were capable of sharing them. Their preferences for books influenced their choice, however book discussions with others, children or adults, also had a great influence on the broadening of their reading interests.

5.2 The Characteristics of Literature that Appealed to Children

5.2.1 Something Familiar

The major appeal of books was the recognition of something familiar to the child, some "linkage" (Chambers, 1985, p.136) with previous experience. A known author, illustrator, topic, series, genre, drew
children to particular books. This linkage may have come through personal experience, but could also be from advertising, or from sharing with peers or adults.

This has implications for the oral and visual recommendation of books within schools and libraries. "Books can play a significant role in the life of the young child, but the extent to which they do depends entirely upon adults. Adults are responsible for providing books and transmitting the literary heritage ..." (Cullinan cited in Norton, 1983, p.4).

Adults need to provide linkage through reading to children, talking with them, showing books, having books available for them to explore. Through this children can be led to a continued enjoyment of quality literature.

5.2.2 Presentation

With unfamiliar books children revealed that book presentation influenced their initial choice. This factor has major implications within book publication, advertising and sales.

Factors such as the colour and size of the cover attracted children to books. Once attracted, the children surveyed the cover for hints as to the books contents - title, blurb and cover illustration often caused acceptance or rejection of the book. How
important, then, for book publishers to ensure that these are true indications of the books contents, and will draw children into a book.

Once invited within a book, children checked the internal pages for print, setting out, length and illustrations. They preferred books to be not too crowded, the print of readable size (not too small) with the length requirements varying according to ability. Illustrations could vary also, from large coloured ones to small black and white, and vary in number according to the complexity of the book. Children, however, required these illustrations to be true to text, as discrepancies were distracting.

Every physical aspect of a book has potential for "selling" the book to children. These children are sensitive readers, and publishers must recognize this. 5.2.3. **Internal Features**

Being attracted to a book did not ensure acceptance, however. Within the pages of books children also had many factors they required. A combination of some of these factors would often encourage enjoyment of a book.

A storyline capable of being understood with their background knowledge, a story which keeps moving, has a sense of adventure, excitement and challenge, keeps children's interest. They enjoy a sense of the
unknown, a little mystery, which makes them a bit frightened, gives them a "shivery feeling". Magic which is left as magic, and is not explained away by logic has great appeal and adds excitement and a sense of the unknown to many popular children's books.

Humour means a great deal to children in the stories they read, and gives relief from the seriousness of many a storyline. Humour which was a little rude or cheeky delighted these children.

Children liked to associate with the characters in a book, but animal characters had special appeal. Even as a minor character, an animal within a story seemed to make it more real for children, and more enjoyable.

5.2.4 The Start and the Finish

Essential to all good books for these children was a good introduction. Children required this to be not too long and drawn out, but long enough to set the scene and introduce characters so that these could be understood from the beginning and were not a puzzle, confusing the storyline.

Another requirement for all children's books was a happy ending, leaving them with hope and a sense of satisfaction. This, however, did not mean a "soppy" ending, which could spoil enjoyment. A satisfyingly happy ending, after difficulties, excitement or adventure, which perhaps left an opening for future
adventures, seemed for these children to add greatly to the appeal of the story.

5.2.5 Language

Many books are written in simplified language for children. This study revealed that these children resented over simplification and did not enjoy an unnatural text.

Challenging vocabulary in the context of an exciting, flowing text, provided that it was within their reading and comprehension capabilities, gave great enjoyment and satisfaction to these children.

5.3 Generalizability

The characteristics discussed are for these children at this time, however they agree with many of those reported by writers in children's literature (Huck, 1979; Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977), and are a comprehensive guide for those involved in choosing books for children.

The most noticeable point to come from this study was that children need to be considered when writing, illustrating and choosing books for them. They have certain requirements in books which will encourage them to read if found in books or used as a connection to further reading.

5.4 Objectives

Further objectives of the study required:
reporting and sharing of results: determining why so many adult selected books were not enjoyed by children; and providing suggestions to adults for introducing literature to children.

5.4.1 Reporting

Reporting and sharing of the results of this study will be accomplished through this document and the investigator's peer discussion.

5.4.2 Rejection of Adult Selected Books

From this study the main reason for children rejecting books selected for them could be summed up in Stewig's question "Does the book expect children to bring associations or perform mental processes of which they are not capable?" (Stewig, 1980, p.10).

It is not that children don't like complex books, but that they need a background of knowledge from which to understand the storyline. If a book is beyond their experience, then it is too complex for this time, or until some point of linkage is established. This linkage can come from increased knowledge, experiences with other books, further explanation from the presenter, or whatever means helps to establish a connection or point of interest for them.

Children are very different and have different interests and needs which must be considered in selecting books for them. A book will be rejected if it
is beyond their interests or needs, unless an interest or need can be established. This can be accomplished through other stories, other children, book discussion, or even the enthusiasm of the presenter.

Children's reading abilities differ and for any point of time it is necessary to consider this when selecting a book for a particular child. Obviously a book will be rejected if the story or illustrations cannot be read, or if read to the child, not understood.

5.4.3 Suggestions for Introducing Books to Children

"Books are no substitute for living but they can add immeasurably to its richness" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1972, p.4). Literary reading is a valuable experience for children and the problem of introducing literature to them of utmost importance.

"We would wish every child to experience to his or her full capacity the enjoyment, and the broadening of horizons, which can be derived from literature" (Townsend cited in Haviland, 1973, p.100). Adults' assistance in this requires some effort on their part, however "... the mediation of literature to children by a literate sympathetic adult is the single most important factor in the creation of a desire among children to read ..." (Chambers, 1985, p.4).
5.4.3.1 **Know the Child**

"Know the child and know books because for every child there is the right book at the right time" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.17). Children's interests, capabilities, needs, all make a difference as to which books, when and how they are presented.

5.4.3.2 **Know the Books**

"You can turn to review sources for opinions of books but in the end you must rely on your own judgement" (Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977, p.20). Adults themselves must read books to be able to judge which books to recommend to children.

A child with a particular interest can be directed to books about that interest by a knowledgeable and caring adult. Adults must know what is in books to find points of linkage, to be able to successfully present books to children.

5.4.3.3 **Take Time**

"Literary readers are not made in a day, but grow and develop and mature over years" (Chambers, 1973, p.71).

Adults need to be patient, allowing the children the privilege of acceptance or rejection, talking with them about books. "If a pupil is allowed to accept or reject, he himself will demand higher standards in reading material far sooner than if his teacher
attempts to tell him what is good or bad" (Chambers, 1973, p.158).

Adults need to take time to talk to children about the books they are reading and the books which they could be reading.

5.4.3.4 **Provide time**

Children need time to browse amongst books, time to choose, time to read, time to respond to reading and time to share reading, as well as time to listen to others reading aloud. All of these factors are "central to children's literary development" (Chambers, 1985, p.3).

5.4.3.5 **Provide a Place**

"Time to Read and settings which encourage and sustain that activity, are an essential element in every child's daily life" (Chambers, 1985, p.11). Being given the books, the time and a suitable place to read encourages children to pursue that task.

5.4.3.6 **Teacher Responsibility**

"It is a professional duty to equip oneself sufficiently to be able to help a child along as a reader ... leading him from author to author, book to book, with enough sure footed confidence that he is guided up the literary mountain and not left wandering in the viewless foothills" (Chambers, 1973, p.76).

Teachers need to read and discuss books themselves
to be able to successfully accomplish this.

5.5 General Conclusions

"Awakening children's interest in literature is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of working with them" (Harris, 1987, p.1). This has been for the investigator an exciting and elating study. Children have been observed greedily devouring books who previously had no interest in independent reading. Others who previously were unwilling to participate in discussion seemed now to have found something worthwhile to talk about.

What made this difference? It appears that a combination of factors were responsible, the most prominent of which was talking about books. Class and group sharing times with children talking and questioning about books have been very rewarding. Children engaged with what their peers were sharing. "If children are to improve their ability to make valid judgements, they must experience good books and investigate and discuss what it is about a book that makes it memorable" (Norton, 1983, p.99). Children's sharing of books often encouraged others to read those books, and provided more thorough enjoyment of the book for the child sharing.

Other important factors which emerged were that the adult influencing children's reading needs to be familiar with the books being read, needs to know the
children and show enthusiasm for reading, as well as providing for the children a variety of books. time to browse. read and share.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Research

This was a study looking for an overall picture of children and books. There is a need for further more specific research on the value of booktalk (such as introduced by Chambers, 1985). Results from a study such as this would be valuable within literary presentation in the classroom.

Case studies with individual children over a length of time, showing progression, connections, linkage between books would add further understanding to the complex question of children and their choice of books.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

"When selecting literature for children, the first consideration should be given to the child who will be reading the book" (Norton, 1983, p.99).

This study it is hoped will encourage adults who are "responsible for providing books ..." (Norton, 1983, p.4) to think more deeply about not only the books being chosen, but the needs and wants of the children for whom they are being selected.
REFERENCES


Haviland, V. (1973) Children and Literature: Views and


APPENDIXES 1 - 26
Appendix 1

A summary of children's oral and written comments on a book read by the whole class, The BFG by Roald Dahl.

* It's exciting especially when the giant has his hand on his ankle because he was bitten by a "vindsreen viper".
* The BFG's speech was funny.
* I like the giants.
* I like how the story made you laugh.
* Parts of the story children liked: the giants hanging from the "bellypopper" (helicopter); when Bloodbottler tried the snozzcumbers; when the people fell into the giant's hole; the queen's arrangements for the BFG to eat; eating people from Wellington for the gum booty taste; when the BFG puts Sophie on the window sill; the part about the whizzpoppers; at the end where it says something about the giant writing his story; when the BFG was lifted up by the other giants.
* I like the ending.
* I like the BFG's pipe and his dreams.
* I like the way the BFG talks and walks.
* There's some scarey bits - I love scarey books.

Other responses echoed those listed above.
Appendix 2

Initial Interview Questions.

Do you find reading easy, fun, hard work or boring?
Can you find the sorts of books you like in the library?
What are some of the books you have enjoyed? Tell me about one of them. What did you especially like about it?
Who are your favourite authors?
What do you think it is in these books that you enjoy?
If you could have a book written specially for you what would it be about?
What title would you give it?
Draw a picture for the cover.

based on Gawith, 1983, p.11
Appendix 3

Analysis of interview answers for points for further discussion.

Funny books were enjoyed, with mischief in them. Children liked laughing about books.

Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton were the most named authors.

They seemed to enjoy the illustrations.

Adventure stories were favourites.

Fantasy stories that were a bit scary seemed also to be popular.

Animal stories were prominent in what was read and suggested for stories they would like written for them.
Appendix 4

Examples of Topics Discussed.

Choice of books.
Appearance of books.
Illustrations in books.
What makes an interesting story?
Favourite characters.
The most absorbing page in a book.
The dullest part of a book.
What did the book make you think of?
Appendix 5

An example of the analysis of observation notes for points to use in discussion.

Observation notes recorded during one morning's reading time.

* Children enjoy Fairy Tales - little bit of magic in them
* Books with detailed illustrations, coloured mostly
* Even those with fiction books (others reading junior fiction) like to discuss the illustrations.
* They often cannot contain themselves and want to share an exciting part - mostly through the illustrations.
* Choosing more carefully - taking books and looking through them to see if suitable. Questions during sharing time suggest looking for size of print, hard words, illustrations, number of pages, number of chapters etc. to see if can cope with the story.
* Children will often re-read a known story for enjoyment.
* Like the rhythm of the name Tikki Tikki Tembo ... as well as the younger brother's predicament.
* BFG - great enjoyment from the innocence of the BFG and the things he says, as well as his pronunciation of words, or mispronunciation and invention of words e.g.
"vindscreen viper" for snake.

* Enjoy being read to, but like the occasional illustration to help with understanding and imagination.

* Like re-reading big books - rhythm, rhyme, illustrations, known story.

* Like a bit of excitement, the unexpected or unknown, adds to interest.

From these notes, points were chosen to follow up: procedure children use in choosing books; the importance of illustrations; the importance of magic and mystery in books.
Appendix 6

Direct questioning by the investigator was used to find answers to key questions.

Books are all different, so what makes you choose a particular book?

Why do you recommend that book to others?

What do you think of the illustrations in books?

Is there any part of the story that you particularly liked?

What is it that you like in books?

What do you not like in books?
Appendix 7

Brainstorming sessions on likes and dislikes in books produced the following list (repetition of points in different wording have not been included)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Dislike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adventure</td>
<td>not funny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fantasy</td>
<td>not adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dinosaurs</td>
<td>not fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>war, fighting</td>
<td>yucky pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sport</td>
<td>no pictures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exciting</td>
<td>boring words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magic</td>
<td>not interesting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>animals</td>
<td>Bugs Bunny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hilarious, funny</td>
<td>jumping into story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugs Bunny</td>
<td>start drags on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairy Tales</td>
<td>baby's books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coloured pictures</td>
<td>repeating same words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pictures</td>
<td>boring end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slowly into story</td>
<td>can't read it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enid Blyton</td>
<td>without chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roald Dahl</td>
<td>too long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose your own adventure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>books I can read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when I learn something</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lots of chapters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt Disney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>space stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit scary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy endings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children were not as vocal about their dislikes.
Appendix 8

Book Conferences

Individual book conferences were held during language time where the teacher spoke with children individually about a book they had chosen to share.

* What is the book's title?
* Who is the Author?
* Who is the main character?
* Where does the story take place?
* What was the main event?
* What did you like best?
* How did you feel when you read the book?
Appendix 9

Summaries of class discussion taken to the small group.

There are a number of things which have been considered important in choosing books. The cover seems to be the main one.

Illustrations are also important in book choice, and help in enjoyment of books.

The size of print and length of the book also seem to have importance for some children.

Most children seem to like fantasy and magic as well as a lot of excitement.
Appendix 10

Final Interview

Basic questions were planned but these were adapted, rephrased, order changed, or left out as was necessary to suit the children and the task.

Each child brought a book to the interview which he/she wanted to discuss and questions related to this.

Tell me about anything that particularly caught your attention?
What will you tell your friends about it?
Tell me about the parts you liked most?
Tell me about the parts you didn't like?
Tell me about the illustrations?
When you are reading a story do you see it happening in your imagination?
If the author asked you what could be improved in the story, what would you say?
What is the most important thing about this book for you?
Do you think I should give this book to other people?
Why?

based on Chambers, 1985, pp.170-173.
Appendix 11

Written response activities.

# Write a publisher’s blurb to sell the book.
# Write a letter to the librarian suggesting why she should or should not recommend a book to others.
# Send a letter to a friend to spread the word about a book.
# Write a newspaper advertisement about a book.
# Make an individual rating chart for the books being read.
# Pretend you are one of the characters and write a letter to the class.
# Make newspaper headlines based on the book.

# A Grade Homework sheet on children’s reading:

1. List six of your favourite books and author’s.

2. Write about one of your favourite books and tell why you liked it.

3. Name four of your favourite book characters. Tell something about each one of them.

4. If you could have a book written just for you, what would it be about? Write about it, give it a title and do an illustration for the cover.
## Appendix 12

### Home Reading Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Book</th>
<th>Date, pages read, initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Copperfield</td>
<td>1st - 23rd, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander the Terrible</td>
<td>3rd - 23rd, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals of the Sea</td>
<td>1st - 3rd, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brindle Bear</td>
<td>1st - 24th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pied Piper</td>
<td>1st - 16th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Sheep Sleep</td>
<td>1st - 25th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Magic Fish</td>
<td>1st - 32nd, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy's Big Rabbit</td>
<td>1st - 27th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamine Bears</td>
<td>1st - 34th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Speak of the Trees</td>
<td>1st - 28th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish 2 Fish, Red Fish</td>
<td>1st - 62nd, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tooth Book</td>
<td>1st - 88th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cat that came back</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undert the Sea</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cat in the Hat</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alphabet Chameleon</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovering Oceans</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Made a Rainbow</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snoopy</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireside Book</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Imu</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frog and Toad</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Riddle of the River</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Little Fairy</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Go The Log</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Art of the Christ</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babar's Band</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babar's Boat</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Around the World in 80 Days</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Twist</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Lost Angel</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegant A.B.C.</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Brian the Dragon</td>
<td>1st - 89th, completed M.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 13

Book Rating Cards

These were filled in by the children in class as they completed the reading of a book. They were asked to rate the book as boring, okay, good, great or fantastic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Boring</th>
<th>Okay</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Fantastic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bfg</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roald Dahl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minerva</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa Kraig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noddy meets father christmas</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enid Blyton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The great ocean Riverboat race</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Dugan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A first book of Fairy Tales</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Computer that went Bahamas. Horace J. Elias</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof Branestawm pocket motor car</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfield stepping Out</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Jim Davis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant the Ant</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Crack</td>
<td>⭐️ ⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
<td>⭐️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 14

A brief summary of the final analysis was presented to the children.

We have been discussing what we felt helped us choose books and enjoy reading them.

We decided that if we knew something about the book such as author, illustrator, topic, it helped. If we did not know the book, then the cover with its title, illustration, and blurb was very important in choosing a book.

Within the book, the setting out, print, language and illustrations seemed to influence us when deciding whether or not to read the book.

Once reading, humour and excitement in stories have added to enjoyment along with some mystery and magic. A good introduction and happy ending also seemed very important.

Do you have anything to say about any of these, or anything to add?
Appendix 15

Some children's comments on the summary of the final analysis.

Children generally nodded in agreement that this was what was discussed and were surprised at being asked again. A few only added comments such as those listed below. The general feeling seemed to be that it had all been said.

Illustrations add detail to the story.
Yes. I like funny books.
Magic makes reading fun.
I always look for Roald Dahl's books.
The title and illustration help choose books.
I like stories a bit scary, like mystery.
You look for five hard words on any page to see if it's too hard to read.
Appendix 16
Examples of Children's Written Work.

Dear Mrs Ralph
I think you should recommend the B.F.G to the whole school because it's very funny when the B.F.G speaks because his language is different. It's sometimes scary when the giants speaks. The illustration are excellent.

by Kelly
Room 18, Oak flats Primary

Dear Mrs Ralph,

I recommend "Sommersaults" because it's exciting. You never know what is going to happen next. The man is cranky. The cover looks good. It is a great book to read.

from Ben
Read all about it!

NO Parking Problems

Professor makes car that
doesn't have parking problems

Read

"Professor Branestawms
Pocket Motor Car"

By Norman Hunter
Prominent Categories Appearing in the Data Collected.

These came from responses to interview, discussion and written response as well as observations which were reviewed in the light of the investigator's tacit knowledge and the reading of literature in the area.
Appendix 17

Questions repeatedly asked during sharing time.

Children shared as a class, in language groups and in the small selected group. These questions are those which were repeatedly asked during these times by the children of their peers, and which seemed to be of importance to them.

What's your favourite page?
Who's the author?
Why did you chose it?
Why do you like it?
Is it easy to read?
Are there any words you had trouble with?
Are there good illustrations?
Would you rather the pictures in black and white or colour?
Do the illustrations suit the story?
How long is it?
Will you read the blurb?
Is it a series?
Have you read any others in the series?
Have you read it before?
How much writing is on the pages?
Who's your favourite character?
Is it exciting?
Is it interesting?
Can I read it after you?
How old would you recommend it for?
What rating would you give it?
Questions about specific story details according to the book were asked.
Who is the illustrator?
Does it have a dedication?
Will you read your favourite poem?
What part of the story did you like best?
How long did it take to read it?
Did you like the movie or the book best?
How big is the writing?
Can you read ... ? A favourite part was often requested by a child who has already read the book.
Which is your favourite story/poem/fairy tale in the book?
Appendix 18

Children's comments on why they chose a particular book, in reply to direct teacher questioning and peer questions.

- 'Cause it was the best one there.
- I looked at the cover and it looked scarey.
- It had the best illustrations.
- Because it looked good especially the words.
- I liked the cover.
- I haven't read it before.
- I heard the story before and liked it.
- It's in a series and I've read the other books in the series.
- I read the first page and liked it.
- The cover looked like the title.
- I flicked through the pages and it looked interesting.
- The cover was interesting.
- I like Enid Blyton.
- I thought it looked exciting.
- I read it before and wanted to read it again.
- Because I haven't read one about the Muddleheaded Wombat before.
- It's my own book and I wanted to read it.
- I like Fairy Tales.
- It looked good, I've already read some.
- I've seen it before, but I haven't read it.
- I like war.
- I liked the title.
- My sister read it before.
- Another child recommended it.
- I read the title and looked inside - I like short stories and poems.
- I've been waiting to read it after the teacher read it in class.
- I've read Snow White in lots of different versions, they're all different.
- I like poems.
- I looked in it.
- I watched the movie and wanted to read the book.
- Another child offered it to me.
- Because I wanted to read the Princess and the Pea.
- I heard someone tell about it.
- The picture on the front looked interesting.
- The girl on the cover looks sad, I wanted to find out why.
- There are heaps of stories in it.
- I love dark illustrations and all the same colour illustrations.
Appendix 19

Themes and Genres Constantly Appearing in Books

Observation of children's choice of books plus their book rating cards and home reading records provided information for this.

Animal stories
Fairy Tales
Aboriginal Legends
Magic
A little scary
Humour
Excitement with the unexpected or unknown
Adventure
Poetry about nature, humour, scary.
Dinosaurs and dragons
Short stories
Colourful junior fiction books
Appendix 20

Books Children Would like Written for Them.

Data for this was provided through children's written response to homework sheets (Appendix 11) and interview questions (Appendix 2).

The Animal Adventures
Ghostbusters
Blinky Bill Escapes
The Disappearing Gymnast
My Mum
The Evil Pirate Ship
Alien Adventure
Australian Animals
Me
In the Trees (A Fairy Adventure)
The Animals
Tarzan in the City
The Magic Carpet
Cricket
The BMX Whizz Kid Adventure
The Explorers
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs and Me
Wendy and Possum
The Spook House
Australia, My Country
Adventure
Mystery
The Motor Bike
The Elf and The Dwarf
Adventures in Sydney
Starlight a horse)
Star Wars (with self as a character)
The Hidden Treasure (self as a character)
The Lost Koala
My Pirate Adventure
Amie's Adventure Story
Flying Carpets (about me0
Adventure story
The Koala Without a Nose
Appendix 21

Children's Reasons for Recommending Books

These points came from class discussion and sharing time, as well as small group discussion.

It's exciting.

It's a good book to read.

Most of the people that have read the book like it.

It is exciting when he discovers the lost underground city.

It's exciting at the end.

A lot of people like horses and stories about horses.

It is good.

It's a fantastic story.

Because it's good, it encourages people to read.

I like the author.

It's an adventure and kids might like it.

Peter Pan is excellent.

I recommended the BFG because of the big pictures and the acting of the characters is great. It's funny and the BFG's speech is just great.

The BFG is funny and exciting.

Charlotte's Web is fantastic and funny.

Snoopy is funny - examples given.

Because of the funny speech in the BFG - you will be in stitches.

I recommended the BFG because of the story and illustrations.
In the BFG the illustrations and speech are fantastic.

Bubble Gum is funny.

Minerva, because it is about a dinosaur.

The Long Red Scarf is exciting and good.

It's very funny when the BFG speaks because his language is different. It's sometimes scary when the giants speak and the illustrations are excellent.

I recommend the Moving Skull because of the illustrations, and the book is interesting.

Garfield Stepping out has great illustrations.

Flossie Teacake has a lot of mischief, it's very funny.

I recommend Somersaults because you never know what's going to happen next and the cover looks good.

The BFG is fantastic, exciting, funny and has a happy ending. The BFG talks very funny.

The BFG is funny and happy and the illustrations in the book are fantastic. The characters are happy, the words are hilarious, the book is exciting and the ending is really happy.

Snoopy is funny, very exciting, there are funny comments when Snoopy talks.
Appendix 22

Comments on Book Covers

These notes came from class and small group discussions on choice of books.

I think the cover needs pictures to attract people to it.

Books are like videos, they make you want to watch by the cover, but when you look at it it's not the same.

The picture on the cover made me think it would be good.

The picture on the cover might be good but the story isn't.

If the title is interesting and the cover picture nice I would choose the book.

The blurb is important. I read it to see if the book is suitable for me.

You need a blurb to help you in choosing a book.

The cover needs to have the Title, the Author, the Illustrator and a Blurb.
Appendix 23

Comments on Illustrations

Tim's favourite question was, "Do coloured or black and white illustrations suit the story or none at all?"

These comments were recorded during class book sharing, small group sharing and class and group discussion.

I love Disney illustrations because they're large and colourful.

The illustrations kind of match the story (talking about a poem) because they're spooky poems, mostly at night and black and white suits.

This book suits colour because the poems are long.

A happy story should have colour for little kids, to make it happy and cheerful.

Frog and Toad illustrations are slimy and yucky to suit frog and toad, they're all green and brown.

Colour suits the story When the King Rides by.

Black and white illustrations are good in this because there's lots of blood and guts.

I prefer black and white illustrations when there's a lot of detail in the story.

It's better without pictures because there's more story.

I don't like pictures because I have a picture in my mind and the picture in the story might wreck my picture and change it.

There'd be more poems without pictures.

Bright coloured pictures interrupt what I'm reading. They make me think about what's coming next instead of what I'm reading.
Sometimes illustrations help us to understand a story, sometimes we can do without them.

You don't need pictures because with these poems you can see what's happening in your mind, even the colours.

I'd rather it without illustrations, there's more pages for the story. When I read the story I see stories in my mind, when I see a picture in a book it's different from what I imagined and spoils it.

Without pictures you could imagine in your mind.

I don't think it's as much fun without the illustrations.

Usually you have coloured illustrations for little children. It helps to see the colour, gives them expression. You have less pictures as you get older and mostly black and white because when you get older you can fit more thinking in your brain, you have more experience of thinking about books and can imagine it yourself.

Little kids don't like black and white pictures.

When I read a book I can see it in my mind.

Sometimes I use the illustrations to judge whether I like the story or not.

Different illustrations suit different stories.

Pinocchio took longer to read because of the illustrations - annoying in a way because I kept looking at the illustrations, they were so good.

Rapunzel's hair in the illustration was still long even after the witch cut it off in the story. That spoiled it.

Observation

Illustrations help the poorer readers with a story, but at times interrupt more mature readers and discrepancies between illustration and story are distracting to all.
Appendix 24

Comments on Print and Language

Sharing and discussion with the class and small group provided this data.

Little kids need bigger print.
It doesn't matter to me what size, as long as it's not really small.
I don't like books that have the pages too crowded with words.
Little kids can't think as much. Older people write simpler words for them. Books for older people have harder words.
I don't usually worry about hard words, I just make them up or leave them out.
I don't like boring words, like when they're too easy or they use the same words all the time.
Appendix 25

Other Children's Comments on Books

I shiver to see what's going to happen next.
Did reading that book make you hungry?
I like toy characters in books.
I like laughing about books.
It's good when things go wrong.

I reckon the back cover on this looks like a blurb because it's got a cat and a mouse and they're usually in rhymes and nursery rhymes.

I didn't get worried about Pinocchio in the cage because you know something else is going to happen because there's so much story to go.

You can read the blurb to see if it's suitable for you.

The length of the book depends on how young you are.

The length doesn't worry me unless it's really too long.

The size of print doesn't matter unless it's really tiny.

Little kids have bigger printing.
Appendix 26

Procedural Characteristics for Choice of an Unknown Book

Observation, discussion and direct questioning of children revealed that they usually followed a set routine for choosing books if they were not familiar with the books available.

1. Title and Illustration on the front cover investigated.

2. Blurb read.

3. Internal pages surveyed for impressions of print, illustrations, length and setting out.