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THE INFLUENCE OF ORAL LANGUAGE VS. LITERARY LANGUAGE STRUCTURES AND DEVICES ON YOUNG CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN AND COMPREHENSION OF READ-ALOUD TEXTS

By

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The Influence of Oral Language vs. Literary Language Structures and Devices on Young Children's Engagement in and Comprehension of Read-Aloud Texts.

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The primary goal in choosing texts to read aloud with the young child who is not yet an independent reader is to find texts which engage the child in the reading process by activating the child's schemas for language patterns, story patterns and personal experience. Fundamental to understanding what schemas a young child brings to the reading session is some understanding of the oral mind which operates when orality is the primary means of communication. The first part of this paper investigates the similarities between the ritualized oral texts of primary oral cultures and those of children to discover the correlations between them. The use of oral language structures and devices (prosody, redundancy and formulae, rhythm and rhyme, metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, story, agonistic forms, archetypes, patterns and motifs, and binary opposites) in books for children is then examined.

The second part of this paper describes a study done to determine if such oral language structures do indeed enhance a child's engagement in and comprehension of a story. Subjects were fifteen preschool and fifteen kindergarten students who were read, orally, two different stories. One contained oral language structures and devices and one contained more traditional literary language. Engagement in the story was measured by observing the student's verbal and nonverbal behavior both during and after the read aloud session. Comprehension was measured by standardized retelling and drawing tasks, both administered immediately after the session. Data analysis indicated that the text containing oral language structures and devices was significantly more effective in engaging the students in the reading process and enhancing their comprehension.
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INTRODUCTION

The proper satisfactions of reading, even in the newly literate child—even, indeed, in the non-literate story-listening child—provide a robust affirmation of our common humanity, whether we are young or old, to understand and to be moved by and to gather ourselves the products of creative imagination. Rosenheim 1967

In 1966, Durkin's well known study, Children Who Read Early was published. In it she examined the variables that contribute to early reading. Surprisingly, she found that the preschoolers who were able to read were not necessarily gifted. Rather they had, more importantly, been exposed to books consistently in their early years. This prompted many parents and some educators to attempt to teach toddlers to read by having them memorize the alphabet and letter sounds. But the need for early reading instruction is not what Durkin's research implied.

Instead, her report suggested that a child's love of books precedes an interest in learning to read (Durkin 1966). Since then, early childhood educators have been researching the effects of reading aloud to children on the child's emerging literacy. The connection between reading aloud to young children and their eventual success as independent readers is now well documented (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982; Kontos 1986). And the use of quality
literature is central to that success (Jewell and Zintz 1986; Tovey, Johnson and Szporer 1986; Willert and Kamii 1985; Fields 1987).

However, many parents and teachers, faced with the incredible variety of children's books available, are at a loss as to how to determine the quality of a selection. Too often their choices are based on the beauty or vivid colors of the illustrations or on the message of the story. Not enough attention is given to the language of the text and how effective that language is in engaging the child as a reader.

Yes, even children who cannot decode the actual words of the text are nevertheless readers. If they are engaged in the meaning making process, they are reading, even if someone else is doing the decoding for them.

Margaret Spencer has argued that it is the authors of children's stories who most fully teach children how to read. The children follow a familiar or predictable tale, perhaps with another reader's assistance, and the author shows how the story is actually told in written language (Smith 1985, 126).

Children, therefore, can learn much about the reading process even before they are able to decode the words if we make oral reading an interactive process.

Numerous studies (Clay 1982; Cochran Smith 1984; Teale 1988) have shown that listening to texts is an important step toward gaining the needed background to make independent reading possible. But little research has been
done on what kinds of texts are most effective for achieving this goal.

In order to qualify those texts, we first need to understand how the reading process works, and particularly how it is dependent on schemas (those structures in semantic memory which specify the general or expected arrangement of a body of information (Carroll 1986, 231)) the reader already possesses before he begins to read. Children who are emerging into literacy are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Instead, they already possess a number of schemas for language use that they have developed from their oral language experiences. This study will examine primary oral cultures and draw parallels to children's oral culture in an effort to understand what those schemas might be and how we can utilize them in the stories we use in read-aloud sessions.

The first chapter of this thesis, then, will examine the research that has been done by linguists and educators on the psycholinguistic reading process and the particular importance of schema theory. Reading is primarily a predictive process. We use our schemas and formulate expectations for what will come next in the text. We do this on a number of levels. We take what we already know about word formations, word order, syntax and discourse structure to make predictions (Smith 1982).
Once we know the importance of schemas in the reading process, we can begin to look at what kind of schemas young children have developed about language and its uses, before they begin the process of becoming literate. By the time a child enters school, he is already an accomplished linguist. In learning to speak and understand oral language, the child has developed his own increasingly sophisticated rules for structuring language. We do not teach him language mechanistically, from smaller parts to larger; rather he learns language by transacting with a language rich environment. He does not merely imitate what he hears, but apparently, based on the language forms he is exposed to, a child abstracts the pattern subconsciously and applies the pattern systematically. Thus he is able to create "rules" for the language he is learning. These rules cannot be verbalized by the child or by most adults, and yet, the child formulates increasingly more sophisticated rules, unconsciously and without direct instruction, until his rules match the adult rules for that language (Klima and Bellugi Klima, 1966, pp. 192-96).

If these hypothesis about child language acquisition are true, it follows directly that the young child who is beginning the journey toward literacy is already a proficient user of oral language. In the second chapter of this thesis, we will look at some of the features of a young child's mental life in terms of what we might call the
child's orality. To understand the child's orality, we will look at the research which has been done on the characteristics of the mental lives of people who live in primary oral cultures, keeping in mind the differences between adults who are not exposed to literacy and children who are exposed to a literate culture, even while they are not literate themselves.

If our goal for reading with young children is to help them access and develop their schemas, then in the third chapter we need to explore the issue of how people in a primary oral culture learn without the use of written materials to "study."

They learn by apprenticeship...by discipleship, which is a kind of apprenticeship, by listening, by repeating what they hear, by mastering proverbs and ways of combining and recombining them, by assimilating other formulary materials, by participation in a kind of corporate retrospection--not by study in the strict sense (Ong 1982, 9).

Such learning employs the use of specialized formulaic language structures. These formulaic structures were developed to solve the problems of memory, participation, conservation, classification and explanation and include the devices of prosody, redundancy, rhythm and rhyme, metaphor, agonistic forms and archetypal patterns and motifs (Smith 1982).

In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral
recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balance patterns, in repetitions or antitheses, in alliterations and assonances, in epithetic and other formulary expressions, in standard thematic settings...in proverbs which are constantly heard by everyone so that they come to mind readily and which themselves are patterned for retention and ready recall, or in other mnemonic form (Smith 1982, 34).

Not only are these forms found in primary oral cultures, but they exist in the oral culture of children in the forms of traditional folklore. Writing over a century ago, William Wells Newell commented, "There exists a children's tradition, maintained independently of print" (Newell 1883, 3), and he published the first collection of this folklore in *Games and Songs of American Children*.

Both the oral ritualized texts of primary oral cultures and those of children employ a specific set of devices to serve the needs of learning. We will examine how these devices can be effectively employed in texts for young children to facilitate the activation of their oral schemas and their engagement with the story. The differences between literary discourse and oral discourse will be discussed and elements of oral discourse examined for their use in texts for children emerging into literacy.

In order to discover if the use of these devices actually has an effect on the young reader, I engaged in a study which looked at the responses of young children to a text which employs these oral elements and one which does not. The fourth chapter will outline that study. Using one
text that utilizes prosody, redundancy, rhythm and thyme, etc. and one that utilizes a literary language structure where these devices are not used, I have examined the differences in the children's ability to remember and comprehend the stories.

The final section discusses the implications that these findings have for the criteria that make up effective first texts for children who are emerging into literacy and ways that we can make optimal use of read-aloud time.
In the introduction I asserted that young children can be active readers long before they can decode the graphophonemic cues of the text. How is this possible? In order to understand, we must first look at how the reading process works.

For a long time, educators believed that reading begins with the correspondence between letters and their sound, the combination of those sounds into words, and the combination of the meanings of individual words to get the meaning of a sentence. This is called the bottom-up model of reading (Smith 1985).

Recent research by psycholinguists, however, has shown that the process of reading is actually much more complicated than the bottom-up model would seem to suggest. In looking at a word like run, which has over 60 meanings in the dictionary, it becomes apparent that we do not simply add together the meanings of individual words to get the meaning of a sentence. To decide what a sentence means, we must use context clues.
These context clues make use of the schemas we have developed on a number of different levels. For example, we have schemas, or organized chunks of knowledge, for the grammatical context of a sentence. We know how words are ordered and how syntax is ordered for different kinds of sentences. Using this schema we can tell if run might be a verb or a noun. We also have semantic and pragmatic schema, which help us choose the intended meaning of word dependent upon the situation in which it is used. If we are reading a story about a baseball game, for example, we know that run could mean the physical act of running, or it could mean the act of scoring. In addition, we have schemas for discourse structures. We know that stories are structured differently from instructions on how to perform some act. Finally, we have a subject or experiential schema. If our schema for baseball is fairly complete, then understanding, "She made a run" will be easy. Since our schemas develop as we transact with the external world, we may often lack appropriate schemas for understanding what we hear or read. Therefore, for a person with no subject schema for baseball, "She made a run" may be pure nonsense (Weaver 1988).

During the process of reading, we are not just taking in the words one by one from the text and adding their meanings together. We are using all of our schemas simultaneously to actively predict what might be coming next on a grammatical, semantic, discourse structure, and
experiential level. We then check the text to see if our expectations have been met. If they have, we continue. If they have not, we must modify our schema in some way to accommodate the new information. Thus, reading becomes an interactive process between the text and the reader (Smith 1982).

Children, who have not yet learned to read, already are familiar with some of these same processes. When a child acquires the spoken language, he is interacting with the language he hears produced in the environment around him in much the same way a reader interacts with the written word. We know that children do not acquire speech because we teach them all the sounds in our language, then the rules for combining the sounds into words, then the rules for formulating sentences. Instead, children learn language by relating the sounds of the language they hear to things they are experiencing. They make assumptions about the relations and relevant elements of their language, look for significant differences in the speech they hear, establish their own grammatical rules and semantic categories, test their hypotheses on a trial and error basis, and learn from the feedback they receive, whether a rule applies or not (Weaver 1988).

Thus the speech learning child and the reader are using the same strategies to make sense of language—predicting, sampling, confirming or correcting. While children cannot
decipher the text's written words in a read-aloud situation, they can utilize the schemas they have built up from their experience with oral language: schemas for syntax structure, semantic and pragmatic possibilities, discourse structure and experiential schema. These schemas can involve the child in the process of predicting what will come next in the text in much the same way that the adult reader predicts, allowing the child to become involved in creating their own meaning from the text.

If we want to engage children in these reading behaviors during read-aloud sessions, we need to look at what kinds of schemas children bring from their experiences with oral language. Clues to what these schemas look like might be found by looking at primary oral cultures, the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 2
THE ORAL CULTURE OF CHILDHOOD

Most reflection on children's mental life has been conducted by people whose main interest is education... this focus on education has tended towards the neglect of certain features of children's mental life. In particular, the roles and importance of what I will call children's "orality" have received relatively little or inappropriate attention.

Kieran Egan 1991

There has been a great deal of research done on the question of oral cultures and literate cultures as having two different intelligences or ways of organizing the universe. We will begin by examining what the various theorists have to say about the question of orality and the mental lives of people who live in oral cultures throughout the world. Considering oral cultures, then, may help us better understand the oral culture of early childhood and in the transition of Western children from orality to literacy.

Many researchers, including Walter Ong who pioneered much of the research on orality, believe that orality and literacy are different intelligences, different ways of understanding and organizing the universe. Using two different forms of language, oral and literate cultures seek ways to solve the same problems, problems that arise out of
the very nature of human culture and human experience; the problems of memory, participation, conservation, classification, and explanation (Egan 1986). The functionalist model of language acquisition (Bates, Bloom, Lahey, Peters, etc.) sees language as a task driven system and identifies the task or problem as the "first cause" in the emergence of language in children. This theory might be extended to how language emerges in human culture in response to the tasks of ensuring the survival of cultural memory, preserving coherence and communion within a community, reducing communication to a finite collection of conventional symbols, and organizing information and explaining everything. Primary oral text (discourse composed orally without any reference to print) was the first solution to these problems.

The research on orality that will be reviewed in each of these categories has some important implications for early childhood education. While I am not suggesting that there is direct correlation between adult oral cultures and those of children, there are some interesting parallels. Adults, of course, have a great deal more accumulated experience and cognitive development. But the features of their oral cultures can be seen in children's oral culture as well. Children are making use of some of the same features we find in primary oral cultures for solving the
fundamental problems of memory, participation, conservation, classification, and explanation through language use.

THE PROBLEM OF MEMORY

It is difficult for us in a literate culture to understand the problem of memory. We have visual access to organized bodies of knowledge. How were people in oral cultures—where what one knows is what one remembers—able to know anything without recourse to the written word? Word for word memorization would seem impossible without a text to refer to. If memorization was not the way to conserve knowledge, then oral peoples had to develop other strategies, such as the use of formulae, rhythm, rhyme and redundancy to aid in the remembering and communication of knowledge and culture. Metaphor, metonymy and synecchdody also played an important role, but the greatest of all these strategies was the narrative structure (Ong 1989).

Redundancy

Researchers have discovered a great deal about how these techniques are used in primary oral cultures. Milman Perry was the first researcher to look into the question of orality in his study of the Greek poets. He found growing evidence that Homer and other "singers of tales" were
illiterate. Since Homer lived 500 years after the events in the *Iliad* happened, one must question how such a long poem could be memorized without recourse to a written text.

Parry's doctoral dissertation (1928) asserted that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed of a set of verbal formulae—repeated morphemic clusters—whose form was dictated by the demands of the hexameter line. He found that one-fifth of Homer's lines are repetitions—of the nearly 28,000 lines, almost 25,000 contain repeated phrases.

Even the meaning of the Greek term "rhapsodize" is to "stitch song together" (Ong 1989, 22). Using an abundant repertoire of epithets, Homer and other "rhapsodes" stitched together the formulae to fit the metrical line.

Alfred B. Lord extended Parry's work in his studies of the oral culture of the Balkans (1964). He found that the singers, or poets from that culture, undergo a systematic training procedure that might have been similar to Homer's.

To show how this might have worked, Lord cites the Balkan poets who did not memorize poems. Instead, they learned the particular metrical form of the tradition during their long apprenticeship. Standardized formulas were grouped around standardized themes such as the council, the gathering of the army, etc. (Lord 1960, 68-98). The language of the songs, then, was a set of standard formulae that was preserved and reworked for metrical purposes.
Since there was no set text, as we know it, to be memorized, each recitation was a new creation as the poet stitched together the formulae to fit the metrical line and the episodes to fit the story (Lord 1960).

Rhythm and Rhyme

Elaborating on Lord's and Parry's work which examined in depth the use of formulae and redundancy, in the 1970's Peabody studied Hesiod's Works and Days. He was particularly interested in how the oral poets were able to "enthrall" their audiences. He observed that, because the cultural history of the people must be maintained orally, the stories and songs must relate the particular beliefs, expectations, roles and behaviors to the listeners. The process of enthralling the audience, using rhyme, rhythm, formula, story and so on ensures that these crucial patterns of belief will be fixed in the minds of the audience (Peabody 1975).

Unlike literate cultures, where text and story are subject to critical reflection by the reader, in oral cultures the poet's goal is to draw the audience into the intrinsic "truth" of the story.

Peabody observed that oral memory also differs from textual memory in its high somatic content.

From all over the world and from all periods of time...traditional composition has been associated with hand activity. The Aborigines of Australia and other areas often make string figures together
with their songs. Other peoples manipulate beads on strings. Most descriptions of bards included stringed instruments or drums (Peabody 1975, 197).

Eric Havelock further extended this work. His description of the techniques used by the poets in oral cultures showed that the whole body was used to support the memorization process. The beat of the music combines with the meter of the words, the pattern of the formulae in the story and the rhythmic body movements to enchant the audience (Havelock 1963). Poets also used gestures, often elaborate and stylized and body activity such as rocking or dancing. This process was described by Levi-Strauss (1969) as a musical performance.

Metaphor, Metonymy and Synechdody

The work of Levi Strauss (1966) and Ernst Cassirer (1946) also pointed out the extensive use of figures of speech—metaphor, metonymy and synechdody. As Levi Strauss said: "Metaphor...is not a later embellishment of language but is one of its fundamental modes—a primary form of discursive thought." (1962, 102). Because written language is pre-emptive, claiming the forms and devices of orality as its own, we are inclined to think of many of the language forms of literature as being the later inventions of the collective work of authors of written text. Metaphor is a good example. We presume that metaphor is the child of written language. We learn in school that this is so.
However, metaphor is a principle dimension of the mentality that supports the creative acts of orality. Oral art forms are set in metaphor; they ARE metaphor.

In oral cultures thinking moves according to the complex logic of metaphor, more readily than it follows the systematic logic of rational thinking (Egan 1987, 456).

This was made clear in Luria's work with the Russian peasants. He found that they were not able to categorize things in the way people in literate cultures do. They seemed to have no concept of abstract categories, such as "tools." When asked to group things together, they used situational, operational frames of reference. For example, they would say that a saw and a log belong in the same group because the saw is used to cut the log (Luria 1976).

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) have suggested in their study, Metaphors We Live By that perhaps "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." (3)

Story

"The various linguistic structures in the end serve only one purpose. They provide the means for telling a story...The tale's the thing." (Lord 1964, 68)

A story is universal and the use of story can help fix the information in our minds. Story also effects our emotions. The story's power lies in its ability to "fix affective responses to the messages it contains and to bind
what is remembered with emotional associations." (Bartlett 1932)

Narrative is a major genre of verbal art, occurring all the way from primary oral cultures into high literacy. Knowledge and discourse come out of human experience, and the elemental way to process human experience verbally is to give an account of it more or less as it really comes into being and exists, embedded in the flow of time. Developing a story line is a way of dealing with this flow.

As Havelock (1978) observed, knowledge cannot be managed in elaborate, scientific categories. Oral cultures cannot generate such categories, and so they use stories of human action to store, organize, and communicate much of what they know.

CHILDREN AND THE PROBLEM OF MEMORY

While oral cultures solve the problem of memory with the use of redundancy, rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy and story, we will find, if we examine the traditional oral literature of childhood, that the same devices are used to solve the problem of memory.

All of these techniques show up actively in the folklore generated and passed on among children themselves. Studies like the Opies' *The Lore and Language of*
Schoolchildren (1959), the Knapps’ One Potato, Two Potato (1976), and Simon Bronner’s American Children’s Folklore (1988) document an extensive use of these traditional oral devices.

These devices are also prominent in nursery rhymes and the fairy and folk tales that originated in the oral tradition and survive today.

Redundancy and Formulae

Repetition and the heavy use of formulaic phrases play a prominent role in children’s folklore. The nursery rhymes that a child is exposed to in early childhood often rely on the repetition of choruses, or on cumulative structure (This is the House that Jack Built).

As children enter the primary years they frequently memorize and repeat game rhymes. One example is the counting rhymes with their highly patterned structure and ritualized procedure of execution. In such rhymes as “Aka backa soda cracker, Acka backa boo/ Acka backa soda cracker. Out goes you” (Geller 1983, 184), the rhyme, rhythm and meter all contribute to the memorability of the text.

These pieces are often memorized and then the formulas might later be manipulated by the child in his/her own recreations. In Emergent Literacy, Elizabeth Teale recounts one such incident:

I recall a time in my office speaking with a parent. Her three year old, obviously restless
after twenty minutes, came up to her mother and said,

Mommy, put your coat on,
Mommy, put your coat on,
Mommy, put your coat on,
Let's go home.

That youngster had heard and sung "Polly Put the Kettle On" over and over again. The formulae had influenced her oral text (19).

Just in primary oral cultures, once someone has a repertoire of formulas, they are able to "rhapsodize," to stitch together their own song, fitting the formulae to the metrical line.

**Rhythm and Rhyme**

Soon after an infant is born, he is regaled with rhythmic renditions of "Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, baker's man/Bake me a cake as fast as you can..." and other examples of verse for the very young. These verses are pervasive; they play a significant role in family life and particularly in interactions between parents and their young children (Snow, DeBlauw, and VanRossmalen 1979)

Nearly all of the nursery rhymes we sing to children are rhythmic and follow a strict meter. They often are in rhymed, four-beat couplets. In English, nearly all dandling rhymes, nursery rhymes and game rhymes are constructed in this form. While in adult poetry this form is usually avoided because of the sing-song cadence it produces, for children, this cadence is what makes these rhymes so memorable.
The somatic content in children's nursery rhymes is also high. From "this little piggy went to market" with its manipulation of the toes, to clapping games and skipping rhymes, much of children's folklore involve some accompanying body movement.

One example of a popular nursery rhyme which contains poetry and motion is "Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross."

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady upon a white horse;
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes
She shall have music wherever she goes.
(Baring-Gould 1962, 247)

The verse's strong trochaic meter echoes the galloping of a horse and invites dance—a tapping toe, a bouncing knee, or the motion of a rocking horse. The verse's formulaic rhyme scheme reflects the balance and opposition of poetry: The first line of each couplet readies the listener for the concluding second line, while the end rhymes in lines two and four create a sense of resolution and provide balance not only within but also between couplets (Obbink 1980, 230).

This small poem exemplifies the synthesis of rhythm, rhyme and somatic qualities in oral-language poetry.

Metaphor, Metonymy and Synecdoche

Another important element in adult orality is the abundant use of figures of speech. We often overlook the centrality of metaphor in children's lives because much of the educational testing is done on children's abstract reasoning. This focus arises out of the traditional way we have understood knowledge. Cognitive scientists believed that abstract categorization was the main way we make sense
of experience, believing that we categorized experiences solely by the properties shared by their members. But a wealth of new data on categorization appears to contradict the traditional view of categories. In the new view, our bodily experience and the way we use imaginative mechanisms are central to how we construct categories to make sense of experience (Lakoff 1987, xii).

Metaphors, metonymy and synecdoche are all used by children as well as adults as a primary way to understand the world. As Gardiner, Kirchner, Winner and Perkins (1975) showed in their research on preschool age children, these children have an easy grasp and use of metaphor. In fact, children's taunts, rhymes, riddles, jokes, parodies, etc. are filled with metaphors, metonymy and synecdoche. "This ready grasp of metaphor and punning is prerequisite to and an essential part of understanding the kinds of jokes that are a vivid part of young children's oral culture..." (Egan 1991, 70).

For example, there are a whole series of formula for autograph inscriptions and they are dependent on metaphor for their humor.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
You've got a nose
Like a B-52.

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet
It's nothing like you.
The roses are wilted
the violets are dead
The sugar is lumpy
And so is your head.
(Bronner 1988, 87)

And many taunts are clever uses of metaphor to deal with embarrassing situations: "Close the barn door before the horses get out" (To a boy with an open zipper) or "It's snowing down South" (To a girl with a slip showing) (Bronner 1988, 41).

Metonymy, a figure of speech which uses an attribute for the name of something or someone, is frequently used in children's taunts:

Fatty, fatty, two by four
Can't get through the bathroom door.
(Bronner 1988, 74)

Unfortunately, metonymy is also a key element in ethnic humor where children use the nationality or race of a person to indicate a type of person. For example, the word Pollack is understood to mean a stupid fool.

Synechdody, a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole or the whole for a part, is also a common technique for making jokes in children's folklore. For example, Dolly Parton jokes such as "Why are Dolly Parton's feet so small?—Nothing grows in the shade." where her name is a synonym for her most prominent body part (Bronner 1988, 86).
Story

Finally, by the time the child enters school, he is already very familiar with oral narratives. A sense of narrative structure is communicated to children through the earliest narrative with which they come into contact.

...two of the most popular traditional games by which adults play with babies have definite narrative structures. "This Little Piggy" describes the everyday activities of the five pigs which are represented by the baby's five toes, and "Patty Cake, Patty Cake" tells a brief tale about food preparation (Sullivan 1990, 52).

As the child passes out of babyhood and leaves these narratives behind, he will encounter other orally structured narratives of increasing length. All of the familiar nursery rhymes such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and "Jack and Jill" are all built on traditional oral patterns, in both syntax and storyline. This awareness of the form of narrative tales is further reinforced as the child hears the traditional fairy tales and folktales like "Cinderella" or the literary creations patterned after them.

This awareness of traditional oral patterns on all linguistic levels which has been acquired passively by children listening to, or being read to by adults, also shows up actively in the folklore generated and passed on among children themselves. Legends, ghost stories, jokes and personal experience stories as well as jump-rope rhymes,
playground chants and taunts also use the devises peculiar to oral narratives.

THE PROBLEM OF PARTICIPATION

In our literate culture, where writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for 'objectivity,' it is difficult for us to imagine the oral mindset in which "learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known." (Ong 1989, 45).

Unlike written words, oral words are closely tied to their context of reference. In studies of non-literate peasants in remote areas of the Soviet Union, Alexander Luria (1976) showed that pragmatic thought in oral cultures is closely tied to situational context. The world and experiences are not objectified.

An oral culture simply does not deal in such items as geometrical figures, abstract categorization, formally logical reasoning processes, definitions, or even comprehensive descriptions, or articulated self analysis, all of which derive not simply from thought itself but from text-formed thought (Ong 1982, 55).

Sound is alive and participatory. The living word, as Socrates said in Plato's Phaedrus, "has a soul...of which the written word is properly no more than an image." (Plato 1979, p.35). The oral word is not distanced the way the written word is.
**Agonistic Forms**

In oral societies even the forms of verbal play are agonistically toned. Riddles, jokes and tricks are often characterized by playful competitiveness or even aggressiveness.

...by keeping knowledge embedded in the human lifeworld, orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle. Proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat: utterance of one proverb or riddle challenges hearers to top it with a more apposite or a contradictory one (Abrahams 1968, 44).

Bragging, name calling, and fulsome praise are found everywhere in connection with orality. *The Iliad, Beowulf, The Bible* as well as African stories and folktales from around the world are all agonistically programmed.

...violence in oral art forms is also connected with the structure of orality itself. When all verbal communication must be by direct word of mouth, involved in the give-and-take dynamics of sound, interpersonal relations are kept high—both attractions and, even more, antagonisms (Ong 1989, 45).

**CHILDREN AND THE PROBLEM OF PARTICIPATION**

For young children, sound, as in adult orality, is alive and participatory. Oral language has this fundamental quality: it is realistic. It deals with the specifics of what one senses and feels. It has a habit of expressing the realities of our experiences in down to earth language.
Take the language of the nursery rhyme: "Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after." Nothing could be more sensuous and also unsparing in its fidelity to the hard facts (Havelock 1988, 415).

Hand clapping rhymes deal in the themes of maturation, courtship, and pregnancy, which are all aspects of the adult world that children are trying to make sense of. Rhymes also deal with such mundane, everyday things as school, teachers and underwear.

**Agonistic form**

One of the powers of lore, children quickly learn, is to direct attention. Often that attention is thrust upon another child in the form of teasing. Children's culture, with its numerous name calling rhymes, recalls that lively competitiveness and moral core in such sayings as: "liar, liar, pants on fire! Nose as long as a telephone wire." (Knapp and Knapp 1976, 11).

A common form of speech play among children, especially boys, is to hurl insulting barbs at one another. In this play children use insults to test verbal skills. Although black and white children draw on a shared repertoire, among white children the insulting is often referred to as "cutting" and "ranking" and relies especially on the uses of metaphor and simile. Among black children the insulting is often known as "dozens," "sounding," or "joning," and relies especially on the use of rhyme (Bronner 1988, 42).

The object is for one opponent to outdo the other in vilifying the other's mother. For example, "Your mother's so low she has to look up to see the curb." (Bronner 1988,
Bronner has collected more than fifty examples of variations of "Your mother...."

Their playground rhymes are also filled with excessive bragging, and outrageous praise: "Hi ho, hi ho/The teacher bit my toe/I bit her back, that dirty rat/Hi ho, hi ho, hi ho." or:

My mother sent me to the store
To buy some food one day
I fell in love with the grocery boy
And there I stayed all day
He gave me all his peaches
He gave me all his pears
He gave me fifty cents
And chased me up the stairs
I ate up all the peaches
I ate up all the pears
I held on tight to the fifty cents
And kicked him down the stairs (Bronner 1988, 62).

The characters in traditional folktales and myths also reflect this larger than life bravado and tall tales, in which praise and bragging are exaggerated to the extreme are very popular with children.

THE PROBLEM OF CONSERVATION

Literate people have and value highly accurate historical accounts. On the other hand, oral societies live in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium by sloughing off memories which no longer present relevance (Goody and Watt 1968). They have what Havelock (1986) has called "structural amnesia." As conditions change in the power relationships and structure of society, so too do the myths,
reflecting the current situation. There is a selective memory of events relevant to present social conditions. "Myths serve to cover certain inconsistencies created by historical events." (Malinowski 1954, 125). Such structural amnesia serves to preserve a sense of stability and clarity, despite historical changes.

At the same time the stability of the culture relies upon a highly traditionalist or conservative set of mind. Even as the old formulas and themes have to be made to interact with new political and social conditions, the formulas and themes are recaste rather than supplanted with new materials. "The inhibition against new invention, to avoid placing any possible strain on the memory, continually encourages contemporary decisions to be framed as though they were the acts and words of the ancestors." (Havelock 1963, 121). Pressures against change preserve stability order and intellectual security.

CHILDREN AND THE PROBLEM OF CONSERVATION

There are many examples in traditional children's folklore that suggest that conservation is one of the central elements in children's culture. Often their folklore reflects their need to make sense of the adult
world and the issues to which they are exposed everyday on the news.

The increasing closeness of death, the moral debate over abortion, the meaning of child abuse, the changes brought about by the civil rights and women's movements, the role of privacy and humanity in the wake of technological expansion, the adjustments forced by mainstreaming of the handicapped, and fear of sexually transmitted diseases have all found their way into children's lore. Often humor is used to relieve some of the anxiety raised by these issues, and within the content of the humor is often a commentary on the sides taken. In an era of change, folklore can be a stabilizing, conservative force, because it represents the power of tradition. By allowing outlets for expression and interpretation, folklore oils the gears of change (Bronner 1988, 33-34).

One example of the this kind of children's folklore are the Christa McAuliffe jokes that arose after the January 28, 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle explosion. Christa McAuliffe was the first teacher to go up in space and children all over the country were actively following the story. These jokes are an attempt on the part of children to deal with the tragedy through humor.

In the jokes, her background in the teaching of schoolchildren provided opportunities for humorous wordplay; other jokes brought out her neophyte status on the flight. Many of the jokes borrowed from traditional jokes having to do with death. For example, when Natalie Wood died on a boating trip, children asked, "Why didn't Natalie Wood take a shower on her yacht?" and answered,
"Because she figured she'd wash ashore." This same joke was adapted to the Challenger space craft. (Bronner 1988, 130).

One of the most popular forms of children's folklore is the parody of songs, hymns and the "sacred texts" of society such as the Pledge of Allegiance. These forms also show the changing social conditions within the framework of tradition. One example is the parody of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Thirty years ago the words went like this:

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the burning of the school/ We have tortured all the teachers, we have broken every rule/ We have stood in every corner of that cotton pickin' school/ Our fame is marching on/ Glory, glory hallelujah, teacher hit me with a ruler/ 'cause I bopped her on the bean with a rotten tangerine/ and the juice came running down (Bronner 1988, 61).

While the basic form has stayed the same, in the nineties you are more likely to hear the song sung with these changes, reflecting the changes in our society:

Glory, glory hallelujah, teacher hit me with a ruler/ So I met her in the attic with a semi-automatic/ Now she ain't my teacher no more (Bronner 1988, 63).

THE PROBLEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND EXPLANATION

As we mentioned in the section on metaphors, oral cultures are so closely tied to the life world that they tend to classify things in terms of action, rather than in
abstract categories. Another way they classify things is in terms of binary opposites (Levi-Strauss 1966). We see this set of binary opposites in the good/evil dichotomy discussed before. However, they are not always opposites in any precise logical or empirical sense but become used as such by serving as the basis for further discriminations. The differences between classificatory schemes in oral cultures and those in our scientific culture rest on the basis of qualification. Levi-Strauss tried, through his study of myth, "to prove that there is a kind of logic in the tangible qualities of the concrete phenomena of everyday life—the raw and the cooked, etc." (1969, 32).

Attempts at classification are fundamental to rational thought. For literate cultures, explanation is a way to get the facts and to gain control over our environment. We do this by classifying, and subclassifying things, then attempting to explain a phenomenon through objective analysis.

In oral cultures though, the mode of thought that directs their approach to classification and explanation is more closely linked with narrative, rather than objective analysis.

For oral cultures, they focus not only on relevant relationships among content features, but cast it in narrative where characters, events, motives and emotions carry the ideas forward—leading to what
Goody calls the "personalization of theory.'"
(Egan 1977, 42).

Ask for the explanation for some phenomenon in an oral culture and you get a story. Malinowski observed that the people on the Trobriand Islands "...never explain in any sense of the word; they always state a precedent which constitutes an ideal and a warrant for its continuance, and sometimes practical directions for the procedure." (1954, 110).

CHILDREN AND THE PROBLEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND EXPLANATION

One of the first concepts that a child grasps is the temperature concepts, "hot" and "cold." A very common way in which we elaborate our conceptual grasp over phenomena is by first forming such binary opposites and then by mediating between them. By mediating between hot and cold, we learn the concept "warm." Ask any child who is engaged in pretend play what kind of character he is and he will answer either "a bad guy" or a "good guy." The young child's grasp of the world is very much in terms of black and white (Egan 1991).

These binary opposites are one of the most obvious features of classic fairy tales. Good/bad, security/fear, courage/cowardice and so on are all concepts that the child
has direct access to. These are typically not opposites in any logical or empirical sense, but like the systems of classification Lurie found in Russian peasants (raw/cooked), they serve as opposites for the structure of meaning (Egan 1991).

Not only do children seek to explain the world in terms of opposites, they also rely heavily on narrative. If we ask a young child why he made a mess, we are likely to get a long story about all the things that happened prior to discovery and how these things were in some way responsible for the mess. When we explain natural phenomena to young children, we are more likely to give a story by way of explanation than to give them the objective, scientific facts. We do not need to unravel the mysteries of physics when a child asks about thunder; we tell him that it is clouds bumping together or the angels bowling.

CONCLUSION

Such speech play as we find in dandling rhymes, nursery rhymes, children's stories, games and jokes have been shown by Hymes (1968) as a part of normal everyday interaction in all societies. While it is different from adult verbal art in the sophistication of the syntax and the heavy reliance on phonologically determined features (Grudgeon 1987), it
still shows many of the same characteristics: the use of formulae, rhyme, rhythm, meter, metaphor and stories. As Grugeon points out:

Children's ordinary discourse does not display the same degree of disciplined, formal patterning, control of rhythm, meter, rhyme, stanzaic forms, metaphor, simile, syntactic repetition and morphophonological patterns. These are, however, all features of effective adult oral discourse and writing, and children's speech play would therefore seem to be vital to the acquisition of literacy (171).

While there are many correlations between primary oral cultures and the oral culture of childhood, there is one rather distinctive difference. Children raised in modern western society live and participate in a literate, print rich society. There has been a great deal of research done in the last ten years on the question of how this contact with literacy affects young children. Researchers have coined a new word to describe literacy in the young child: "emergent literacy" (Teal and Sulzby 1983). They draw a new portrait of the child in a literate culture, not as one who begins the journey toward literacy in school, but as one who has begun to learn about reading and writing very early in life.

Thus the portrait shows that in a positive literacy learning environment young children grow experiencing reading and writing in many facets in their everyday lives, primarily as purposeful, goal directed activities. As children encounter writing language, they try to figure out how it works. In so doing, they form the test hypotheses, attempting to discern the differences between drawing and writing; to understand the meanings, structures, and cadences of written
language; to learn the symbols of writing; and to sort out the relationships between these symbols and the sounds of oral language. The knowledge and procedures young children develop for solving the literacy puzzle often are different from adult conventions and strategies, but they are logical and understandable, once we take the children's perspectives. Furthermore, their understandings and strategies change over time, showing that literacy learning is a developmental process. Even more important than the demonstrations of literacy are the times parents and children interact around print (Teale and Sulzby 1986, 34-35).

And yet, in spite of all this exposure to the print world, the children still exist in a fundamentally oral culture. As Luria pointed out in his work, passing acquaintance with the habits of literacy does not alter the mentality of orality. Only when the technology of writing has been internalized (interiorized) does the thought process change. Ong reiterates this: "I think the 'transforming' effects of literacy do not begin to have significant impact on children's oral culture until literacy is fluently mastered, used for pleasure, and 'internalized,' a process that occurs around 8 or 9 in most Western cultures." (1989, 116).

Traditionally educators have seen young children as illiterates, lacking in the skills of Western rationality. However, as I have attempted to illustrate above, children are actually in command of a positive orality, a distinctive culture of their own. In the next section we will look at ways such an understanding might be used in helping children move from orality to literacy.
CHAPTER 3
USING ELEMENTS OF ORALITY IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

One could talk about literature as a form of communication, as expression or as artifact... however, literature is an experience and, further, an experience not discontinuous with other experiences. Norman Holland Five Readers Reading

In our eagerness to "educate" young children, to progress from the world of the utterance into the world of text, we oftentimes miss the opportunity to use the child's orality in the process. Hall (1987), in a study involving over 150 teachers, found that "the overwhelming majority of teachers in the sample did not appear to use a child's oral language as a resource for reading." (38). It is important for us to recognize that the evolution to literacy has its roots deep in orality. Havelock (1986) asks, "If a child's brain is initially programmed to master oral language and only oral language, why do we lay such stress on acquiring literacy as soon as possible?" (414). He then sets forward this warning: "If we skip over the oral stage in the education process too hurriedly, if we slight its importance, we do damage to those very conceptual powers we aim to develop." (415).
Chukovksy (1925/63), too, admits that the two year old's sensitivity to and creativity with language begins to fade at the age of five and disappear without a trace by the age of eight. Surely the development of literacy in children is good. Yet it is important to note that the invention of writing did not end the oral tradition; even in a predominantly literate society, aspects of the oral tradition remain (Olson 1977). Therefore, it is important for us to remain sensitive to a child's oral culture, even as we try to induct him into the literate culture. As Judith Saltman says (1985) "A mature appreciation of literature develops from—and depends on—the experiences of childhood. The origins of all the rhythms, moods, images and patterns of adult literature can be heard in the chorus of voices that is children's poetry." (36).

From our understanding of the way the reading process works using the reader's schemas and the evidence of children's schemas based in their oral culture, the relationship of orality and reading is evident. Getting children to interact with books, using their schemas, should be the key way in which children experience print in the early childhood classroom.

And as Frank Smith (1971) says,

Fortunately, children come to the task of learning to read with a well-formulated knowledge of language, including grammar. They have "discovered" the rules that control spoken language and they demonstrate their abilities by generating, pronouncing, and interpreting the
language. Their major task in learning to read is to apply these same rule-discovering skills to the printed page (15).

This process can be encouraged by exposing children to the types of texts that can engage them.

When a young child hears a text being read aloud, the schemata he possesses from his oral culture are activated. These schemata produce certain expectations for the text. If these expectations are met by the style of the text, the child is able to engage the text and transact with it. He can begin predicting what will come next and will either have his predictions confirmed, which causes a feeling of success or, in the case of a twist at the end of a tale, his prediction might be thwarted. If the tale has been highly predictable up to this point, the young child has been involved in the text and is thus able to take delight in the surprising twist. If the text has failed to engage him, the twist will leave him confused.

Beyond his ability to become involved in a transaction with a text, a young child can use his schemata and his subsequent expectations to begin to read the text itself. If the text uses such devices as a predictable rhythm, an end phrase rhyme, and elements of prosody, then the child is able to predict what word might appear next. If he has some very elementary knowledge of reading skills, he can make an educated guess about what word is next, even if that word is unfamiliar to him.
Therefore, in order to activate the oral schemata that children have, the text can utilize certain strategies typical to oral texts, as opposed to written styles.

Teale and Sulzby (1991) say:

Children who hear stories learn story language and structure. They learn that "once upon a time", for example, is the way a story begins...Books that encourage children to respond to the story because of interesting and exciting language help stimulate language growth. Participation stories, poetry and rhymes, and song books help immerse children into language. The language is repetitive and predictable. Because children are able to anticipate the language, they join the reader and become part of the storybook activity. The language catches their ears and captures their hearts and minds (20-23).

The importance of this kind of child involvement was documented in research conducted by Linda Lamme (1976). She concludes that the number one factor that contributed to a successful read-aloud session with a young child was child involvement, including reading parts of the selection with an adult, predicting what will happen next and filling in missing words. Child involvement can be accomplished by using the devices of orality.

The devices of orality are the devices of in-mind memory. They are regular, predictable, highly conventional, and carefully conserved. We remember things that remain the same, that are predictable and repetitive, and that follow set patterns. We do not remember unpredictable, unconventional, discrepant data.
While the following items look familiar because they also appear in written literature, they are the children of orality and have been borrowed into literacy. They support the structures and composing acts of written literature. These are the elements that we should be looking for when we select read-aloud literature for young children:

Prosody
Redundancy and Formulae
Rhythm and Rhyme
Metaphor, Metonymy and Synechdody
Story
Agonistic forms
Archetypes, patterns and motifs
Binary opposites

Prosody

One of the biggest differences between oral and written communication involves the way speakers use pitch, tone, volume, stress, intonation and pauses. These are the elements of prosody.

Prosody communicates much meaning. For example, prosody helps signal pronoun referents. Suppose a speaker said the sentence, "Sue hugged Beth and then David hugged her" stressing the word David. Spoken in this way, the speaker implies David hugged Beth. In contrast, suppose a speaker said the same sentence stressing the word her. spoken in this way, the speaker implies that David hugged Sue. The meanings communicated in this one sentence differ depending on stress.

In contrast to spoken language, prosody is poorly signaled in written language. Underling,
using italics, and using boldface print are used almost incidentally; periods and commas only give a rough idea of how long to pause; and many pauses are not signaled by punctuation at all. Young children depend on prosody to understand spoken language. Written language’s imperfect prosodic cues may make reading difficult for children (McGee and Richgels 1990, 14).

There has been limited research done on the development of sensitivity to the temporal dimensions, that is, the sound and rhythm, of spoken and written language. Yet the transition from orality to literacy entails an ability to transcribe elements of sound and rhythm (pitch, stress, pauses, expression) found in oral language to written language. Havelock (1976), as well as many linguists, is of the opinion that “any language owes its basic existence to an arrangement of sounds, not script.” (12).

In an attempt to see how the elements of sound and rhythm might successfully be transcribed in written language, Townsend and Bever (1982) have done important research on proposition theory and how it relates to the prosody of a text. Proposition theory relates how listeners isolate phrases and relations among phrases. There is evidence that readers engage in syntactic processing of sentences. Reading comprehension improves when syntactic patterns correspond to common patterns in speech. (Tatham 1970) Pauses in oral reading frequently occur at the ends of clauses (Goldman-Eisler 1968). This evidence suggests that readers impose an initial grouping of words by using phrase structure strategies that they use in listening.
This is why inappropriate intonation has a strong negative effect on listening comprehension in less-skilled readers (Townsend and Bever 1982).

Peter Schreiber is another researcher who has studied the effects of prosody on reading comprehension in beginning readers. He suggests that reading comprehension tends to be more difficult than listening comprehension because prosodic features that we ordinarily pick up in the syntactic processing of speech are not found in written language. Schreiber demonstrates in his study (1986) that intonation, stress, and especially duration play an important role for children in marking syntactic constituents. On sentences with normal prosody, children perform like adults. However, his study showed that on sentences with misleading prosody, children follow prosody while adults follow the syntactic structure.

If prosody plays a significant role for children in processing spoken language as Schreiber suggests, the absence of consistent print analogues to prosodic cues might explain the difficulty early readers have.

To attain reading fluency, a reader must learn to chunk words in appropriate syntactic phrases. Gibson and Levine (1975) suggest that part of the difference between good and poor readers is their ability to break up sentences into "syntactically critical units such as phrases." (39). If Schreiber is correct, and children use prosody to chunk
sentences, then we need to consider how prosodic features can be represented in written language.

Although many studies offer specific suggestions for studying syntactic structure and increasing comprehension, it appears that the intuitive knowledge children have of their language is the best foundation upon which to build reading (or any language) skills. Numerous studies (i.e. Ruddell 1965; Stevenson 1965; Tatham 1970) have shown that comprehension is improved when reading materials become increasingly similar to the oral language already used and understood by children (Schreiber 186, 40).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, one type of oral language that children are comfortable with is ritualized communication. This language is highly stylized and, so, predictable in form and content. While ritual communication is spoken language, it is speech of a different kind, being constrained by a recitative or chanting prosodic style. The constraints regarding pitch, stress, tempo, etc. are basic to the poetic grammar of ritual language (Tedlock 1972; McDowell 1983).

In the same way, verse language—especially children's rhymes—deliberately exploits prosodic characteristics of language...Because of the repetitious use of rhyme and rhythm in their construction and the gleeful exploitation of these characteristics typical of young children's oral performance, it would seem that the learning of this verse repertoire contributes to processes of discrimination and categorization of key sound structures of language (Geller 1983, 186).

Two important elements of ritualized oral texts can be utilized to give written language more of a feel of prosody: rhythm and repetition.
Rhythm

Rhythmic prose is a syntactic feature found in many children's stories. The rhythm helps to organize speech. Welleck and Warren (1987) discuss the organization of speech rhythms:

The artistic rhythm of prose can be described as an organization of ordinary speech rhythms. It differs from ordinary prose by a greater regularity of stress distribution, which, however, must not reach an apparent isochronism. In an ordinary sentence there are usually considerable differences of intensity and pitch, while in rhythmical prose there is a marked tendency toward a leveling of stress and pitch differences...There are all kinds of gradations from almost non-rhythmical prose: from chopped sentences full of accumulated stresses to rhythmical prose approaching the regularity of verse (164-165).

One of the most devastating effects of the trend in children's literature to use controlled vocabulary and short sentences is the destruction of any natural rhythm. What is left is a choppy, fragmented text which causes the young reader to begin to focus on word calling rather than meaning.

Children seem to have a natural sense of rhythm.

In the oral world of modern young children, poetry...moves them from the world of utterance toward the world of text and prose. The babbling of infants is rhythmic: it is filled with rhyme and music and sound. As children grow older, they chant their vocabulary of one or two words in a rhythmic sing-song fashion while they clap or stomp or jump to the beat...Toddlers delight in creating their own rhymes by repeating two or more words in a row, and the Russian poet Kornel Chukovsky (1925/1963) noted that "the younger the child the greater is his (or her) attraction to word repetition that rhymes"—words such as "night-night" and "bye-bye" (64). As Chukovsky puts it,
"In the beginning of our childhood we are all 'versifiers'--it is only later that we begin to speak in prose" (64). (Geller 1983, 189).

If young children are indeed natural versifiers, this explains why they are drawn to literature that utilizes rhythmic language.

"To the swing in the song, a stamp to the beat, to the lilt of the lines, a skip of the feet--this is early childhood--action in body and words." (Cullinan 1977, 3). Young children are active. Children's literature offers many highly cadenced poems that match the young child's love of activity. Finger plays invite young children to rhythmic movement and verbal participation.

Rhythm is used in a very obvious way in poetry for children and two excellent anthologies that focus on rhythm are Lillian Morrison's *Rhythm Road: Poems to Move To* and The Sidewalk Racer and Other Poems of Sports and Motion. Rhythm is also pervasive in the picture storybooks of Dr. Suess, Ludwig Bemelmans and Beatrice Schenk de Regneirs.

**Rhyme**

In addition to rhythm, oral memory relied heavily upon poetry, particularly poetry in its more old fashioned sense of words, rhyme and meter (Havelock 1986).

Exposure to rhymes is terribly important for young children acquiring literacy skills. Rhymes not only
increase the predictability of a text, but they enhance a child's phonological sensitivity.

Although novice readers and writers do not make the connection between sounds and letters, they do learn something important about oral language which, at a later time, will help them to discover letter-sound relations. Novice readers and writers learn to pay attention to the sounds in oral language. This may sound strange—oral language is composed of sounds. Young children who speak and understand oral language must produce and perceive the sounds of their language. However, they do so without paying much attention to the sounds themselves. They are concerned with the meanings and functions of their speech and not with the sounds used to convey meanings (McGee and Richgels 1990, 180-81).

Children must be able to hear sounds in words in order to discover the relation between letters and sounds. In order to help them do that, we can exploit the use of rhyming words which isolate one phoneme for change. The ability of novice readers and writers to create rhyming words emerges from their earlier experiences with nursery rhymes and other books with language play. Chomsky (1979) found that the patterns in these rhymes can enhance a child's ability to segment word sounds. It helps him to identify the initial sounds in alliterative sequences—black bears burp—or in rhyming words, the ending sounds of words that are the same—hat, cat. Geller (1983) found that the rhythm created in nursery rhymes highlights and segments speech sounds in a way that conversation does not. The syllables PEter, PEter, PUMPkin EATer are naturally separated by the stress in the rhyme. Bryant, et al. (1989)
found in their research that nursery rhymes did indeed enhance children's phonological skills. They found that children who were sensitive to rhyme and alliteration recognized that different words and different syllables have a segment in common.

The use of rhyme is not only satisfying to the ear but also aids the reader by limiting the choice of words. Young children can make use of the predictability of verse language.

Children are word collectors. They play with language. They are fascinated by its sounds. When we read to them, we expose them to the beauty of literary language and a wider variety of language forms than they hear in other situations. Children pick up new words and phrases that sound interesting and are fun to say...Children often memorize a particularly melodic word, phrase, or rhyme instantly (Cullinan 1981, 2).

In addition to increasing the predictability of the text, rhymes aid children in coming to terms with the metalinguistic aspects of learning to read. Frank Smith (1982) emphasizes the importance, in the beginning steps of reading acquisition, of learning such terms as *sentence*, *paragraph* and *word*. Understanding those key linguistic concepts is best acquired in the act of reading. And as Geller (1983) points out, "...because the reading/repeating of familiar verses and the predictability of rhyming words relieves the beginner of some of the task of discovering what is being said, it can leave him or her freer to
consider how it is being said—how that is, spoken language is represented by print systems." (189-90).

The use of rhyme then is a particularly effective device in engaging young readers in a text and in developing their beginning reading skills.

Recalling a premise with which this discussion began seems a good way to conclude: human creatures—especially children—are particularly responsive to the musicality of language sounds. The meanings of words when captured in the expressive rhymes and rhythms of verse delight the ear at the same time that they alert young language learners to the phonological design of their native tongue. And through hardly representative of a total approach to language education, the exploiting of rhymes—and children's love of rhyme—appears to hold possibilities for integrating the art of verbal expression with the science of literacy learning (Geller 1983, 192).

Many children's books use such rhyming devices very effectively. Nursery rhymes are the first form of poetry that most children experience. Rumor Godden (1988) says "nursery rhymes are true poems, poetry with all its gifts of language, rhythm and unexpectedness." (309). Nursery rhymes contain easily memorized rhymes and rhythms that help young children master speech. "The rhymes encourage children to respond orally as they join in with the rhyme, answer a question formulated by the rhyme, or proved a missing word suggested by the rhyme." (Norton 1991, 369-70).

Another form of verse that uses alliteration are tongue twisters which expand the young child's delight in the sounds of language and teach them that words can be
manipulated in playful ways. Nursery rhymes contain many
tongue twisters such as Peter Piper. Dr. Suess is perhaps
the master of using rhyme and alliteration in his texts. Oh
Say Can You Say is a challenging collection that will tie
anyone's tongue in knots.

Finally, many traditional poems for children, such as
Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat" use careful rhyme
schemes. But beyond collections of poetry and nursery
rhymes, picture storybooks use rhyming as an effective
device as well. Dr. Suess uses rhymes heavily in his easy
to read texts such as The Cat in the Hat and researcher
(Strickland 1977) have shown that this is particularly
effective with beginning readers. The nonsense of Bill
Peet's books, such as No Such Thing is made sensible by the
predictable rhymes, both internal and end-of-line.

Repetition

Successful retention in memory is built up by
repetition. If a young child is able to remember what comes
next, by virtue of the fact he has heard it before, he will
be using the process of prediction as he listens to the
text. Smith (1977) discusses the application of redundancy
to reading and explains that "more meaning can be extracted,
and greater comprehension can be gained...if syntactic and
semantic sequential redundancy are utilized." (53). Fagan
(1971) concluded in his study that reading comprehension is
affected by the repetition of syntactic structure found in the printed language and similar research by Ruddell (1965) likewise showed that increased structural redundancy contributed to the ease of comprehension.

A number of children's picture books use this device. Indeed children respond to the repetition of sounds as in alliteration, which we already looked at under rhymes. They also respond to the repetition of lines and phrases, whole refrains, and to structural repetitions such as can be found in cyclical story structures and cumulative patterns in narratives.

The repetition of words in picture books can be a very effective device. As McGee and Richgals found in their research, (1990):

Pattern books, with their heavy use of repetition are useful for calling children's attention to words, for supporting children's developing letter-sound knowledge, for helping children acquire some sight words, and for expanding children's concept of story. When the text contains an often repeated refrain, children who are ready to pay attention to graphic details are given the best possible opportunity to notice printed words and to speculate about how they are related to spoken words." (286-87).

Young children also enjoy repetition because it provides them opportunities to join in with the dialogue.

Authors of picture books often repeat a single word in a sentence to create stronger impressions. For example, Gail Haley, in A Story, A Story describes Ananse the trickster, as "so small, so small, so small." In Verna
Aardema's book, Why Mosquitos Buzz in People's Ears, the owl, whose baby is dead, is described as "so sad, so sad, so sad," and the endless night is "long, long, long."

Traditional folk tales make heavy use of repetition. They are popular with children because the repetitive elements attract their attention and impress upon them the structure and content of the story. Goodman summarized his view of beginning stages of literacy learning in the following sentence: "Reading begins with whole meaningful texts which are easily predictable for the learners." (1982, 4). The repetition of formulaic refrains increase not only recall, but the predictability of folktales.

Another type of picture book which relies on repetition is the pattern book. These books have repetitive patterns, good text to picture matches, familiar concepts and stories, and, often, cumulative patterns. In order to encourage children's creative writing, McClain (1986) used two type of model books: a traditionally structured picture book in which the story maintained strong development of plot and setting and characters (Peter Rabbit) and a predictable pattern book with a strong repetitive pattern (In a Dark, Dark Wood). She found that the pattern book was the most successful with students. They showed the greatest independence in writing, and the most creativity. "The pattern stories written by the primary children reflected more creative and critical thinking in terms of story
development than the stories they wrote in a traditional format." (p.I).

Cumulative story structures not only help a child in being able to predict the text and participate in the refrain, they develop the child's growing awareness of plot. "Very strong and obvious chronological order is found in cumulative folktales. Actions and characters are related to each other in sequential order and each is mentioned again when new action or a new character is introduced." (Norton 1991, 87). Nursery rhymes often have a cumulative structure (The House that Jack Built) as do picture books based on traditional folksongs (When I First Came to This Land, and The Wheels on the Bus). Traditional folktales also are often developed on a cumulative pattern. Verna Aardema's Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain and The Greedy Old Fat Man retold by Paul Galdone are two good examples of modern picture books based on traditional cumulative tales. These stories rely on repetition to build suspense and then introduce the element of surprise.

Repeating episodes and finally bringing the repetition to a stop constitute a very common storymaking strategy. Repetition carries a story along and provides a mechanism for its unfolding, but the repetition cannot continue forever. The repetitive story needs a device for coming to an end. In especially repetitive stories, that device can be a twist on the usually repeated action or usually repeated words. Many folk stories end with such a twist. (Geller 1983, 197).
Metaphor

Because written language is pre-emptive—claiming the forms and devices of orality as its own, we are inclined to think of many language forms of literature as being the later inventions of the collective work of authors of written text. Metaphor is a good example. We presume that metaphor is the child of written language.

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language...We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 3).

What Lakoff and Johnson's work has shown us is that metaphor is not simply a literary device but a principle dimension of the mentality that supports the creative acts of orality. Oral art forms are set in metaphor; they ARE metaphor. Very young children make metaphor as a natural part of composing oral language (Sutton-Smith 1981). They need no formal instruction through the devices of written language to "know" that metaphor is a good way to make sense of their worlds.

James Britton (1970) explains clearly how children use language to structure their experiences. They use figurative language to incorporate new knowledge into the already established sense of reality.
Children's schemas, then, are built on metaphorical associations. Using figures of speech in children's literature encourages these developing schemas. Every time they have a new comparison or see something in a new way, it expands the schema they already possess for that category. As Judson Jerome (1968) pointed out, insightful comparisons can develop as meaning that transcends words. And because children naturally assimilate new knowledge in metaphorical terms, literature that makes heavy use of metaphor corresponds more directly to their oral mindset than literature that relies more heavily on abstract categories and linear, logical development.

In our eagerness to "educate" the child, we often overlook metaphorical categorization and introduce him to abstract concepts long before he is ready. There are hundreds of "concept" books on the market that seek to introduce the ideas of such abstract concepts as big, small, happy, sad, etc. They contain labeled pictures of things out of context. For example, one book has pictures of a big truck, an elephant, a skyscraper, a mountain, etc. These items appear alone on the page, removed from any real life context, that might help the child relate them to any schemas he might possess. In fact, the lumping together of these items is usually directly at odds with any schemas the child might have already developed and so it is nearly
impossible for him to become engaged in any meaningful way with these books.

The kinds of concept books that are more successful with children are ones with a more holistic approach to their subject matter. Books like The Pond or The Meadow by David Bellamy that show things in relationship to other things in their real life context are books that will activate the schemas a child brings to the reading.

Another type of literature that works with metaphorical categorization are imaginative books which look at common, everyday things in new ways. I Thought I Saw by Pam Adams and Ceri Jones, and To Think that I Saw it on Mulberry Street by Dr. Suess both describe how imagination can transform such things as trucks into dragons, etc. Children are actively engaged when reading these types as books as they try to predict what the real object might be.

Finally, the literature most rich in figurative language has to be poetry. Young children respond in an instinctive way to poetry. As Britton says:

If at least these elements of poetry, figurative language, sound patterns, and imagery, are used spontaneously by very young children in their own speech, then it is not surprising that they respond quite naturally to poetry (Britton 1973).

Story

Schema theory assumes the ability to understand fiction depends upon a reader's prior knowledge of the codes and
conventions that any narrative inevitably evokes and depends on.

There has been a great deal of debate on how our knowledge of these codes and conventions develop. One possible answer is that the skills required to understand narrative structures are inherent, pre-existing in all human beings. Propp, the Russian linguist who studied patterns in folk tales, suggested that "fairy tales possess a quite particular structure which is immediately felt and which determines their category even though we may not be aware of it." (Propp 19, 34).

While Propp's research was limited to Russian storytelling, it appears now that "What constitutes reality or likelihood is a strictly cultural phenomenon...The 'natural' changes from one society to another." (1968, 49). But across cultures, narrative structure plays into the strengths of the brain's ability to remember (Luria 1968).

Narrative structure solves two problems. First, narrative solves the problem of memory. Stories are rememberable. Second, stories solve the problem of making persuasion entertaining. The narrative format invites attention because narrative is not ideology but action and those situations which action creates. Havelock, Ong, and others have pointed out that one of the key features in the change from an oral to a literate community is the change of focus from the action of the narrative--people (or
personifications) doing—to the abstract detachment of the essay and the invention of mental constructs.

Of course, young children have not yet acquired the same concept or schema of a story as adults. However, their concept of story is very important in learning to construct meaning from stories. These schema are developed through the earliest narratives to which children are exposed. For example, two of the most popular traditional games that are played with babies in English speaking countries are "This Little Piggy" which describes the everyday activities of five pigs and "Patty Cake, Patty Cake" which is a brief narrative about food preparation. Later on, in nursery rhymes, the child is exposed to narratives of increased length.

As the child passes out of babyhood and leaves these narratives behind, he or she will encounter other traditionally-structured narratives of increasing length. The familiar nursery rhymes—"Mary Had a Little Lamb," "Jack and Jill," etc. all have strong story lines. And once the child has heard the rhyme a few times, the parent who changes or makes an error in the recitation (or skips a page in the book) will be quickly corrected. These corrections suggest, at least, that the child is becoming aware that there is such a thing as a "whole" book or story to be read and a "proper" form for the rhyme; the child is becoming aware of a congruence between the content and the form (Sullivan 1990, 53).

Children's story grammars can be elaborated by exposure to tales with strong narrative elements. One of the best sources for stories is the traditional oral literature which has been transcribed in folk and fairytales. The plots of
these stories are fast paced and filled with action and follow a chronological sequence that makes prediction easier. Children exposed to a variety of fairytales begin to recognize the underlying structure and anticipate elements of the structure, such as things happening in three's (Cocetti 1991).

These stories, whether they are actually traditional folktales or the literary creations patterned after them, make the child reader or listener aware, at least passively and still informally, of the structure of traditional narrative. Although perhaps not able to articulate it, the child is, by now, certainly aware of "plot," as Aristotle defined it in his Poetics, as having a definite and non-interchangeable beginning, middle, and end (Sullivan 1990, 53).

Narrative expectations need to be met in order for the young reader to be able to engage the text actively. The literature we expose them to should have strong, traditional story lines. Not surprisingly, the stories we consider classics do contain traditional structures, as do a majority of the works listed in The Children's Literature Association's Touchstones: Reflections on the Best in Children's Literature. This satisfaction derived from having narrative expectations met extends even beyond childhood into adulthood and accounts for the popularity of formula fiction, such as the romance, western and mystery genres offer.

Agonistic Forms
Bragging about one's prowess, verbal tongue lashings of one's opponent, and the fulsome expression of praise are all agonistic features of oral texts, as well as the enthusiastic description of physical violence.

Walter Ong (1989) explains:

The common and persistent physical hardships of life in many early societies of course explain in part of the high evidence of violence in early verbal art forms. Ignorance of physical causes of disease and disaster can also foster personal tensions. Since the disease or disaster is caused by something, in lieu of physical causes the personal malevolence of another human being—a magician, a witch—can be assumed and personal hostilities thereby increased (44-45).

These features, when used by children in their oral storytelling, often dismay parents and teachers and are readily discouraged. But they are, nonetheless, central to much of our "classic" literature that grew out of the original oral stories—texts like The Odyssey and The Iliad and much of The Bible.

While most people would argue that these stories are not suitable for children, there are acceptable forms of literature that make use of these features.

Most of the traditional fairy tales and folk tales contain witches or magicians or sorcerers and a great deal of violence. While it is not within the scope of this paper to delve into the psychological needs of the child that are satisfied by these stories (see Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment for an indepth study), it is important to emphasize that these elements are a vital part of the oral
culture of children and we do them a disservice when we try to expurgate these traditional tales of these elements. Because children are well aware of the roles witches, etc. play in this type of tale, it is easy for them to become engaged in the text by being able to predict the story line.

These elements can also be used for humor and are the building blocks of much of the hyperbole found in children's literature. Humor is probably the most engaging element in any children's text. Many of the contemporary poets for children use hyperbole extensively. One example is John Ciardi's humorous "Mummy Slept Late and Daddy Fixed Breakfast" which describes a waffle as being so tough that it cannot be dented by hacksaw.

Tall tales also depend on agonistic forms, particularly excessive bragging and fulsome praise.

Boastful frontier humor is found in North American tall tales. These tales reflect the hardships of settlers, who faced severe climatic changes, unknown lands, and people whose lives reflected strange cultures. Exaggerated claims in tall tales--such as those found in Walter Blair's Tall Tale America: A Legendary History of Our Humorous Heroes--declare that...frontier people are so powerful they can lasso and subdue cyclones; and that the leader of the river boaters can outshoot, outfight, outrun, and outbrag everyone in the world (Norton 1991, 256).

Another group of books that use hyperbole and agonistic forms are the "moron" tales. These stories, like The Peterkin Papers, and The Stupids series feature characters who are completely ridiculous. In reading these stories, children can use their "superior" knowledge of the world to
predict what disaster is likely to befall the befuddled main characters.

Archetypes, Patterns and Motifs

The advantages to using archetypes, patterns, and motifs are obvious when it comes to the child's ability to become engaged in the text and predict what will happen. By a very young age, most children in the Western world are familiar with the archetypes of the king, the queen, the princess, the prince, the fairy godmother and the wicked step mother. Because these characters are so "flat" and do not contain the confusing complexities of real life people, their behavior is always predictable.

Children also become aware at an early age that many things in fairy and folk tales come in threes, even if they are not able to consciously express it. This also helps in the predictability of the text.

Finally, most traditional tales follow a pattern of motifs as Propp pointed out and because they are always the same, the child is familiar with them after being exposed to a few traditional tales.

Beyond the traditional folk and fairy tales, though, there are other sources that contain these archetypes, patterns and motifs. Most literary folk tales (that is contemporary folk tales created by authors) rely on these traditional forms in their creation. There are the tales
of Hans Christian Anderson, many of which have been illustrated and are available in the picture book format. There are also the creations of Jane Yolen: The Girl Who Cried Flowers, The Acorn Quest, and The Faery Flag are just a few examples from her extensive list.

Recently, there has begun a new trend in children's literature, that of the "fractured" fairy tale. These stories work with a child's knowledge of the archetypes, patterns, and motifs in traditional stories and turn them on their head for humor. These can be particularly engaging for young children because they depend on the child's schema for traditional tales for their effect. Some recent examples are Jane Yolen's Sleeping Ugly, The True Story of the Three Little Pigs, The Frog Prince Continued, and The Stinky Cheese Man by Jon Scieszka and The Paper Bag Princess by Robert Muench.

Binary Opposites

The use of binary opposites in characterization in stories for young children is particularly effective in engaging them in the text, for the characters are always predictable. The handsome prince is always noble and the wicked witch is always mean, and these characters have none of the mixed motives of real life people. Traditional fairy and folk tales of course contain characters who are binary opposites. They are also built on simple but powerful
abstract concepts like good/bad, security/fear, courage/cowardice, etc.

The content of such stories is often quite remote from anything the child has experienced, but that content is made accessible and meaningful by being articulated on basic abstract concepts to which young children have direct access (Eagen 1991, 67).

The Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes are another source of tales with strong binary opposites. There are both good and bad children in many of the rhymes, as well as good and bad animals. While nursery rhymes sometimes don't explicitly state which behavior is good or bad, children have no difficulty identifying which is which and empathizing with the characters that display it.

Many contemporary texts also make use of binary opposites. One example is The Wild Baby by Jack Prelutsky who uses a child's prior knowledge of "good behavior" to create a character who is seems totally unredeemable, but his mother still loves him and that is a comfort to children who often feel they are being uncontrollably bad.
While individuals investigating reading comprehension differ on the details of their theoretical constructs, there are two characteristics that most models of the reading process share. First, there is increasing agreement that the predication of upcoming text is central to proficient reading comprehension (Goodman & Goodman, 1977, Neisser, 1967, Smith, 1971, etc.) Second, this prediction is accomplished by bringing to bear one's knowledge on the graphic and contextual information. The success of these predictions relies on previous experience with the subject matter and, secondarily, on how language is typically organized. (Goodman, 1976, Morton, 1970, Rumelhart, 1976, etc.) The problem with applying these models to pre-readers is that they assume that the child's previous oral language experiences provide a familiarity with linguistic organization sufficient for the efficient anticipation of written language (Rubin, 1978) while ignoring the obvious differences between oral and literary text structures. Rather than focusing on making the language consistent with a child's oral experience, early readers and picture books...
instead have focused on creating texts that depict subject matter with which a child is familiar. This emphasis on the idea that the child's ability to predict depends on being familiar with the events depicted in the text has resulted in a plethora of "real life" stories. However, the language in these stories is for the most part literary language. Thus, while a child may be able to predict what will happen next in the text, based on his previous experience, he will not be able to predict the language that will be used. This study advances the hypothesis that if children are not involved in the language of the text, they cannot become fully engaged in the reading of the story and their involvement will be on a very superficial level.

This study was undertaken to explore the validity of the following experimental hypothesis:

Pre-readers will show greater reading comprehension of texts which utilize oral language structures and devices than they will with texts which rely only on their familiarity with the events depicted in the text and utilize literary language structures.

Procedure

The 30 kindergarten students and 30 preschool students who participated in this study were randomly selected from a single school district. The socio-economic status of the children is very diverse, ranging from very wealthy children
of professional parents to very poor children from welfare households. The wide range of the socio-economic backrounds of the students was one reason for the selection of this particular school district. The preschool students all attend a progressive Montesorri preschool which stresses a very "hands on" learning experience for the students. While the children are daily exposed to literature through read-aloud sessions and the use of thematically related books, no effort is made to teach them to read in any structured way. The kindergarten students are taught the letters of alphabet, but beyond that there is no formal reading instruction. They also are exposed to literature on a daily basis through read-aloud sessions and thematically related books.

Students were distinguished by two between-subject factors: 1) age and 2) treatment condition.

Two stories were used in the study, one which utilizes oral language structures and devices ("The Tale of Custard, the Dragon" by Ogden Nash, see Appendix 1) and one which utilizes literary language structures and familiar material ("No Dogs is Not Enough" by Linda Leopold Strauss, see Appendix 1)

Children were tested in groups of 5. Fifteen kindergarten students and fifteen preschoolers were read the first story with the oral language structures and then tested for reading comprehension. The same number of each
grade were exposed to the second story with the literary language structures and then tested. Assignment to condition was randomized.

Analysis of the Stories

"The Tale of Custard the Dragon" by Ogden Nash was chosen because of its use of many of the features of oral narratives. **Redundancy:** There are a number of redundant elements in the story. The first stanza of the poem is repeated in the next to last stanza and the fourth stanza is repeated in the ending stanza, repeating the main idea of the tale. Several phrases appear repeatedly, including, little white house, little black kitten and little grey kitten, little yellow dog and little red wagon. The repeated use of little emphasizes Belinda's ownership of these things. There is a refrain, "a realio, trulio, little pet dragon," that appears in some variation in four of the stanzas.

**Rhythm and Rhyme:** The tale is told in the form of a poem and there is a consistent rhythm throughout, maintaining an A,A/B,B rhyme scheme.

**Metaphor and Simile:** There are a number of metaphors and similes in the poem. One of the most obvious is in the naming of the pets: a black kitten named Ink, a gray mouse named Blink and a yellow dog who "was as sharp as Mustard." The description of the dragon as well is filled with
metaphor: "mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose...daggers on his toes." The bravery of Belinda and Mustard is described with the use of metaphors and similes: "brave as a barrel full of bears, brave as a tiger in a rage". And the fight with the pirate also told in metaphor and simile: "Ink tickled down to the bottom of the household,...snorting like an engine, Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon...He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm."

**Story:** There is a very clear narrative structure in this poem. It begins with a problem—a cowardly dragon. There is a crisis when a pirate comes, a battle ensues and in the resolution the dragon triumphs. Then the story comes back around to the beginning in the end with the dragon still preferring a nice safe cage. There are no flashbacks or secondary story lines.

**Agonistically toned:** There is both name calling and fulsome praise in the poem. In the fifth and sixth stanza the other characters ridicule the dragon for his cowardice by tickling him unmerciful, rudely calling him Percival, laughing at him and rudely asking his age. Their own bravery is exaggerated in the fourth stanza where they are described as being as brave a barrel full of bears, chasing lions down the stairs, and being as brave as a tiger in a rage.

**Archetypes:** Two archetypes are prominent in this poem; both the dragon and the pirate and the humor in the poem derives
from the cowardice of the dragon working against the archetype.

**Binary Opposites:** In this particular piece, the binary opposites work on two levels. On the primary level, there is the contrast between the bravery of Belinda and her other pets and the cowardice of the dragon. On the secondary level, there is the good/evil dichotomy between the dragon and the pirate. The evil nature of the pirate is never questioned; there is no hope for redemption and his punishment is violent and final.

The story, "No Dogs is Not Enough" by Linda Leopold Strauss was chosen because it is an excellent example of a "reality" story for children; it lacks any of the elements of oral narratives; and because it deals with a similar theme: pets, but in a more realistic way. It is written in a straight literary style with ample use of dialogue. The language is simplified, and there is no difficult vocabulary, in contrast to Nash's poem where words like "cutlass," "dungeon," "flagon," "gyrate," etc. greatly elevate the reading level. None of the phrases or sentences are repeated, and the sentence structure is varied so there is no clear rhythm. No rhyming words are present in the story, and there are no metaphors or similes. The narrative structure is more complicated by the introduction of the imaginary dog, so that it doesn't follow a straight linear
progression. It is, however, brought around in the resolution by the trip to Lawlors, referred to in the beginning of the story. No agonistic forms are found in the story, no bragging or criticism. The story is based very much in reality, so there is no use of archetype. In addition, the story lacks any clear good guys or bad guys; the characters are well rounded and even the parents, who will not allow Tony to buy the dog, are not seen as particularly mean.

Testing Procedures

Four different components were used in the testing. The first component consisted of an observation of the children during the reading itself. The second involved an observation of the children after the reading experience. The third component was a retelling task completed by each child. And the final component was a drawing task.

Observation during and after the reading: Because young children often do not possess the necessary writing skills, nor are they always ready to answer questions about a story, it becomes necessary to find alternatives to standard tests to augment our awareness of children's responses to literature. In "Responses to Literature," Cullinan (1977) describes several instruments for observing children for their literary responses both before and after the literary
experience. The instruments take into account the situational context of the experience, and both verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Using Cullinan's examples, modifications were made in her observational guidelines for this particular study. Samples of the instruments used can be found in Appendix 2.

**Situational Context** - The situational contexts for each reading experience were very tightly controlled. For the Kindergarten students, the story reading took place in the school library in the usual story corner. The area was free from outside distractions and the students were well acquainted with the procedures for listening during story time. The story was read by the school librarian and every effort was made to replicate the standard library story experience with which the children are familiar. For the preschool children, once again, the usual story corner was used. There were no outside distractions during any of the story times, and the preschool teacher read the stories during the regular story hour. The observations were made from the glassed in work area in the library and the adjacent office space in the preschool. In both situations, the children were not aware of the observer.

Both the kindergarten and the preschool children were asked to join the group and to remain with it until the story was finished. No visual aids were used, and, in this one aspect, the stories were very different from those that
the children are used to having read. At the beginning of each session, the reader explained to the children that there were no pictures and the children would have to imagine the pictures in their minds. In two of the three preschool groups, the children expressed some resistance to this idea.

*Verbal behavior during the reading*- The children's verbal communication was grouped according to the function or purpose it serves. Children were observed for examples of questions, interjections, elaborations upon an idea or the repetition of a phrase or group of words. Prior to running the actual experimental sessions, two "dry runs" were done with each group and the observer, as well as the story reader used the observational instruments and compared notes to enhance the reliability of the observations made during the experiment.

What the children talked about in response to the story was also recorded. Did they talk about what was happening or what might happen in the story? Did they add to the story? Did they relate what was happening in the story to themselves? Did they comment on things that have happened to them? Did they comment on the interests or responses of others in the group?

The children were also observed for any comments unrelated to the story that might be indicative of a lack of interest. Each time one of the described behaviors was
observed, a check was made in that category. The data was then analyzed by adding up the checks in each category and dividing by the number of children observed. This gave a mean score which could be compared for each age group and story type.

*Nonverbal Behavior during the reading*—Young children often tell us much more about themselves through their actions than they do through their words, particularly in a setting where adults expect children to be quiet and pay close attention. Nonverbal behaviors may be grouped in terms of larger body movements, such as moving the whole body from one place to another, or other movements, such as jumping or clapping hands. A second grouping of smaller body movements includes gestures and facial expressions. It is also important to note to whom or to what a child responds nonverbally, the manner in which the child responds, and the timing of the responses. Again, the children were also observed for unrelated nonverbal behavior that might indicate wandering attention or lack of interest.

A check was given in each category when the behavior was observed. A mean score was then obtained by adding up the total number of checks by category and dividing by 15.

*Verbal behavior after the reading*—When the oral reading was complete the students were given drawing materials and asked
to illustrate some aspect of the story they had just heard. While they worked on their drawings the librarian or preschool teacher remained nearby, making observations using the guidelines for verbal behavior after the reading found in Appendix 2, of their verbal responses to the stories during the drawing task.

Two types of responses were considered: those made to the teacher and those made to fellow students. Questions about the story, or repetition of a phrase or group of words, were recorded as well as comments on what happened in the story, comments on characters, additions to the story, relating what happened in the story to their own experiences, comments on their reaction to the story and comments on the responses of others in the group. All comments unrelated to the story experience were also carefully recorded.

The data was later tabulated in the same way as the data for the verbal behavior during the reading.

Retelling Task: In Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading, Teale and Sulzby (1986) describe the use of a retelling task in determining a child's comprehension of the story. They recommend use of the standardized retelling task devised by Goodman and Burke (1972). Students were asked to perform this task following the oral reading of each story. There were four components to the total comprehension score:
Character Analysis (1-5 points), Setting and Events (1-5 points), Plot (1-5 points), and Theme (1-5 points).

After the story was read aloud, the children were given drawing materials and asked to illustrate some action of the story. While the children worked, they were taken aside one at a time by the researcher and asked questions about the story. Their responses were taped and later analyzed using the retelling instrument found in Appendix 2. The children were asked to tell the researcher the story, since the researcher "missed" hearing it. If they could not remember anything, the researcher asked "Who was in the story?" "What happened?" and "What happened then?" No further prompting was given.

In this case a mean score was again obtained by adding the scores in each category and dividing by 15.

**Drawing Task:** After the oral reading of the story, each child was given materials for drawing and asked to illustrate some aspect of the story of their own choosing. Each child was then asked to tell about their drawing and the drawings were then scored on the same basis as the retelling task: depiction of characters (1-5 points), depiction of setting and events (1-5 points), reference to plot (1-5 points) and reference to theme (1-5 points). The researcher, the preschool teacher or librarian and another
teacher participated in the evaluation and their scores were averaged for each student in each category.

As with the retelling, the mean score was obtained by adding the total scores for each category and dividing by 15.

Results

In order to facilitate the discussion of the results, the oral text (Nash's "Tale of Custard the Dragon") will be referred to as OT, and the literary text (Strauss' "No Dogs is Not Enough") will be referred to LT from now on.

Observations during the reading:

Situational context- Because the readings were so tightly controlled, no outside distractions occurred during any of the tellings for the preschool or kindergarten students and the situational contexts were consistent for each testing group.

Verbal Behavior during the reading—Overall, there was a marked contrast in the verbal behavior exhibited by both age groups during the reading of OT as opposed to LT. The following tables and graphs depict the number of times each behavior occurred during the reading of the text.
### Observation of Verbal Behavior During the Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Oral Text</th>
<th>Literary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interjections</strong></td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaborations on Idea</strong></td>
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<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repetition of a phrase or group of words</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments on what is happening</strong></td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adds to the story</strong></td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relates what is happening to own experiences</strong></td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments on their reaction to story</strong></td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments on responses of others</strong></td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unrelated comments</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions  More questions were asked during the LT. All of those questions related to whether or not the imaginary dog in the story was indeed imaginary. The teacher did not answer the question directly but asked the children to wait and see what they thought. However, after asking the question, most of the children seemed to loose interest in the story and their attention wandered. During the OT, several preschoolers asked for more description of the pirate and one asked for an explanation of Custard.

Interjections  During the OT, several interjections were made during the fight between the dragon and pirate, in the form of encouragement for the dragon. One boy described the length of the daggers on his toes. During the LT two students mentioned their own pets.

Elaborations on an idea: The OT brought out several elaborations in both age groups on the descriptions of the dragon and the pirate. The LT did not elicit any elaborations in either age group.

Repetition of a phrase or group of words: The biggest difference between the OT and the LT is evident in this area. Because the LT did not repeat any particular phrases or use any rhyming, none of the wording in the story captured any of the children's attention. In the OT the
phrase "realio, trulio" was the most commonly repeated. Several children also repeated little white house, little red wagon, etc. and one child repeated the entire last refrain of the poem with the teacher.

Comments on what is happening: There were slightly more comments on the story line during the OT than during the LT. However, the comments during the LT were restricted to speculations about the dog's reality.

Predicts what might happen: The children hearing the OT were more likely to predict what happens next, particularly during the fight scene between the dragon and the pirate. Only one kindergartner commented on the LT, saying "I bet he never gets a dog."

Adds to the story: Several children added to the OT, focusing on what happened to the dragon after the fight, involving speculations about stomach aches and telling off the cat and the dog.

Relates what is happening in story to own experience: All of the comments from the LT listeners involved experiences with their own pets. These comments consisted simply of describing their own pets. Only one child related the problem in the story, of obtaining a pet, to his own
experience. The OT listeners were more likely to relate to the theme of the story, talking about what they would do if they had a dragon who was a scardy cat, or about similar experiences where they had to face an enemy.

Comments on their reaction to the story: Overall, the preschoolers were much less inhibited in their verbalizations during the reading. During the reading of the OT many of the children reacted to the entrance of the pirate, expressing worry or fear and to the triumph of the dragon, expressing pleasure and approval. The children listening to the LT did not react to the actions in the story, but two students complained they didn't get it.

Comments on responses of others in the group: There was not a great deal of discussion during the reading of the story; the comments on responses of others were restricted to affirmations.

Unrelated comments: This is the area where we see the most significant results. The children hearing the LT were much more distracted, and several unrelated conversations went on during each session. The children hearing the OT were much more focused on the story.
Additional Notes: Both the preschool teacher and the kindergarten librarian commented on how easily distracted the children were during the reading of the LT and how they had to make special efforts using expression in their voices to pull the children's attention back to the story.

Non-verbal Behavior during the reading—Again, there was a marked contrast in both age groups between those children listening to the LT as opposed to those listening to the OT.
The following charts and graphs depict the number of times each behavior occurred during the reading of the text.

**OBSERVATION OF NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOR DURING THE READING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Category</th>
<th>ORAL TEXT</th>
<th>LITERARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>P</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves closer to reader</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitates action in story</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiles, laughs</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frowns</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opens eyes wide</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestures in reaction to story</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frequency

Moves Closer
Imitates Action
Smiles
Frowns
Opens Eyes
Gestures
Unrelated

Kindergarten Observation of Non-Verbal Behavior During the Reading
Moves closer to reader: It is interesting to note that none of the children listening to the LT made any effort to move closer to the reader, while several children moved closer during the OT, particularly with the arrival of the pirate.

Imitates action in story when action involves larger body movements: Again, none of the children hearing the LT imitated any of the actions, while the OT children acted out the fight.

Smiles, laughs: The children listening to OT reacted with laughter to the teasing of the dragon and to the end of the story. Surprisingly, none of the children who read the LT reacted with laughter to Tony’s imaginary dog.

Frowns: The children hearing the OT frowned when the pirate appeared in the window and during the fight. The children hearing the LT frowned at the mention of the imaginary dog, often in conjunction with asking if the dog was real or not.

Opens eyes wide: Reaction to the OT occurred during the appearance of the dragon and the fight. Only one child reacted to the LT, and that was when the mother said he could not have a dog the first time.
Gestures in reaction to something in the story: None of the children hearing the LT reacted with gestures. The reactions of the OT listeners involved imitating gestures from the story or gesturing in approval for the dragon eating the pirate.

General Nonverbal behaviors that do not appear to be directed at another person in response to the story: As with the verbal behaviors, the children listening to the OT story were much more focused than the children listening to the LT story. Many of the LT children were clearly distracted, looking around and fidgeting, playing with their shoelaces or their neighbors hair and clothing.

Additional comments: Twice during the reading of the LT to preschoolers and once with kindergartners, the teacher had to stop the story to ask the children to sit still or to stop some nonverbal behavior.

Verbal behavior after the reading— The results of the verbal behavior after the reading were even more pronounced than during the reading. Uninhibited by prohibitions against interrupting the teacher, the children felt freer to express their feelings about the stories.
The following charts and graphs depict the number of times each behavior occurred during the reading of the text.

**OBSERVATIONS OF VERBAL BEHAVIOR AFTER THE READING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>ORAL TEXT</th>
<th>LITERARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
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<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition of a phrase or group of words</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on what happened in the story</td>
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<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adds to story</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relates what happened to own experiences</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on their reaction to story</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on responses of others</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated comments</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions: The questions asked by the LT children once again focused on whether or not the dog was imaginary. The OT children asked questions that were really extensions of the story, such as where they could obtain a pet dragon, was the dragon really a coward, etc.

Repetition of a phrase or group of words: The LT children did not repeat any phrases or groups of words from the story. The OT children most often repeated "realio, trulio," with one group starting a generative exercise making up things to go with "realio, trulio."

Comments on what happened in the story: Most of the OT children commented on the story events, focusing on the fight and on having a pet dragon. The discussions of the OT story were sustained throughout the entire drawing session. Comments on the events in the LT story were restricted to the first few minutes of the drawing session, with the conversations drifting off to other subject matters fairly quickly.

Comments on characters: Again, there was a sustained discussion by the OT children of characters in the story, focusing primarily on the dragon and the pirate. The focus of the LT children was on the dog, and again, the comments
were restricted to the first few minutes of the drawing session.

**Adds to the story:** Several of the OT children extended the story beyond the ending, discussing further adventures of the dragon against various adversaries such as burglars. One kindergarten LT child suggested that Tony might have built a dog house.

**Comments on their reaction to the story:** All of the OT children commented on their personal reactions to the story and engaged in a sustained conversation with other children about their reactions. A few of the LT children made personal reaction comments and tried to initiate discussions, but did not meet with success.

**Comments of responses of others in the group:** The OT discussions stayed very focused on the story. The LT discussions quickly digressed to other subjects.

**Unrelated comments:** Most of the unrelated comments in the OT group related to drawing supplies. The bulk of the discussion by the LT children was on unrelated topics.

**Additional comments:** A significant difference between the OT children and the LT children can be seen from this data.
The OT children talked about the story they had read during the entire drawing period. However, the LT groups were easily distracted from the topic of the story and digressed into discussions of cartoons, cats, houses, dolls and toys.

Retelling Task- There were clear differences in the ability to recall all four subject areas (character, setting, plot and theme) between the children who heard the OT story and those who heard the LT story. Some of the children could not complete the retelling task and said they were unable to remember anything, although their pictures and discussions afterward indicated they might have just been reluctant to talk to the researcher. One OT child and three LT children couldn't retell the story at all.
The following tables and graphs depict the scores in each subject area.

**RETELLING TASK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>ORAL TEXT</th>
<th>LITERARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>P</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Character analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.73</td>
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<td>Setting and Events</td>
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<td>2.93</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Plot</td>
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<td>2.83</td>
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<td>Theme</td>
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<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.53</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Character Analysis: Most of the OT children remembered all the characters and their parts in the story. The exception was one of the secondary pets, the mouse, the cat or the dog. The LT children also remembered the characters, with the exception of the father.

Setting and events: All of the OT and LT readers who could recall the story remembered the settings accurately. Many of the LT children did not retell the part of the story where the dog was lost.

Plot: All of the OT children could recall the plot. Many of the LT readers did not recall the end where they went to get the real dog.

Theme: Many of the OT children did not remember that the dragon was described as still preferring his safe cage, but they realized that he was no longer going to be teased about being a coward. Many of the LT children did not understand that Tony was going to get a real dog in the end, and only one mentioned that it had to do with his demonstration of responsibility with the imaginary dog.
**Drawing Task**— While some of the children were hesitant about the retelling task, they all undertook the drawing task eagerly and were very willing to talk about the pictures they drew. While all of the children in the OT groups drew pictures related to the subjects of the story, many of the LT children drew pictures unrelated to the story.

The following tables and graphs depict the scores in each subject area.

**DRAWING TASK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
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<th>LITERARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>P</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depiction of Characters</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Depiction of Setting and Events</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>References to Plot</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.46</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to Theme</td>
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<td>3.86</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.46</td>
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Drawing Task Kindergarten

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Plot</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Text</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary Text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Depiction of Characters: All of the OT children depicted characters from the story. Several focused primarily on the dragon and the pirate and their encounter. Many of the LT children included characters unrelated to the story in their pictures, most often personal pets.

Depiction of Setting and Events: All of the OT children depicted the setting of the story and drew something related to one of the events in the story, the majority being the encounter between the dragon and the pirate. Many of the LT children drew pictures of settings unrelated to the story. One group of 4 drew pictures of houses and forts following their discussion, one group of 4 drew cat pictures and 4 drew pictures of toys that they wanted.

References to Plot: All of the OT children put their pictures in the context of where it occurred in the plot. Several mentioned what happened before or after to place their picture. Most of the LT children made no reference at all to the plot. Those pictures that were related to the story were described simply as Tony and his dog, with no connection to what point in the story they were depicting.

References to Theme: Most of the OT children made reference to the dragon's new found bravery. Only one child mentioned
that he still wanted a nice safe cage. One LT child mentioned Tony's desire for the dog and what he did to get it. Otherwise there was no mention by the LT children of the theme.

Discussion

Results based on these three measures of reading: observation of verbal behavior both during and after the reading; observation of non-verbal behavior during the reading; and the two measures of reading comprehension: the retelling task and the drawing task, generally support the hypothesis that oral language structures facilitate the young child's appreciation of a text. It was clear from the data that those children who heard the oral language text were more focused on the story. On the other hand, the children who heard the literary language text were clearly distracted, and their level of involvement with the story was much less. In addition, the retelling and drawing tasks clearly indicate that the children who listened to the oral language text had a greater comprehension level than the children who listened to the literary language text.

The results of this study contradict two popularly held notions about young children's reading material, that young children's stories are more easily understood if they contain subject matter that the child has experience with and that literary language structures are not a problem if
the language used in young children's stories does not contain unfamiliar words. It is clear from the data that children would benefit from more exposure to stories which utilize oral language structures, not only at a pre-reading stage, but perhaps in their early readers. Additional research needs to be done on children learning to read to see if oral language structures in their reading materials would facilitate their learning.
CONCLUSION

Books can play a significant role in the life of the young child, but the extent to which they do depends entirely upon adults...The responsibility lies first with parents but is shared by child care workers, early childhood teachers,...and all others whose work reaches young children. There is a great store of literature to share with the young, but the wealth could go unused if adults disregard their responsibilities. Adults must sing the songs, say the rhymes, tell the tales, and read the stories to children to make literature and all its benefits central to children's lives. Bernice E. Cullinan Literature and Young Children

The research presented in this thesis has some important implications in the types of materials we choose to share with young children during read-aloud sessions. If we want children's early contact with literature to engage them as active readers, despite the fact that someone else is decoding the written words, then it is important that our primary consideration in choosing books is the kind of language they contain.

In my research I hypothesized that, because children function in an oral culture, then the kinds of language oral cultures utilize to aid memory and learning would encourage children's participation in read-aloud stories. As we have seen, the use of texts which contain the elements ritualized oral texts make use of (prosody, redundancy, rhythm and
rhyme, metaphor, agonistic forms and archetypal patterns and motifs) is more effective in engaging young children in read-aloud sessions. Therefore, the use of these elements should be one of our primary considerations in choosing texts to use with young children.

Implications for Parents and Teachers

The importance of the findings in this thesis also have application in the ways we conduct read-aloud sessions with young children. Oftentimes read-aloud sessions become nothing more than a labeling game using the pictures. These kinds of games are fine, but they should never take the place of real reading which allows the child to get caught up in the flow of the story.

It is also important to recognized the primacy of the text. While the pictures can often be studied for the ways they enhance a story, it is more important for young children to learn to create pictures in their minds from the words they hear. In our visually oriented society where we are barraged with different images every minute, it becomes increasingly important for children to hear stories without the aid of pictures and to be encouraged to create their own artistic images.

Children should also be allowed to move to the rhythm and action of the words. They should be given the chance to repeat familiar phrases and refrains. And too often it is the adult and not the child who initiates the questioning.
Young children usually cannot articulate what they feel and know about a story, and asking them a series of questions distracts them from being involved with the text.

Finally, we should never underestimate children's understanding. Just as with oral language, which they can understand at a much more difficult level than they can produce, so it is with the language in stories. Simplified texts, which suck the blood from powerful stories, do more harm by making reading seem an anemic thing. So too with stories of everyday experiences, such as visiting the doctor or starting school, which often oversimplify those experiences, making the book version pale in comparison to the real thing.

Implications for Further Research

Teachers and researchers need to take a serious look at how orality affects the mind set of young children who are emerging into literacy. There are a number of areas in which this research can be expanded. Additional studies should be done with a variety of oral and literary texts to verify the results of this study. In addition, there are some exciting implications for teaching children to read independently. Research should be done on using oral language structures in beginning reading texts. And finally, serious consideration should be given to the importance of oral storytelling to enhance reading skills.
and to the expanded use and development of oral language experiences in the classroom.

Walter de la Mare said, "Only the rarest and best kind of anything can be good enough for the young." We must remember this when we become the guides who lead a child into the new worlds that they should find in reading.
APPENDIX 1: STORY TEXTS
THE TALE OF CUSTARD, THE DRAGON

By Ogden Nash

Belinda lived in a little white house,
With a little black kitten and a little gray mouse,
And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Now the name of the little black kitten was Ink,
And the little gray mouse, she called her Blink,
And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,
But the dragon was a coward, and she called him Custard.

Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth,
And spikes on top of him and scales underneath,
Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose,
And realio, trulio, daggers on his toes.

Belinda was as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful,
Ink, Blink, and Mustard, they rudely called him Percival,
They all sat laughing in the little red wagon
At the realio, trulio, cowardly dragon.

Belind giggled till she shook the house,
And Blink said, "week!" (which is giggling for a mouse.)
Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age
When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Suddenly, suddenly, they heard a nasty sound,
And Mustard growled, and they all looked around.
"Meowch!" cried Ink, and "Oooh!" cried Belinda,
For there was a pirate, climbing in the winda.

Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right,
And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright,
His beard was black, one leg was wood;
It was clear that the pirate meant no good.

Belinda paled, and she cried, "Help, Help!"
But Mustard fled with a terrified yelp.
Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household,
And little mouse Blink strategically mouseholed.

But up jumped Custard, snorting like an engine,
Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon.
With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm
He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm.

The pirate gaped at Belinda's dragon,
And gulped some grog from his pocket flagon.
He fired two bullets, but they didn't hit,
And Custard gobbled him, every bit.

Belinda embraced him, Mustard licked him,
No one mourned for his pirate victim.
Ink and Blink in glee did gyrate
Around the dragon that ate the pirate.

Belinda still lives in her little white house,
With her little black kitten and her little gray mouse,
And her little yellow dog and her little red wagon,
And her realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Belinda is as brave as a barrel full of bears,
And Ink and Blink chase lions down the stairs.
Mustard is as brave as a tiger in a rage,
But Custard keeps crying for a nice safe cage.
Tony wanted a dog.

Tony's mother said no.

Mrs. Lawlor who lived up the street promised Tony one of Snuggy's puppies—if Tony's mother said yes.

Tony's mother said no.

"I have enough to do already," she told Tony, "Without taking care of a dog."

The Lawlors were going to put an ad in the paper to sell Snuggy's puppies, even the brown puppy with the white nose. Tony had to find a way to change his mother's mind.

The next morning, after he got dressed, Tony found a rope. He made a loop at one end and a smaller loop at the other end that he held in his hand. Then he ran downstairs, trailing the rope behind him.

"I'm going to walk Nosey before breakfast," Tony told his mother.

His mother stared at him.

"Nosey. My dog," said Tony. "Isn't she cute?" And he went out the back door, pulling the rope behind him.

"Now, Tony...," began his mother, but Tony was gone.

When he came back into the kitchen, he looped the rope over the back of his chair.

"Down, Nosey," he said. "Down, girl. Sit."

Tony's father leaned over to look at the floor next to Tony's chair. He looked at Tony. "Are you feeling all right?" he asked.

"Fine," said Tony. "Nosey's fine, too. She's a good dog, isn't she, Dad?"

"You'd never even know she's there," said Tony's father.
Tony was very busy after school. He took the money he had been saving from his allowance and walked Nosey to the corner store. He bought dog food and a red dish to put it in, a leash, and real leather collar. When he got home, he put the dog food and a bowl of water in the kitchen.

"Mom? said Tony. "Nosey's such a good dog. Can she sleep in my room tonight?"

"Absolutely not," said Tony's mother firmly. "No dogs in the bedroom." Then she laughed out loud. "You and your imagination!"

After a few days, the neighbors got used to seeing Tony walk around the block with a leash and real leather dog collar. Tony walked Nosey twice a day, rain or shine, and every morning he put fresh food in her new red bowl. Tony's mother had to admit that Tony took good care of Nosey.

"If I can take care of Nosey," Tony told his mother, "I can take care of any puppy."

"Perhaps," said his mother, "but we have Nosey now. One dog is enough."

Early the next morning, Tony came down to the kitchen. "Have you seen Nosey?" he asked his mother. "I can't find her anywhere."

He walked over to the red dish. "Nosey hasn't touched her food," he said in a worried voice. "She must have got out."

"But how?" asked Tony's mother. "You had her with you at bedtime. I saw her myself." She turned to Tony's father. "Didn't you, dear?" she asked.

Tony's father looked at her and shook his head. "You and your imagination!" he laughed. "You and that dog!"

"Maybe we should put an ad in the paper," suggested Tony's mother at lunchtime.

"What would we say Nosey looked like?" Tony wanted to know.

There was no doubt about. Nosey was going to be hard to find.

"We won't find her," said Tony, and he was right.

"I hate to admit it," said Tony's mother at dinner, "but I think I miss Nosey."
"We could get another dog," said Tony quickly.

"What if Nosey comes back?" asked his father. "Your mother says one dog is enough."

"Nosey is not coming back," said Tony. "And no dogs is not enough."

"Not coming back?" said his mother. "That's a different story." She looked at Tony. "I see in the paper that Lawlors' puppies are still for sale."

"Brown ones," said Tony's father. "One with a white nose."

Tony held his breath.

"It's a nice night," said Tony's father. "Let's take a walk to the Lawlors'."

"And don't forget the leash and collar," said Tony's mother.
APPENDIX 2: TEST FORMS
**OBSERVATION OF VERBAL BEHAVIOR DURING THE READING**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Group Number</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Type</th>
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<tr>
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<th>Relates what is happening in story to own experiences</th>
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<th>Comments on their reaction to the story</th>
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<th>Comments on responses of others in the group</th>
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OBSERVATION OF NON-VERBAL BEHAVIOR DURING THE READING

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| Story Type | | |
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| Children's Age Level | | |
|----------------------|-------------|

**Larger Body Movements**

| Moves closer to reader | | |
|------------------------|-------------|

| Imitates action in story when action involves larger body movements | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

| Other | | |
|-------|-------------|

**Smaller Body Movements and Facial Expressions**

| Smiles, laughs | | |
|----------------|-------------|

| Frowns | | |
|--------|-------------|

| Opens eyes wide | | |
|-----------------|-------------|

| Gestures in reaction to something in the story | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|

| Other | | |
|-------|-------------|

**Comments:**

| | |
| | |

**General Nonverbal Behaviors That Do Not Appear to Be Directed at Another Person in Response to Story:**

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<td>Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comments on what happened in the story</td>
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<td>Comments on characters</td>
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<td>Relates what happened in the story to own experiences</td>
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# RETELLING TASK

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Group Number ____________________

Story Type________________________

Children's Age Level________________

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Character Analysis

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Setting and Events

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Plot

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Theme

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Comments:
**DRAWING TASK**

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**Children's Age Level**

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**Depiction of Characters**

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**Depiction of Setting and Events**

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**References to Plot**

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**References to Theme**

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**Comments:**
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