Reading interests of fifth and sixth grade boys

Judith E. Sheridan

Rowan College of New Jersey

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READING INTERESTS OF FIFTH AND
SIXTH GRADE BOYS

by
Judith E. Sheridan

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division of
Rowan College of New Jersey
1996

Approved by ________________________________
Advisor

Date Approved ________________
May 1996
ABSTRACT

Judith E. Sheridan

Reading Interests of Fifth and Sixth Grade Boys.

Fifth and sixth grade boys were studied to determine their reading interests for the purpose of developing a bibliography of books that the boys had read and enjoyed to use for collection development for the school library. One class of fifth grade students and one class of sixth grade students were surveyed to determine their reading attitudes, habits, and interests. Reading logs were kept during a three month period recording books that the students read during that time and enjoyed. Both boys and girls participated in the data collection portion of the study.

Major findings reinforced the author's perceptions that reading attitude declines as the children progress to the upper elementary grades, and that girls enjoy reading more than boys at this age. While the survey showed that even the reading attitude of the girls declined in the sixth grade, overall the attitude of the girls was more positive than the attitude of the boys. When asked if they enjoyed reading, only 36% of the fifth and sixth grade boys responded positively compared with 70% of the fifth and sixth grade girls. Despite the professed decline in reading attitude, the students did complete reading logs and a bibliography of books of interest for boys in fifth and sixth grade was developed. The fifth grade boys recommended 36 books, and the sixth grade boys recommended 37 books.
Fifth and sixth grade boys were studied to determine their reading interests for the purpose of developing a bibliography of books that the boys had read and enjoyed to use for collection development for the school library. Major findings reinforced the author's perceptions that reading attitude declines as the children progress to the upper grades, and that girls enjoy reading more than boys at this age. Fifth grade boys recommended 36 books, sixth grade boys recommended 37 books.
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Chapter One
The Problem

Introduction

My curiosity about my thesis subject began several years ago when I began to notice the difference in reading interest (not ability) between my two children. I have a daughter now fourteen and a son now eleven. Both children were read to a great deal as young children, and there were frequent trips to the public library for more books. In fact, my daughter's voracious reading habits were a catalyst to my entering the School and Public Library program at Rowan. Our house has always been full of reading material on all levels. My son was an early reader, read fluently as a kindergarten student, and seemed to derive a great deal of pleasure from books.

As the children grew older, my daughter's interest in reading increased steadily while my son's interest in reading declined markedly. My daughter is an avid reader and must always have a book. Comfortable with both the latest series books as well as the more sophisticated children's and young adult literature, she needs no encouragement to begin reading. Gift certificates to the local bookstore are a favorite and very much appreciated gift. Not so with my son. Reading for pleasure is a concept that he does not seem to understand yet. Leisure reading is only engaged in when the issue is forced by teachers or parents.

Need for the Study

When I started working as a full-time school librarian/educational media specialist, I began to notice this same pattern emerging in my district. Since my district is configured in such a way that there are two schools, a primary (K-3) school and an intermediate (4-8) school, the decline in reading interest for boys at the intermediate school was very apparent.
After my first two years in the district, I began to notice that I was having great success at introducing children in the lower grades to books in the school library. Yet I began to wonder at the relatively limited success I was having with introducing my fifth and sixth grade students to books in the school collection. One reason, of course, had to do with the age and condition of the material. Much of this has since been weeded and updated. Another reason is perhaps the infrequency of scheduled classes in the library for fifth and sixth graders. Classes are scheduled every two weeks for fifth and sixth grades rather than every week for Kindergarten through fourth grade. But a third reason, I believe, has to do with the makeup of the classes. After reviewing my class lists, I realized that the enrollment in the classes in the upper grades was heavy on boys. Required book reports meant that reading was occurring, but the type of reading material was and still is a puzzle to me. I would like to learn more about the particular interests of boys in choosing reading material.

In a way, this thesis is a personal quest for me. I am interested in the outcome of the research for my students and for my own ability to reach the children that I see every day. I am also interested in the outcome of the research so that I can provide better answers for parents of students in my district who are struggling with this issue. Lastly, I am interested in the outcome so that I can foster reading interest in my own son.

Purpose of the Study

Therefore, the question that this thesis will attempt to answer for me will be: What are the reading interests of boys at the fifth and sixth grade level? I am mainly concerned with determining what those interests are and then developing a bibliography of favorite titles. I plan to use this information to expand the school library into a more user friendly collection to meet the needs of this particular segment of the school population. In addition, the study will allow me the opportunity to explore the reasons why boys at this age level choose not to read and how the reading attitudes of boys compare with the reading attitudes of girls.
Methodology

In order to determine the reading interests of fifth and sixth grade boys, the student population at an elementary school in southern New Jersey will be studied. Initially, a survey will be given to both boys and girls in the fifth and sixth grades. The survey will ask basic questions about reading interest, reading enjoyment, type of material most often read, and a listing of recently read books that have been enjoyed. This will provide a basis for comparison of reading interest between boys and girls as well as the beginning of a bibliography of appealing titles. While both sexes will be surveyed and some of the data will be compared, the focus of the study remains mainly on the interests of the boys. A copy of the survey is attached in Appendix A (Ciccone 32-34).

After the initial survey data is collected, fifth and sixth grade students will be asked to complete a reading log for each book they read during the three month period December 1, 1995 - February 29, 1996. A copy of the reading log is attached in Appendix B. All students will be asked to complete the reading log. Although the study will focus only on the interests of boys, the reading logs turned in by the girls will be valuable for purposes other than this thesis. The reading logs will collected in homeroom as well as in the school library.

The sample group consists of one fifth grade class and one sixth grade class. The fifth grade class is composed of ten males and eight females. The sixth grade class is composed of twelve males and twelve females. All students in the sample are regular education students. The classes are heterogeneously grouped. The students represent a cross-section of socio-economic groups in American society. There are no special education students included in the survey.
The breakdown by sex for all of the fifth and sixth grade classes at the elementary school is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fifth Male</th>
<th>Fifth Female</th>
<th>Sixth Male</th>
<th>Sixth Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>5Q</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>6P</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5Sc</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumptions of the Study

It is assumed that some degree of reading is taking place by the fifth and sixth grade boys in the study. It is also assumed that the reading that is taking place may be required reading by the classroom teacher.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited by the fact that not all fifth and sixth grade boys at the elementary school will be participating in the study. Four fifth grade classroom teachers and three sixth grade classroom teachers were surveyed to determine their interest in participating in this study. A copy of the letter requesting participation is included in Appendix C. Only one fifth grade teacher and only one sixth grade teacher responded positively. Therefore the sample group will be substantially smaller than originally planned. However, there may be some advantages in studying a smaller group. While there may not be as much data, the smaller numbers will make the data easier to collect. It will also be easier to manage the study over a long term period with only two classes participating.
Chapter Two
Survey of the Literature

Change in reading interest and attitude as students move from the lower grades to the intermediate grades has been a concern of educators and parents for a number of years. Studies on this subject have been documented since 1889. (Kincade, Kleine and Vaughn 224). In addition, numerous studies have been conducted on reading attitudes and interests of older elementary students. Studies have also been conducted to determine a correlation between reading achievement and amount of time spent reading — either in a classroom setting for sustained silent reading or at home for leisure reading.

Taylor, Frye and Maruyama found in their study of 195 fifth and sixth grade suburban students that "... the more time students spent in independent silent reading, the better they performed on reading comprehension exams" ("Silent Reading" 2). Thus their conclusion that silent reading is a valuable part of the reading class period.

However valuable silent reading may be, research has shown that children in the upper elementary grades spend very little time engaged in leisure reading. Anderson, Wilson and Fielding conducted a longitudinal study of fifth graders that found that most of these students read as few as four minutes and as many as sixteen minutes a day at home (Pardon 7). Some children did not read at all, and only a very small group read for several hours.

Pardon was concerned that too much research is dedicated to searching for the reasons related to the competition for leisure reading time from other activities such as television viewing. He feels more emphasis should be placed on developing a methodology that will increase the amount of time children spend reading in their leisure time (8).

Kincade et. al. wrote that knowing children's reading interests in a particular classroom or school is a crucial motivational reading device. Students will read material
of personal interest even if the reading level is advanced (234). Stone provided an example of this when she wrote of her experience tutoring a seven year old boy who had been labeled a "slow reader". "Sam needed a reason to enjoy reading and [workbook assignments] were not providing him with one" (76). Once Stone was able to provide books on subjects of interest to Sam, his reading ability and interest improved.

Unfortunately, teachers are not always aware of the interests of their students. In an Australian study of children in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades, Pascoe and Gilchrist found differences between what the children reported they enjoyed reading and what their teachers thought the children enjoyed. The teachers thought the children were more interested in the characters they were reading about. The children reported liking excitement, action and suspense (Haynes and Richgels 208).

In a study of 276 gifted students in grades one through twelve, Anderson, Tollefson, and Gilbert found that females had a more positive attitude toward reading and reported it as a hobby more often than males (189). The study also showed that older students reported less interest in reading as a favorite activity than younger students. The general trend was for primary students to have the most positive attitudes and for each advancing grade level group to have less positive mean attitudes (188). Further, the study showed that gifted students selected their books from both the public library and the school library. Thus the researchers noted the important position librarians have in influencing the selection of reading materials for gifted students and exposing them to all genres of literature. The researchers recommended that comprehensive reading programs be established for gifted students.

Cloer and Pearman investigated the relationship of gender to attitudes about academic and recreational reading. They noted in their research that the National Assessment of Educational Progress results showed that females at ages 9, 13, and 17 outperformed their male counterparts in each of the six NAEP reading assignments conducted from 1971 to 1990. The NAEP data indicated that females outperformed males
in writing proficiency as well. In addition, the national assessments have shown that across all age groups, students who frequently read for fun were likely to have the highest proficiency; those who never read recreationally had the lowest (Cloer and Pearman 3).

Cloer and Pearman investigated current research findings that posit that girls achieve better in language arts than boys and have better attitudes. They found that the attitude toward recreational and academic reading of boys in grades 4 - 6 dropped significantly. The attitude of girls in grades 4 - 6 dropped significantly toward academic reading (8). Both boys and girls in grades 4 - 6 had poorer academic reading attitudes than boys and girls in grades 1-3 (9). Cloer and Pearman described the decline in boys' attitude toward recreational and academic reading as "disquieting" (12).

Haynes and Richgels studied the literature preferences of 253 female and 239 male fourth graders. They found that girls were most interested in reading fantasy and books about growing up while boys were most interested in reading books about adventure, space, science, and sports (216). In their study they reported that their findings were consistent with earlier studies that had been conducted on children's reading preferences.

Parker and Paradis found in two studies of reading attitudes that children in grades one, two, and three possessed positive attitudes toward reading and that children in grades four, five, and six reported a steady increase in positive attitudes toward reading during the first year of the study. During the second year of the study, positive attitudes toward reading were reported for the fourth grade with a substantial decrease in attitude for grade five and a continued decline for grade six. A change in the basal reader is noted as a possible explanation for the decline in reading attitude for the fifth and sixth grade during the second year study. Additionally, this study found that males had more positive attitudes about reading than females in both the primary and intermediate grades (4).

Steiner, Steinen, and Newman studied sex differences in reading achievement in students in grades one through four in two parochial schools. The results showed no significant difference in reading achievement between boys and girls (10). The study also
showed that students in these grade levels did not sex-type reading as a feminine activity (11).

Suhorsky and Nuzzi studied reading attitudes of middle school students to determine attitudinal differences between males and females. They found that "female middle school students' attitudes toward reading are more positive than those of males" (7).

Wray and Lewis surveyed 464 students in England (among them 94 ten year olds and 45 eleven year olds) to determine reading preferences. They found that offering children a wide range of reading materials is of vital importance in stimulating interest. They also found that teachers can strongly affect the reading interests and experiences of children. Making books the focus of classroom activities, reading to children, discussing books with children, and making books the starting point for thematic work are some of the ways the researchers suggested that teachers can influence children's reading choices. Wray and Lewis reiterated the importance of knowing the reading interests and preferences of a given class as an aid to the teacher in motivating reading (262).

Self-selection of reading materials has been found to be an important factor in improving children's attitudes toward reading. Ciccone found this to be true in her study of sixth graders (14), and Ediger reported on the importance of the middle school student to be able to self-select reading materials from a wide variety of topics and different achievement levels ("Encouraging" 57). Self-selection of reading materials is important even for high school students as Virgil noted. Virgil also supported the idea of making a wide range of interesting reading choices available to supplement the textbook (54). Such findings as these lend credence to the concept of a viable school library program with a regularly updated collection designed both to supplement the curriculum as well as to motivate reading.

Kibby countered the common notion that today's students are not reading as well as students in the past with current statistics that indicate that the "reading proficiency of
today's students meets or exceeds that of students from any other era" ("What Reading Teachers" 28). High school completion rates at the turn of the century were less than five percent, and illiteracy was the norm even for second generation Americans. Today, high school completion rates are seventy-five to eighty percent, and under four percent of young adults cannot read ("Today's Students" 33). Kibby did acknowledge, however, that while illiteracy is not a national problem, the limited number of seventeen year olds and young adults attaining levels of proficiency at the upper end of the reading scale may be. The reading proficiency levels expected of these students in their future education and work may be beyond their present capabilities ("What Reading Teachers" 37).

Schumm reported on an Australian study conducted by Rowe that confirmed what most people suspect about at-home literacy experiences of older children. Rowe studied over 5,000 students ages 5 to 14 and found that children with more frequent at-home reading experiences enjoyed higher achievement in reading, better attitudes toward reading, and more positive teacher ratings of attentiveness in class. The results were true regardless of age, gender, sex, or socioeconomic status of students. The study suggests that at-home reading experiences are still very important for literacy development. (Schumm 222).

The noted YA author Robert Lipsyte wrote about his own literacy experiences as a child. He recalled that because he was overweight he was never an athlete or a sports fan. So he read. He feels that boys do not read as much as we would like them to because "the current books do not deal with the real problems and fears of individual boys" (292). He wrote about the fears of boys -- looking dumb or inadequate in front of other boys and in front of girls. He noted that boys are afraid of each other, and boys are afraid of homosexuality. Lipsyte wrote that "Boys have to learn what girls already know, that a book is something you can make into a cave, and that you can crawl into the cave, roll around in it, explore it, find out what's in it, and what's in you" (296).
Lipsyte expressed his concerns about boys reading in a far less controversial way than did Ray Nicolle, an early reading specialist in Vancouver, British Columbia. In his now infamous article entitled "Boys and the Five-Year Void" in the "Make Your Point" section of *School Library Journal*, he asserted that there was nothing to read for boys in the 7-12 year age range. He blamed the lack of appropriate reading material on the fact that "mothers pick out books for their sons, not fathers," "most librarians are either female -- or gay," and librarians have "control ... over public funds and the availability of suitable children's literature" (130).

Mainly in a response to Nicolle's assertions, Deborah Langerman rebutted his views with her own article in *School Library Journal* that quoted studies analyzing the reading preferences of boys and girls. One such study by Mary Watson in 1985 noted that "girls read many more books in the category of family stories than did boys. They also read more romance and historical fiction. Boys read more books about animals and science than did girls" (133).

Langerman also reported on Joan T. Feely's study of fourth and fifth graders. Feely studied reading preferences of students in the early seventies and then sampled the same grade level students at the end of the decade. She found that in both studies, "sports topped the boys' list, books with informational content held a solid middle position, and books about people with everyday problems (social empathy) and about the arts remained at the bottom" (133).

London schoolteacher Pip Osmont's study was cited in Langerman's article wherein Osmont found that "girls chose fairy stories and storybooks while boys chose superhero books, comic, science fiction, pop-up books, cartoon books, funny books and, in her words, 'exciting, colorful books'" (133).

Langerman noted that in response to Nicolle's article, librarians wrote to *School Library Journal* recommending a total of 23 books for boys in this age range. In addition
Booklist published a bibliography titled "Popular Reading: Mostly Male" which listed 54 books for this age range.

Mary Alice Wheeler, a mother of a fourth grade boy as well as a graduate student in education at the University of Pennsylvania, detected a decline in her son's reading at the beginning of his fourth grade year. When the mothers of her son's friends noted the same pattern, she decided to study what was really happening with these three boys. Each of the boys lived in a literate environment, where they had been read to as young children, taken to the library regularly, and books, magazines, and newspapers were in their homes. The parents read at home, providing a reading role model. Two of the mothers were schoolteachers. The fathers worked in technical, business, and educational jobs which demanded reading. The reading done by the fathers at home was often work-related.

What Wheeler discovered was not that the boys were reading less, but that the boys' "reading interests include[d] topics that were either not of interest to the mothers, or topics that the boys [did] not share with their mothers" (613). The boys were reading the sports and comics section in the daily newspaper, children's magazines, Cub Scout manuals, statistics on baseball cards and books providing baseball card values. They were connecting with print in typing class and practicing on the family word processor, reading lessons in Sunday School and memorizing Bible verses and songs, and reading music for music lessons.

Wheeler concluded that what these mothers were actually expressing was the sense of personal loss at the fact that their time for sharing books with their sons was ending. In addition, the boys' reading habits were beginning to resemble that of their fathers. The boys were being socialized to a male view of literacy which was different from the mothers' view (614). The male view of literacy that the boys were developing was one of informational reading similar to the work-related reading of their fathers.

In conclusion, studies have documented the limited amount of time fifth and sixth graders devote to leisure reading. Studies have also shown that reading can be motivated
through self-selection of materials, knowing the reading interests of the children and providing those materials, providing a wide range of reading materials, making books the focus of classroom activities, reading and discussing books with children, and recognizing that children connect with print in many ways in addition to the traditional book format.
Chapter Three

Results of the Study

Fifth and sixth grade students attending an elementary school in southern New Jersey were asked to complete a survey to determine their reading interests and attitudes. The survey was administered during their regularly scheduled library period. The students were informed that the data was being collected for a master's project, and they were asked to respond as accurately as possible to the questionnaire. The survey instrument is found in Appendix A. The results of the questionnaire are described below.

Question #1: I enjoy reading ...

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<th>GIRLS</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>5th 6th Total</td>
<td>5th 6th Total</td>
<td>5th 6th</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>3 2 5</td>
<td>6 1 7</td>
<td>9 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>1 2 3</td>
<td>1 6 7</td>
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<td>neutral</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>1 1 2</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>1 5 6</td>
<td>1 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 12 22</td>
<td>8 12 20</td>
<td>18 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When one compares the reading enjoyment of fifth and sixth grade boys to the reading enjoyment of fifth and sixth grade girls, the boys admit that they do not enjoy reading to the same degree that the girls admit to. Only eight of the twenty-two fifth and sixth grade boys (36%) answered positively to this question. This compares with 14 of the twenty-five fifth and sixth grade girls (70%) who answered positively to this question. In addition, eight of the twenty-two fifth and sixth grade boys in the sample (36%) answered negatively to this question, indicating that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the
statement "I enjoy reading." None of the fifth and sixth grade girls in the sample answered this question in the negative.

There seems to be a shift in reading attitude from the fifth to the sixth grade for this particular sample. At 61%, the fifth graders had a more positive response to this question compared with the sixth graders where only 46% responded positively to this question.

Of the eighteen fifth graders who responded to this question, eleven (61%) answered with a positive response of strongly agree or agree. Five (28%) answered with a neutral response, and only two (11%) answered with a negative response of disagree or strongly disagree. When one looks at the gender breakdown of the responses, seven of the eight fifth grade girls (88%) responded positively to the question, answering strongly agree or disagree, while only four of the ten boys (40%) gave a positive answer of strongly agree or agree.

In the sixth grade, only eleven of the twenty-four students (46%) responded positively to this question with a response of strongly agree or agree. However, six of the twenty-four sixth graders (25%) responded with a negative answer of disagree or strongly disagree. All of these six responses came from boys.

When one looks at the gender breakdown, seven sixth grade girls (58%) responded positively to this question with a response of strongly agree or agree. Of the sixth grade boys, four (33%) responded with a positive response of strongly agree or agree.
When the students were asked if they had a preference for fiction or non-fiction, the majority of them in both the fifth and sixth grades as well as the majority of boys and the majority of girls said they like to read both fiction and non-fiction. Only one fifth grade boy and one sixth grade boy reported liking only fiction, and only three fifth grade girls and two sixth grade girls reported liking only fiction. No one said they read only non-fiction. However, a total of six boys (one in the fifth grade and five in the sixth grade -- 27%) reported that they do not like to read books.
The students were asked to indicate the type of fiction they enjoyed reading. The current popularity of R.L. Stine's "Goosebumps" books was quite evident in the responses. Scary stories was the most commonly selected type of fiction enjoyed by fifth and 6th grade boys as well as by 6th grade girls. Other top categories included adventure and mystery books for fifth grade boys, mystery books and other (no indication of what) for sixth grade boys, and mystery, fantasy and adventure books for sixth grade girls. Fifth grade girls reported liking mystery books, adventure books and scary stories. Historical fiction was selected by very few students which is somewhat surprising considering the popularity of the "American Girl" series.
Question # 4: If you enjoy reading non-fiction books, please indicate what kind you like;
(check as many as apply)

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<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were asked to indicate what kind of non-fiction books they enjoyed reading. They were allowed to check as many kinds of non-fiction as they wished. Sports books were the most commonly selected type of non-fiction enjoyed by fifth and sixth grade boys. The fifth grade boys also selected books about unexplainable strange things like UFO's, Bigfoot, and the Lochness Monster and drawing books. The second most commonly selected category for sixth grade boys was the one including books about cars, planes, and spaceships. The most commonly selected type of non-fiction book selected by fifth grade girls was drawing books. Animal books were the next most commonly selected type of non-fiction book. Sixth grade girls most often selected animal books, then books about unexplained strange things, and lives of famous people and drawing books as the type of non-fiction they enjoyed reading. The selection of drawing books as a category of
interest is significant since these books generally have little or no reading. They are simply books that the children use to copy already designed drawings, and a step-by-step procedure is followed to complete a similar picture. The children enjoy these books because they enjoy drawing. They are being selected to enhance drawing skills rather than for pleasure reading.

Question #5: If you enjoy reading the types of books described below, please check each type you like: (check as many as apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>folk/fairy tales</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myths/legends</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fables</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tall tales</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jokes/riddles</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poetry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scary stories</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were asked to indicate their preference for the above-named types of books that fall somewhere between clearly delineated fiction (long imaginary chapter books) and non-fiction (true books with facts and information). Joke and riddle books was the category most commonly selected by fifth grade boys. This was followed by myths and legends and scary stories. Sixth grade boys chose scary stories first and then myths and legends. The interest in joke and riddle books seemed to wane for the sixth grade boys. Fifth grade girls most commonly selected scary stories, then folk and fairy tales and lastly poetry. Sixth grade girls selected scary stories and joke and riddle books.
to the same degree. Unlike their male classmates, they still found the joke and riddle books amusing. The sixth grade girls also selected the category of myths and legends.

Question # 6  I like the main character to be ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>either</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were asked if the sex of the main character made a difference. It appeared that most of the students were willing to read about a main character of either sex although the boys did become more gender conscious as they got older. Nine out of ten fifth grade boys responded that they liked the main character to be either a male or female. Only five of the twelve sixth grade boys responded that the character could be of either sex. Two sixth grade boys responded that they like the main character to be female, and five responded that they like the main character to be male. All eight fifth grade girls responded that they liked the character to be either male or female, and ten of the twelve sixth grade girls responded that they liked reading about a main character of either sex. It was interesting that two boys preferred female characters while no girls preferred male ones.
Question #7: I usually get books from ... (check as many as apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school library</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public library</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>book store</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school book clubs</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom library</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were asked where they obtained their books. While the book store was a strong factor for the sixth grade girls (11 out of 12 reported buying books at a book store), the school library proved to be a strong choice as well for some students. Thirteen of the eighteen fifth graders (72%) and seven of the eight fifth grade girls (88%) reported getting their books from the school library. Fifth grade boys seemed to select their books from a wider variety of places than did sixth grade boys. Only two of the students who responded that they obtained their books from other sources indicated where the books came from. Sending away for books and using what was available from home were the two other sources mentioned.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th></th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>books</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magazines</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>newspapers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comic books</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none of these</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students were asked to indicate what type of print material they enjoy reading. They could check as many choices as they wished. While eight of the ten fifth grade boys (80%) checked books, only 3 of the twelve sixth grade boys (25%) checked books. This is in stark contrast to the fact that all eight of the fifth grade girls (100%) and ten of the twelve sixth grade girls (83%) checked that they like reading books. The fifth grade boys seemed to enjoy magazines more than the sixth grade boys. All ten fifth grade boys (100%) checked that they enjoy magazines, while only four of the twelve sixth grade boys (33%) checked the magazine category. Newspapers were not all that popular with the students, although four of the ten fifth grade boys (40%) checked the newspaper category. Comic books were a source of interest for the boys (nine of the twenty-two fifth and sixth grade boys -- 41%) checked this category. A total of eight students (17%) -- mostly sixth grade girls -- checked the category "other", but gave no indication of what that might be.
Question #9: In my free time I read for my own pleasure even when it is not a school assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th></th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students were asked if they read in their free time even if it wasn't a school assignment. This question was an attempt to determine students' attitudes toward reading, to see whether in fact students would read on their own without being coerced by teachers. Both sixth grade boys and sixth grade girls reported a more negative attitude toward reading than the fifth grade boys and the fifth grade girls. Of the ten fifth grade boys, five (50%) responded positively to this question, and only two fifth grade boys (20%) responded negatively. This compares to nine of the twelve sixth grade boys (75%) who responded negatively to this question. Nine out of twelve sixth grade boys (75%) checked disagree or strongly disagree, indicating that they would not read in their free time unless the reading was a school assignment. Only one out the twelve sixth grade boys gave a positive answer to this question.

Even the attitude of the girls changed from fifth grade to sixth grade with this question. Six of the eight (75%) fifth grade girls responded positively to this question answering strongly agree or agree, while only six of the twelve (50%) sixth grade girls
gave a positive answer. Five sixth grade girls (42%) checked neutral, and one of the
twelve (8%) checked disagree.

Question #10: When I have free time, I would rather read than do anything else.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no answer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While no one embraced this statement with the answer of strongly agree, the fifth
and sixth grade girls responded more positively to it than the fifth and sixth grade boys.
Nine of the twenty girls in the survey (45%) agreed with the statement that they would
rather read than do anything else during their free time while only two of the twenty-two
boys (9%) agreed. Thirteen of the twenty-two (59%) boys responded that they either
disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Six of the twenty girls (30%)
responded that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
The children were asked if their parents read books for pleasure. This was an attempt to see what kind of modeling was going on in the home with regard to reading. Eighteen of the twenty-two boys (82%) in the study reported that their parents often or sometimes read books for pleasure. All twenty of the girls (100%) reported that their parents often or sometimes read books for pleasure. Clearly there is sufficient parental modeling going on at home that reading books is an enjoyable activity.

Two fifth grade boys reported that their parents never read books for pleasure. In one case, the boy indicated that he did not like to read (question #1) and that he would not read in his free time unless it was a school assignment (question #9). This boy's attitude toward reading was the most negative in the fifth grade. He did, however, express an interest in joke and riddle books as well as magazines and newspapers proving that even the most reluctant reader can be reached in some way.

The second boy indicated a more positive attitude toward reading. Even though he reported that his parents never read books, he expressed a liking for reading, agreed that he would read in his free time even if it were not a school assignment, and indicated that he enjoyed books, magazines, and comic books.
One sixth grade boy reported that his parents never read books for pleasure. This boy also responded that he disagreed with the statement that in his free time he would rather read than do anything else. He described his own attitude toward reading as neutral, yet he did express an interest in reading books, *Sports Illustrated* and the Sports section of the newspaper.

**Question # 12: How many books do you usually read for pleasure in a month?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th></th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to this question were encouraging, because the children reported that reading for pleasure was actually occurring. Only three students (two fifth grade boys and one sixth grade boy) answered *none* when asked how many books they read for pleasure in a month. The most commonly reported answer was that the students read 1-3 books in a month for pleasure. Eleven of the twenty-two boys (50%) in the study gave this answer and eleven of the twenty girls (55%) gave this answer.

When one tries to determine where the most prolific readers are, it is clear that the girls are more prolific than the boys. Only six of the twenty-two fifth and sixth grade boys
reported reading four or more books per month as compared with nine of the twenty fifth and sixth grade girls (45%).

Once again a change in attitude toward reading was noted between fifth and sixth grade. Five of the six boys who reported reading four or more books per month (83%) were fifth graders. Only one sixth grade boy reported reading four or more books per month. Similarly, four of the eight fifth grade girls (50%) reported reading four or more books per month, while five of the twelve sixth grade girls (only 41%) reported reading four or more books per month.

Summary

In summary, the survey showed that for this particular sample of fifth and sixth grade students, the boys responded that they did not enjoy reading as much as the girls did. The majority of the boys responded that they read both fiction and nonfiction. The boys reported reading scary stories, sports books, joke and riddle books, and myths and legends. Fourteen of the twenty-two boys (64%) preferred a male main character while two (9%) preferred a female character.

The boys indicated that they purchased their books from the bookstore and school book clubs as well as borrowed books from the school, public, and classroom library. When asked to specify preferences for types of reading material, magazines were selected by the boys more often than books. Half of the boys responded that they do not read for their own pleasure when the reading is not a school assignment. More than half of the boys responded that they disagreed with the statement that they would rather read than do anything else during their free time.

Parental reading of books for pleasure was reported as occurring in a majority of the boys' homes. The attitude toward reading became more negative from fifth grade to sixth grade. It is not clear whether this attitudinal change is due to a difference in the individuals studied or a result of developmental changes. The fifth grade students would
need to be polled again next year to determine if the attitude change was related to development.
CHAPTER FOUR

Books Enjoyed by Fifth and Sixth Grade Boys

The following is a listing of the books selected and read by the fifth and sixth grade boys in the study. The boys reported that they enjoyed reading these books. The fact that the boys finished these books and also reported that they enjoyed reading them is a testament to the value of self-selection of reading materials. Some of these books were read for the purpose of completing broad school assignments where a book in a specific genre was required, but students could select from a variety of titles. Others were read for enjoyment.

Annotations for the books are included whenever possible. Unless otherwise noted, the annotations come from library catalog records. One limitation of this study is that all bibliographic information was reported by the students. Sometimes the students had the book in hand and could verify the author, title, publisher, and copyright date. Many times the students could only supply the title and author. Whenever possible, standard sources such as Children's Books in Print, The Elementary School Library Collection, Children's Catalog, Junior High School Library Catalog, library catalog information, and the book itself were used to find incomplete information. Both the Burlington County Library catalog and the Camden County Library catalog were searched on-line using dial-in capability to try to find missing information. In a few cases, particularly with the R. L. Stine series books, annotations and copyright information could not be found; however, the titles were still included as representative examples of the kinds of books the boys enjoyed reading.

In other cases, titles could not be included in this study because enough information could not be found to adequately identify them. Some examples of titles that were excluded because of a lack of identifying information include the following: Ghost Stories, Ghosts, and Zombies. There are so many books written for children with these
titles that without the complete bibliographic information, there was no point in including them.

When reviewing the listing of titles read, it is important to keep in mind the fact that the sixth grade class had two required book reports to do during this period, while the fifth grade class had no required book reports to do during this period. To some degree, the choices of titles for the sixth grade boys reflect a different standard of literature than the choices for the fifth grade boys. This is probably due to the fact that in the sixth grade the books were read to complete a class requirement, and therefore had to be approved by the classroom teacher. It may, in some cases, also be due to the fact that the sixth grade boys are older and are interested in a more mature type of book. The lengthy Wrede and Yolen fantasy books, for example, were all read by the same sixth grade boy — an avid fan of long, imaginary chapter books.

What I found to be a striking outcome of the study, was that in the fifth grade where book reports were not required, the boys still reported reading a fair amount of chapter books. I had expected to find more joke and riddle books, poetry books, collections of short stories, and other types of "browsing" books that would be read to fill in class time when work was completed and the students were waiting to start the next subject. I had also expected to find more sports books listed. The school library has a sizable collection of nonfiction books on various sports teams, famous players, and the history of different sports. These books circulate frequently, but only one sports book -- *Baseball's Biggest Bloopers* -- was mentioned by the boys in the two surveyed classes.

In the survey, the boys reported that they enjoyed reading sports books and joke and riddle books, but these books were not recorded on the reading logs to the extent that I would have expected.

The November 1st, 1989 issue of *Booklist* included a bibliography entitled "Mostly Male." The bibliography was designed for boys in grades 4-7, and it provides a quality listing of books by well-known children's authors such as Lloyd Alexander, Judy Blume,
John Bellairs, Betsy Byars, John Christopher, Walter Dean Myers, and others. While many of the books recommended in the Booklist article are included in the school library collection, none of those specific titles were self-selected and read by the fifth and sixth grade boys in the survey during the time the reading logs were being collected. It's possible that the boys read some of those recommended titles in earlier grades, and it is hoped that the boys will read others as they progress through school.

According to the survey that the students answered, the boys reported enjoying reading to a lesser degree than the girls. Only 36% of all of the boys in both grades reported that they enjoyed reading compared with 70% of all of the girls in both grades. This enjoyment level translated into what the students recorded on their reading logs.

While there were only eight fifth grade girls in the study, these eight girls reported reading a total of 66 books -- without assigned book reports. This compares with the ten fifth grade boys who reported reading a total of 36 books -- without assigned book reports. Both the boys and the girls were reading the same type of material especially books in R. L. Stine's "Goosebumps" series. The boys also read books by such well-known authors for children as David Adler, Roald Dahl, James Howe, Edward Lear, Jack Prelutsky, and Alvin Schwartz.

In addition to the "Goosebumps" books the girls also read "Boxcar Children" books, "Babysitters Club" books, books in the "American Girl" series, and books from the "Little House" series. The girls also read books by such critically acclaimed children's authors as Lynne Reid Banks, Roald Dahl, Louis Sachar, and Robert Kimmel Smith. The girls were clearly the more avid readers in the fifth grade and needed little formal encouragement in terms of assigned reading.

These results are interesting when compared with the sixth grade where two book reports were assigned during the time of the study. The twelve sixth grade girls reported reading 51 books, and the twelve sixth grade boys reported reading 37 books. While the sixth graders read beyond the two books apiece assigned during the time of the study, they
still did not read at the same level as the fifth graders who read purely for pleasure. One
can only wonder what reading would have occurred in the sixth grade if no book reports
had been assigned.

During the period that the reading logs were being collected, the girls' interest in
recording their books and in checking out new ones was often more evident than the
boys'. The girls were eager to complete their logs and frequently asked for additional
forms because they had read extra books. Their enthusiasm spurred on the boys to some
degree, but for the most part, it was clear that the girls were far more interested in helping
with this project than the boys.

Books Read by Fifth Grade Boys:

This is another addition to the very successful Cam Jansen series. Cam is
the girl with the amazing photographic memory. This time the mystery revolves
around Cam's friend Eric and a photograph of strange creatures from outer
space.

Dadey, Debbie and Marcia Thorton Jones. *Werewolves Don't Go to Summer Camp.*
This is another addition to the popular Bailey Street School series of paperback
books for children.

"After the untimely death of his parents, little James finds his life with Aunts
Sponge and Spiker miserable until a magic potion produces an enormous peach which
becomes his new and exciting home"

---The Elementary School Library Collection (548).

When Robbie York is marked as a target by a bully at school, he decides that the
only way to survive the third grade is by being cool.

Gutman, Dan. *Baseball's Biggest Bloopers: The Games that Got Away.* New York: 
Viking, 1993.
"This account features the twelve most glaring mistakes made in the history
of baseball"

---Best Books for Children (886).

This book was adapted by Gail Herman from a screenplay by Michael Crichton and Daniel Knoepp and based on the novel by Michael Crichton.


In this sequel to Howliday Inn, the Monroe family pets are again boarded at Chateau Bow-Wow, when some spooky goings-on serve as a distraction from the kennel's poor food.


An illustrated collection of limericks by the well-known nineteenth-century English writer.


Ten-year-old Lisa tells about her brothers and playmate and the happy times they spend at work and at play in the Swedish village.


"Presents a brief history of the Aztecs and vividly details the dramatic story of Montezuma and Cortes. Narrative is skilled and readable; illustrations after the Aztec style demand attention. Valuable in study of the Aztecs and for independent reading. For multicultural studies"

---


A collection of poems about dragons, including "I'm an Amiable Dragon," "If you Don't Believe in Dragons," and "A Dragon is in My Computer."


This third collection of scary folklore provides readers with more spooky, funny, and fantastic tales to read alone or for telling aloud in the dark.


"Kevin is entranced when he finds a pair of sunglasses that turns his desires into reality, but then things start to get out of control."

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"Skipper Matthews sees a building in Riverview Falls that looks exactly like one from his comic book collection -- the Masked Mutant's secret headquarters. This building seems to appear and disappear. Could the Masked Mutant really live in Skipper's home town?"


On Max's birthday, he finds a sort of magic mirror in the attic that can make him become invisible. Each time he becomes invisible it is harder to come back. The next time Max becomes invisible, will it be forever?


Evan can't stand baby sitting his genius cousin, Kermit. Kermit doesn't play video games or Frisbee. He only like to do strange experiments in the basement and play mean practical jokes on Evan and his friend Andy. But now Andy has found something that will teach Kermit a lesson once and for all -- green, slimy monster blood.

During a visit to London, "...Sue and her brother get separated from their tour group and find themselves trapped in a prison tower and transported back in time."

"The Morris family gets lost trying to find Zoo Gardens Theme Park, but they find Horrorland Amusement Park instead. It seems like a cool place at first, but there's something creepy and weird about the rides."

"Strange things happen when Gregg starts using the camera he and his friends found."

"Erin and her friend Marty, two horror movie fans, go to the Shocker Studio Theme Park, but things get out of hand when their tram gets stuck in the Cave of the Living Creeps."

Dr. Brewer is doing a little harmless plant-testing in his basement. But Margaret and Casey Brewer are worried about their father, especially when they meet some of the plants he's growing down there. When they notice he is becoming distinctly weedy -- and seedy, their fears really mount.

---. Trapped in Batwing Hall. New York: Scholastic.
--- Welcome to Camp Nightmare. New York: Scholastic, 1993
The food is not great, and the counselors are a little strange but
Billy thinks he can live with that. Then his fellow campers start to
disappear, and Camp Nightmoon turns into Camp Nightmare.


"A collection of amazing but true adventure tales involving unusual people and situations"
-- Best Books for Children (483).

Books Read by Sixth Grade Boys.


A nine-year-old boy receives a plastic Indian, a cupboard and a little key for his birthday and finds himself involved in an adventure when the Indian comes to life.

This book probes the tragic and mysterious fate of Sir John Franklin's failed expedition to find the Northwest Passage in 1845.

While trying to transport food to Richmond, Virginia during the Civil War, fourteen-year-old Johnny is captured by a black Union soldier.

"Jason's search for the Golden Fleece incorporates some of the best known myths and legends of ancient Greece"
-- Best Books for Children (454).

Explores the life and times of dinosaurs from their origins in prehistoric times to the discovery of their fossils in the modern era.


Discusses the origins, events, conclusions, and aftermath of the
conflict in Korea following the Communist invasion of the southern half of the country.


In 2194 in Zimbabwe, General Matsika's three children are kidnapped and put to work in a plastic mine while three mutant detectives use their special powers to search for them.


"Fanny's beloved Grandpa is dying but with the help of a magic potion, he becomes younger and younger leading to various humorous problems. There is also a serious tone as Grandpa remembers the fire bombings and deaths during World War II and eventually realizes that he cannot live forever and welcomes death. Both major protagonists are realistically portrayed, but some minor ones are overdrawn for the sake of humor. Older readers who know Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* might find some similarities in a book that is smoothly developed and contains more than meets the eye. Thought-provoking, intergenerational story for reading aloud"

-- *The Elementary School Library Collection* (555).


Newbery Award. "Following a clear description of Lincoln's childhood and early political attempts is a vivid presentation of his years as a military leader as well as president of the U.S. Although not easy to read, this fluidly written text, amply illustrated with period photographs and art, is enthralling reading for skilled students and teachers as well as being a fine resource for history units"

-- *The Elementary School Library Collection* (355).


Little Willie hopes to pay the back taxes on his grandfather's farm with the purse from a dog sled race he enters.


"Sam Gribley does what many boys dream of doing — spends a winter alone on the mountain in the Catskills"

-- *The Elementary School Library Collection* (557).


A boy who goes to Barrow, Alaska to live with friends of his father for awhile learns the importance of whaling to the Eskimo culture.


"Includes glossary, bibliography and index. Lizards, large and small, drab
and colorful, are included in this useful introduction. The author invites the reader to imagine life from the lizard's point of view as she discusses characteristics of cold-blooded animals, physical differences among species, changing colors, food, defenses against enemies, and birth of the young. Selected photographs are interesting in the variety of lizards featured, and the book is inviting and clear though occasionally difficult."

— The Elementary School Library Collection (206).

"Handsome biography of this popular general who led the Allied victory in the Persian Gulf War"

— Best Books for Children (508).

Explores the planets of our solar system highlighting the prominent features of each.

The youngest of the Murry children must travel through time and space in a battle against an evil dictator who would destroy the entire universe.

The fifteen-year-old Murry twins are accidentally sent back to a strange Biblical time period, in which mythical beasts roam the desert and a man named Noah is building a boat in preparation for a great flood.

"Newbery Medal Award. Meg and her friends are spirited to another world by three extraterrestrial beings — Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which — where they find her father and undergo many adventures and terrors before they can free him from captivity."

— The Elementary School Library Collection (580).

"Seven stories of fantasy on the theme of the battle between good and evil, which started when the land of Narnia was new and animals talked. The children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy meet the witch, the mighty lion Aslan, and other characters who live in Narnia."

— The Elementary School Library Collection (580).

When he and his older brother go camping, Doug faces his fear of heights and his feelings about his brother — with the help of a cougar.
A collection of humorous poems.

See earlier annotation.

By following the directions at the bottom of each page, the reader can select various outcomes for Indy as he hunts for the legendary Silver Tower that is hidden in the Himalayas.

When the freighter on which they are traveling is torpedoed by a German submarine during World War II, a twelve-year-old boy blinded by a blow to his head and an old Negro are stranded on a small deserted island in the Caribbean when the boy acquires a new kind of vision, courage, and love from his old companion.

Volume I of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy wherein "...Frodo Baggins, a home-loving young hobbit, inherits a magic ring which his uncle Bilbo brought home after his adventures ... He begins a journey to prevent it from falling into the hands of evil powers, encountering elves, dwarves, men and other creatures"

--*Junior High School Library Catalog* (418).

This biography tells the story of "...how a boy became the creator of some of the most loved children's books of all time."

--*Titlewave*

Another addition to the "World Leaders Past and Present" series that provides young adults with a cultural and educational bridge to the recent and distant past. This illustrated biography of Adolf Hitler illuminates the personal as well as historical events that shaped the life of this brutal dictator.

A biography of magician Harry Houdini, his contributions to magic, and the mystery surrounding his death.

The true story of Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, John Glenn, Scott Carpenter, Walter Schirra, Gordon Cooper, and Deke Slayton — the seven men chosen
to launch the U.S. into space.

Bored with traditional palace life, a princess goes off to live with a group of dragons and soon becomes involved with fighting against some disreputable wizards who want to steal away the dragons' kingdom.

With the aid of King Mandenbar, Princess Cimorene rescues the dragon Kazul and saves the Enchanted Forest from a band of wicked wizards.

"A revised version of the title first published in 1985 in paperback. Queen Cimorene sends her sixteen-year-old son Daystar into the Enchanted Forest with the only weapon that can combat an evil wizard's magic in an effort to restore the balance of power in the kingdom"

--. Children's Catalog Supplement to the Sixteenth Edition (64).

Jakkin, a bond boy who works as a keeper in a dragon nursery on the planet Austa IV, secretly trains a frightening pit dragon of his own in hope of winning his freedom.

Jakkin, now a free dragon trainer, has his plans abruptly changed when he is asked to infiltrate rebel forces taking hold on the planet.

Falsely accused of sabotage, Jakkin and Akki are sent out to certain death in the wilderness of the planet Austa IV, but, through the heroic sacrifice of Jakkin's dragons and the help of her offspring, manage not only to survive but gain unusual powers and insights.

Conclusions

Conducting this study has been a valuable educational experience for me. I have been able to validate my perceptions and personal experience that the attitude towards reading declines as the children move into the upper elementary grades -- particularly sixth. I have also been somewhat surprised and encouraged by the degree of reading that is still occurring in the fifth grade. The girls still demonstrate a great interest in reading.
and the boys still enjoy chapter books -- without coercion from teachers. While the fifth
graders (boys and girls) read primarily series books, especially "Goosebumps", there was
a representative sampling of high quality children's authors as well. Selecting primarily
series books should be expected if the reading is purely for pleasure and not teacher-
directed, especially if school library visits are infrequently scheduled.

Surveying the literature has also been useful for me. I've been made much more
aware of the importance of such common teaching techniques as self-selection of reading
materials, providing a wide range of reading materials, booktalking, knowing the reading
interests of one's students, reading and discussing books with children, silent reading time
in school, and at-home literacy experiences. All of these techniques are important in
nurturing successful readers. Sifting through all of the research has made me more
conscious of observing student behavior when these techniques are used. I've also been
able to recognize and value the fact that children connect with print in many formats in
addition to the traditional book format.

The listing of books read and enjoyed by the fifth and sixth grade boys as well as
the data I collected from the fifth and sixth grade girls will provide me with useful
information for collection development. Some titles that the students recommended were
unfamiliar to me, and in doing my research I discovered that they would be very
appropriate additions to the school library. While I have always tried to obtain student
input about books the children have enjoyed, this thesis gave me the opportunity to do so
in a formal approach. It has proven to be a very informative project for me.
APPENDIX A

Student Survey of Reading Interests and Attitudes

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Grade: _______ Boy: _______ Girl: _______

Directions: Please read each question carefully and answer honestly. Check the answer(s) that most accurately describe(s) the way you feel.

1. I enjoy reading...
   ___ strongly agree ___ disagree
   ___ agree ___ strongly disagree
   ___ neutral

2. I like to read...
   ___ only fiction (make believe) books
   ___ only non-fiction (true facts) books
   ___ both fiction and non-fiction books
   ___ I do not like to read books.

Directions: Check as many answers that apply.

3. If you enjoy reading fiction, please indicate what kind of fiction:
   ___ adventure stories ___ realistic fiction
   ___ fantasy ___ historical fiction (make believe stories set in the past)
   ___ mystery ___ scary stories
   ___ science fiction ___ romance
   ___ series books ___ other

4. If you enjoy reading non-fiction books, please indicate what kind you like:
   ___ animal books
   ___ science & nature books
   ___ books about other countries
   ___ drawing books
   ___ sports books
   ___ history books
   ___ books about the lives of famous people
   ___ books about cars, planes, and/or spacecrafts
   ___ books about unexplainable strange things like UFO's, Bigfoot, and the Lochness Monster
   ___ other __________________________________________

5. If you enjoy reading the types of books described below, please check each type you like:
   ___ folk tales and fairy tales ___ joke and riddle books
   ___ myths and legends ___ poetry books
   ___ fables ___ scary stories
   ___ tall tales
6. I like the main character to be ...

___ boy or man
___ girl or woman
___ either boy or girl

7. I usually get books from ...

___ school library
___ public library
___ book store
___ school book clubs like Scholastic
___ classroom library
___ other

8. I like reading ...

___ books
___ magazines
___ newspapers
___ comic books
___ other
___ none of these

9. In my free time I read for my own pleasure even when it is not a school assignment.

___ strongly agree
___ disagree
___ agree
___ strongly disagree
___ neutral

10. When I have free time, I would rather read than do anything else.

___ strongly agree
___ disagree
___ agree
___ strongly disagree
___ neutral

11. My parents read books for pleasure ...

___ often
___ sometimes
___ never

12. How many books do you usually read for pleasure in a month? _____

13. Name three books that you have read since September 1995 that you have enjoyed. Include the author's name if you can remember it.

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

14. Name a magazine that you enjoy reading.

________________________________________

15. Name a section of the newspaper you enjoy reading.

________________________________________
APPENDIX B

READING LOG

Name: ____________________________________________

Grade: _______

Title: ____________________________________________

Author: __________________________________________

Publisher: _________________________________________

Copyright date: ________  This book was fiction ___  non-fiction ___  other ___.

I enjoyed _____  did not enjoy _____  this book.

Please order ___  do not order ___  this book for the school library.

This book is already found in our school library _____.
APPENDIX C

To:

From Mrs. Sheridan

Re: Reading Study

Date: October 30, 1995

In order to fulfill requirements for graduate school, I am planning a study of the reading interests of fifth and sixth grade boys this year. If you would be interested in having your class participate in this study, please let me know. I would appreciate as much cooperation as possible.

Initially, both boys and girls will be asked to complete a survey of their reading interests. This would take approximately twenty minutes to complete. Then during a three-month period (approximately December 1, 1995 - February 29, 1996) students will be asked to complete a form each time they read something new that they have enjoyed. Since many of you assign book reports, the students would most likely be documenting for me the books they have read for school reports. However, the books that are read for leisure reading are certainly acceptable and welcome.

For purposes of my study, I am primarily interested in the responses from boys; however, if girls wish to complete the forms, their input will be valuable in other ways. The boys' responses will be turned into a bibliography of favorite titles that I will incorporate into the study. I will also use this information to expand the school library collection into a more user-friendly collection -- assuming the titles are appropriate for a school library.

If you are interested in participating, I will need your help with the data collection phase of the study. I would like to keep blank forms and a collection box in your homeroom so students can complete the forms in your classroom. I will also need your assistance in reminding the students to complete the forms. I will keep a collection box and forms in the library as well and will remind students to complete the forms each time they come to the library.

Completing the forms will be a good lesson in the elements of a bibliography. In addition, this is an opportunity for the students to see themselves as a community of learners where we are each learning something of value from someone else in the group.

Please return this form to me by Wednesday, November 1, 1995 and indicate whether you wish to participate in this study.

Thank you.

I would ___ would not ___ like my class to participate in this study.

Teacher’s name: __________________________

cc:
WORKS CITED


Virgil, Sharon. "More Time and Choices Overcome Students' Resistance to Reading."


Wheeler, Mary Alice. "Fourth Grade Boys' Literacy from a Mother's Point of View."


WORKS CONSULTED


Biographical Data

Name: Judith E. Sheridan

Date and Place of birth:
August 13, 1947
New York, New York

Elementary School:
Radburn School
Radburn, New Jersey

Junior High School:
Benjamin Franklin Junior High School
Ridgewood, New Jersey

High School:
Ridgewood High School
Ridgewood, New Jersey
Graduated 1965

College:
Lycoming College
Williamsport, PA
Graduated 1969