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Journaling as a Tool to Improve Story Comprehension for Kindergarten Students

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Early Childhood Education
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements to the degree
Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education

by
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Dr. Rebecca Isbell
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Key words: Story Retelling, Classroom Story Time, Story Journaling, Kindergarten.

ABSTRACT

Journaling as a Tool to Improve Story Comprehension for Kindergarten Students

By

Carisa Carr

This study investigated story journaling to enhance story comprehension. Eighteen kindergarten children participated in this six-week study with the teacher reading a total of 24 stories to the class. The class was randomly divided into Group A and Group B, with 3 focus participants from each group retelling the story. The retelling was audio taped and analyzed using Morrow's (2001) procedures. Group B experienced the intervention of story journaling on the third week of the study and showed an improvement in story comprehension during the fifth and sixth weeks of story journaling. Group A did not experience the intervention of story journaling until the fifth week of the study and showed a slight improvement by the end of the sixth week of story journaling. There appears to be a connection of story journaling to story comprehension when children are given the opportunity to story journal after hearing a story.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Literacy development has generated more political attention since President George Bush's Act of 2001 "No Child Left Behind." Through this Act, the President has acknowledged that each child who comes to school has the potential to learn to the best of his/her ability. This has presented a challenge for schools and teachers to make sure that each child be given the opportunity for individual growth. To ensure that children are being given every opportunity to succeed, there must be accountability for the schools. School assessment has also become a hot topic, and early childhood educators recognize the need for authentic assessment techniques to measure progress in the primary grade classroom (Kamii & Willert, 1985; NAEYC, 1988; Shepard, 1994).

Literacy encompasses more than just reading, it includes oral language, writing, listening skills, retelling of stories, and comprehension of stories. For the early development of literacy skills, it is important for teachers to foster in children the motivation to learn during the first few years of a child's school experience. According to early childhood educators, learning experiences for children in the primary grades need to have purpose and meaning (Atkins, 1984; Morrow, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

By providing young children classroom environments that are literature rich there is the potential to foster literacy development (Einarsdottir, 1996; Miels, 2001; Stickland & Morrow, 1989b). This includes having writing and reading materials available in all learning areas across the curriculum to enable children to realize their purpose in learning experiences. Morrow and Rand (1991) have found in their research "that preschool and kindergarten children are likely to engage in more voluntary literacy behaviors during free-play periods when literacy materials are introduced and teachers guide children to use those materials" (p. 399). Researchers and teachers have realized the need for children to be given these opportunities and how important assessment of skill development is to the learning experience (NAEYC, 1988; Peck, 1989; Roser, 1987). To foster the development of early literacy skills through oral questions, story retelling, and story journaling after the classroom story time when a teacher read aloud to their students. There would also be the opportunity for assessment of emergent writing ability.

Would story journaling after classroom story time improve story comprehension in kindergarten students?

Research Questions

Does story journaling aid in the understanding of story structure and comprehension for kindergarten students? Does story journaling give the teacher a measurement of writing abilities? And does story journaling promote the development of making the literary connection between literature and writing? Is there a difference in story comprehension between kindergarten age children who listen to a story and use story journaling afterwards and kindergarten age children who listen to a story and retell the story?

Review of Literature

Theory

The majority of children in kindergarten classrooms would still be in Piaget's preoperational stage of development. One characteristic the pre-operational child would have is that he/she would be perceptual learners and visually oriented (Raines & Isbell, 1994). The implications for fostering the development of literacy skills in the classroom would be the inclusion of concrete opportunities to make connections between literature and writing. Fhang (1999) stated' according to Vygotsky's theory of language development, that language development should be fostered through the following concepts: language use is functional, the function of language is to make meanings, these meanings are influenced by the socio-cultural context in which they are exchanged, the process of using language is a process of semantic choice, language learning is a process of socialization in which the child and adult are both active participants. Vygotsky (as cited in Fhang) "Children's written text provides a window through which we gain insights into their linguistic, cognitive, and communicative competence" (p.180). When given the opportunity to express themselves through writing, children make a concrete connection to literature.

Integrated Instruction

There have been many proponents of literacy integration across the curriculum. Many educators and researchers strongly believe that reading and writing are closely connected together and should be taught concurrently (Miels, 2001; Morrow, 1992; Roser, 1987). Because the emphasis on testing standards has increased over the past few years there is a stronger need

for integrated instruction in the classroom. McGee and Richgels (as cited in Shanahan, 1997) state,

Writing, however, because it affords one an insider's view of this aspect of text, provides a powerful, complementary way of thinking about reading that would not be available if reading and writing were identical. Similarly, reading a text and writing about it can provide alternative perspectives that deepen one's understanding of the text; given this, it is not surprising that many study skills approaches try to combine reading and writing activities in various ways (p. 14).

Shanahan does caution that in order to fully develop reading and writing, they both need direct instruction. In the early childhood classroom it is important that the foundation for literacy skills be fostered. International Reading Association (IRA) (1998) recognized the need for assessment and monitoring of children's work to measure growth. "It is essential and urgent to teach children to read and write competently, enabling them to achieve today's high standards of literacy" (p. 196).

Classroom Story Time

Story time in the classroom when the teacher reads aloud to the whole class has been found to have a positive impact on higher achievement in vocabulary, comprehension, and decoding (Morrow & Smith, 1990). In Morrow's (1985) earlier research on story readings she found that instructional methods before, during, and after the reading time affected children's comprehension of the story. "Use of a directed listening and thinking activity significantly improved student comprehension. Children given the opportunity to retell stories that had been read to them scored better on both probed recall and free recall than children who were not given such an opportunity" (Morrow & Smith 1990 p. 217). In Morrow's (1988) research on one-on-one story readings, she stated that storybook reading is a social learning experience for young children. Adults interactive behavior promoted questioning, scaffolding, dialogue and responses, offering praise or positive feedback, giving or extending information, clarifying information, restating information, directing discussion, sharing personal reactions, and relating concepts to life experiences. When children ask questions, it often leads to an increase in literacy learning. Morrow also found that when children were asked to retell stories, they were more focused on the meaning of the story.

Journaling

Journal writing is one method reading and writing can be integrated together in the curriculum. Reflective journaling is defined according to many researchers as a tool for students to express thoughts, feelings, and reactions (Hipple, 1985; Strickland & Morrow, 1990; Youngblood, 1985). Reflective journaling allowed students a chance to process information learned and to find connections in their own life. Students become more than spectators, and become active participants who are better able to accurately reflect the meaning of the story and how it connected to them, through journaling (Wollman-Bonilla, 1989). According to researchers, journaling is an effective tool that more closely connected the relationship between reading and writing (Patzner & Pettegrew, 1996; Roser, 1987; Shanahan, 1997). Jewel and Tichenor (1994) emphasized that journaling is a tool that promotes increased reading comprehension and an observation of writing development.

One teacher/researcher, Wollman-Bonilla (1989), found in her classroom that the use of reading journals, journals used in conjunction with individual reading time, provided her students with learning experiences that were geared toward each child's interests and needs. The reading journals also gave her as the teacher an assessment tool to measure growth over the school year. Learning then becomes collaboration between teacher and student.

Journaling has been found to be advantageous in the development of the writing process for young children. According to Hipple (1985) when children are given freedom and opportunity to write on their own, using their own background knowledge, this autonomy promotes positive attitudes toward literacy. Children then view themselves as writers. Youngblood (1985) found that reading journals enabled students to make connections to their lives from the stories they read. Students expressed themselves through their journals, giving them a voice.

Journaling also provided teachers a written record of a student's progress over time (Green, 1990; Jewel & Tichenor, 1994; Patzner & Pettegrew, 1996). Fhang (1999) found that the research in emergent writing revealed that writing gave researchers and teachers a closer look at the development of spelling – how a student moved from scribbling to spelling. Emergent writing also revealed socio-cultural aspects of the writing process – how culture influenced a student's writing, and how storybook language becomes part of a student's written texts.

Kintisch (1986) described some distinct characteristics that kindergarten and first-grade children have when journal writing. There tended to be a move from having journal entries dictated to trying to write more on their own. During this process there appeared to be shorter entries that are less descriptive in nature than when dictation takes place. Another characteristic was repetition of form and meaning. Writing accompanied with illustrations is also prevalent in their journaling. Children in this age group enjoyed working together and made their entries identical at times. There was a move to have chapters and titles for journal entries with the child working on the same story for more than one day.

Story Retelling

Morrow (1985) recognize, “Retelling stories has been used frequently as an assessment tool in studying developmental trends in comprehending stories and for investigating other strategies to improve story comprehension” (p. 870). According to the research done in early childhood, when children become active participants in the literacy experience through story retellings, they make connections to literature (Morrow, 1985; Roser, 1987; Strickland & Morrow, 1989a). Peck (1989) stated that storytelling connected the dots from hearing, telling, and reading stories to writing original stories. Storytelling also promoted the proficiency in reading, comprehension, listening, writing, and oracy skills. Strickland and Morrow (1989a) emphasized that because book language is different than oral language story retelling helped promote reading development. Storytelling also enhanced the development of vocabulary, syntactic complexity, sense of story structure, and comprehension.

Raines and Isbell (1994) described story retellings main purpose is to give children the opportunity to share a story in their own words. They also identified several characteristics that primary children’s story retellings have: some children simply labeled the illustrations, others used the book language, and some took liberty with their retellings and created new parts to the stories.

A child’s knowledge of story structure is important for the development of later reading and writing original stories that have proper sequence of events. According to researchers, children recall settings, initiating events, internal responses, consequences, and reactions in stories (Nezworski, Stein, & Trabasso, 1982). Morrow (1985) found in her story retelling study that kindergarten age children that are given guidance improved their story telling techniques to

include more structural parts of the story, and showed an increase of syntactic complexity of their oral language. Is there a difference in story comprehension between kindergarten age children who listen to a story and use story journaling afterwards and kindergarten age children who listen to a story and retell the story?

Definitions

There are many terms used in this study that need to be defined in relation to how they were used in this study. Emergent literacy is the literacy development that includes oral language, literature, reading, and writing of young children from birth through eight years of age. Integrated instruction is defined as the combination of two subjects such as reading and writing to be taught together in the classroom (Shanahan, 1997). Reflective journaling is defined according to many researchers as a tool for students to express thoughts, feelings, and reactions (Hipple, 1985; Strickland & Morrow, 1990; Youngblood, 1985). Story journaling is defined for this study as writing about a story read by the teacher and may include drawing, dictation, or writing. Authentic assessment is defined as assessment for young children that would include measurements of ability in the classroom without using standardized tests.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Participants

The participants in the study were 18 kindergarten students attending elementary school located in the Southeast United States and one teacher consented to participate in this study. The kindergarten class was randomly divided into 2 groups by drawing names from a bowl. There were nine participants in each group (A & B). The researcher randomly selected 3 children from Group A and 3 children from Group B to be the focus participants who were tape recorded throughout the study.

Instrumentation

Comprehension was measured using Morrow's (2001) story retelling analysis tool. The analysis consisted of the setting of the story (introduction, inclusion of main character, other characters, time, and place); theme (makes reference to character's main goal); plot episodes (number remembered); resolution (names the solution to the story and ends the story); and story sequence (see Appendix: A for story retelling analysis). Reliability and validity for this instrument was based on prior use of the instrument (Morrow, 1985; Morrow, 1992; Morrow & Smith, 1990).

Journal rewritings were analyzed using Sulzby's (1989) writing development scale. This analysis included six stages of writing development: stage one, drawing without writing; stage two, writing using scribbling; stage three, writing using letter like forms; stage four, writing using reproducible letter strings; stage five, writing using invented spelling; stage six, writing using conventional spelling (see Appendix: B for writing development scale). Reliability and validity for this instrument was based on prior use of this instrument (Sulzby, 1989).

Materials

Twenty-four stories were selected from the Public Library based on the following criteria taken from Morrow's (1985) story retelling research and Raines and Isbell's (1994) guidelines for selecting literature for young children (see Appendix: C for references for story books). The picture storybooks were similar in length, number of illustrations, and number of words per page (Morrow, 1985). All books had a clear story plot, well defined settings that were familiar to kindergarten students, clearly defined themes, authentic characters, plot episodes that lead to the

attainment of the main character’s goal, and resolutions that were clearly identifiable (Morrow, 1985; Raines & Isbell). The stories had characters and situations that were relevant to kindergarten age children and were developmentally appropriate for this age group (Raines & Isbell). The researcher then parsed each story to outline the setting, theme, characters, plot episodes, and resolution (see Appendix D for example of parsed story).

Experimental Design and Procedures

A multiple baseline across settings time-series experimental design was used (Barlow & Hersen, 1984; Kazdin, 1982; Neuman & McCormick, 1995). This design involved beginning the collection of baseline data in all settings at the same time but introducing the intervention into only one setting at a time while continuing to take measures in the other(s). If the behavior changed only when the intervention is applied to that particular setting and remained at baseline levels in the other settings, then it can be concluded that the effects are due to the intervention rather than to maturation or extraneous variables.

Table 1.

A Multiple Baseline Across Settings Time-series Experimental Design.

	Group A	Group B
Weeks 1-2	Baseline – listen to story read by the teacher and retell the story to researcher.	Baseline – listen to story read by the teacher and retell the story to researcher.
Weeks 3-4	Continue Baseline – listen to story read by the teacher and retell the story to researcher.	Intervention – story journal after listening to the story read by the teacher and retell the story to researcher.
Weeks 5-6	Intervention – story journal after listening to the story read by the teacher and retell the story to researcher.	Continue Intervention – story journal after listening to the story read by the teacher and retell the story to researcher.

Each day during the duration of this study, Monday through Thursday, at the regular story time, the teacher read the story selected by the researcher. Before the story was read, the teacher was instructed (see Appendix: E for story reading instructions) to read the title of the story, the author's name, the illustrators name, introduce the main character of the story, and then instruct the kindergarten class to think about two questions I selected related to the comprehension of the each story (see Appendix: F for questions asked by the teacher). After the story was read, the teacher was instructed by the researcher to ask the kindergarten class the two questions that were related to the comprehension of the story and, "What was your favorite part?" and to allow for two responses from the class.

During the first two weeks of the study, the children resumed their regular activities in the classroom after the story was read. Focus participants in both Group A and B were asked by me twice a week to retell the story. Each retelling was recorded onto an audiotape. The order of the six focus participants changed daily so there was a rotation through the six participants. I then transcribed each participant's recording using Morrow's (2001) story retelling analysis to code the retellings. The data from the audio retellings during the first two weeks of the study provided the researcher with baseline information for both Group A and B focus participants.

During the third and fourth weeks, after the story time, the children in Group B were instructed to do a reflective journaling exercise (see Appendix: G for instructions for reflective journaling activity). They were asked by the teacher to write on a piece of paper what they thought of the story, or what their favorite part was in the story their teacher read to them that day. The children in Group B had 10 minutes to complete their journal writing. Journal writing was coded using Sulzby's (1989) writing development stages. As during baseline, twice a week I asked the focus participants in both Group A and Group B to retell the story, and each participant's retelling was recorded. I transcribed each participant's recording using the retelling analysis (Morrow, 2001). This data continued the baseline for the focus participants in Group A and provided data after the intervention of journaling for the focus participants in Group B.

For the fifth and sixth weeks of the study, both Group A and Group B participated in intervention. They were instructed to do a reflective journaling exercise. The children were asked by the teacher to write on a piece of paper about what they thought of the story, or what their favorite part was in the story the teacher had read. The journal writings of the whole class

were coded using Sulzby's (1989) writing development stages. Two days per week I had the focus participants in both groups retell the story they had heard that day with each participant's retelling recorded. I transcribed each retelling and coded them on the retelling analysis (Morrow, 2001).

There were 68 transcriptions of the story retellings. Ten of the transcriptions were coded using the retelling analysis instrument (Morrow, 2001). A teacher from another school was asked to code 10 transcriptions in order to establish inter-scorer reliability. By going over one of the story transcriptions together and explaining the coding system on the retelling analysis, instruction by the researcher was given to the teacher on how to code each analysis. Ten transcriptions were randomly selected for coding by the researcher. There were 112 journal writings. Twenty-five were randomly selected by the researcher and given to the same teacher to code them using Sulzby's (1989) stages of writing development. The teacher was instructed by the researcher on the method in which to analyze each journal writing by going over several examples and explaining Sulzby's stages of writing development.

The reliability between the researcher and the teacher was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements for a .97 (range 1.00-.85) inter-scorer agreement of the story retelling. The inter-scorer agreement for journal writing was .98 (range 1.00-.90) and was obtained by the same method.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Description of Analysis

Data obtained from the focus participant's story retelling was analyzed using Morrow's (2001) categories for story retelling which include Setting, Theme, Plot Episodes, Resolution, and Sequence. Scoring consisted of a point each for the introduction of the story, identification of the main character, inclusion of other characters, and reference to time or place, for a total of 4 points for the Setting. One point was possible for the inclusion of the Theme of the story. There was 1 point possible for the inclusion of all Plot Episodes. The Resolution included 1 point possible for identification of the resolution in the story and for ending the story with 2 points total. If the story was told in sequence with the inclusion of introduction, plot episodes, and ending there were 2 points possible. If only partial order of the story was included there was 1 point possible. If there was no inclusion of an introduction, plot episodes, and ending to the story there was no points awarded. The total score equaled 10 points. Each transcript retelling was then analyzed for the difference between the baseline averages and the intervention of journal writing.

The audio taped transcripts were also analyzed for the intervention period of weeks 3-6 for Group B focus participants and for weeks 5-6 for Group A focus participants. Each group was then analyzed for differences between baseline and intervention of journal writing.

The baseline period for Group B focus participants was during weeks 1-2. The focus participants in Group A had a baseline period of weeks 1-4. The baseline scores for both groups were similar in the area of Theme, Plot Episodes, Resolution, and Sequence. There was a greater difference between Group A and Group B baseline average in the area of Setting. The difference between Group A and Group B total average score was .87, while Group B on the average scored higher.

Intervention

After the class listened to the story read by the teacher and she repeated the questions they were told to think about during the story, they were asked to write about the story. Then the focus participants retold the story. The recordings were then transcribed. The transcriptions of

the story retellings were coded using Morrow's (2001) story retelling analysis instrument. Each focus participant's scores were plotted on a graph.

Group B was the first group to participate in the story journaling writing exercise, they were instructed by the teacher to write about the story after hearing it. Child B 1 showed an increase from the baseline starting with story 14 from the baseline although there was a decrease from the baseline scores for the first two stories after the journal exercise began. During the fifth and sixth weeks the last three story scores increased when compared to the baseline and third and fourth weeks. Figure 1 contains the graph for child B 1. The child B 1 showed a difference in mean scores in the areas of setting, theme, resolution, and sequencing when we compare the mean scores found during the fifth and sixth weeks to the baseline scores found in weeks one and two. Table 2 shows the mean scores for child B 1.

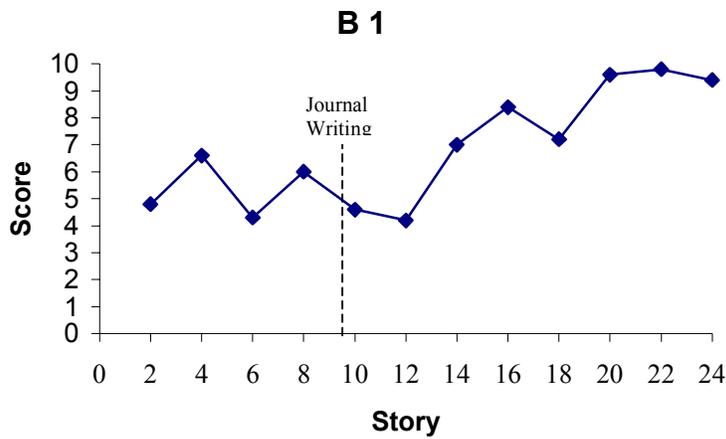


Figure 1. Retelling Points for Each Story by Child B 1.

Table 2.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Child B 1.

Child B 1	Baseline	Intervention	
	Weeks	Weeks	Weeks
	1-2	3-4	5-6
Setting	2.50	2.45	3.80
Theme	0.75	1.00	1.00
Plot	0.68	0.60	0.70
Resolution	1.00	1.25	1.75
Sequence	0.50	0.75	1.75
Total	5.43	6.05	9.00

Child B 2 scores showed that this participant's scores were similar to the baseline scores during stories 10 and 12. This child dropped several points during story number 14 and then returned to similar scores for story number 16. This child scored two points higher than baseline scores for story 18 but stories 20, 22, and 24 showed a return to baseline scores. This child showed slight difference in the area of setting and had the most improvement in the area of sequence. Figure 2 shows the scores for child B 2. Table 3 shows the mean scores for child B 2.

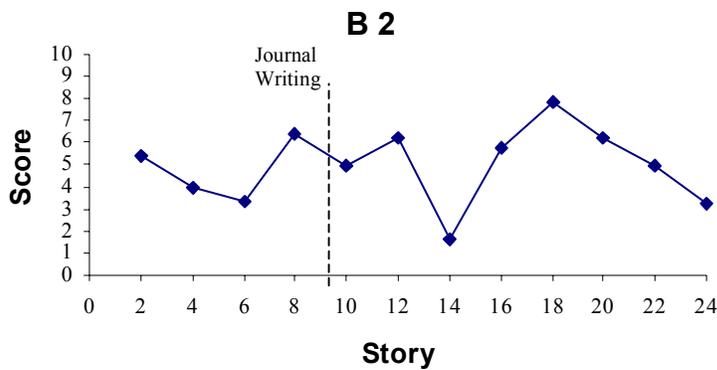


Figure 2. Retelling Points for Each Story by Child B 2.

Table 3.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Child B 2.

Child B 2	Baseline		Intervention	
	Weeks		Weeks	
	1-2	3-4	5-6	
Setting	1.82	1.55	1.95	
Theme	1.00	0.50	0.75	
Plot	0.45	0.60	0.35	
Resolution	1.25	1.25	1.25	
Sequence	0.25	0.75	1.25	
Total	5.43	4.65	5.55	

Child B 3 had a high baseline and after the intervention continued with similar scores during stories 12, 14, and 16. During the last two weeks of the study this child showed a slight increase in scores for stories 18, 20, and 22. This child was absent from school on two days during the duration of the study. Figure 3 shows the scores for child B 3. This child showed a difference of mean scores in the areas of setting, plot, resolution, and sequence of the story when compared with the baseline scores found during weeks one and two. Table 4 shows the mean scores for child B 3.

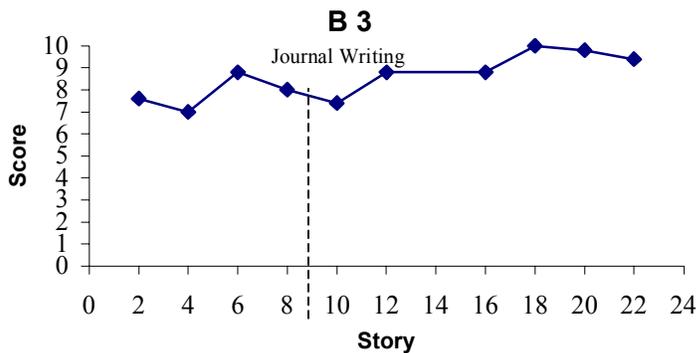


Figure 3. Retelling Points for Each Story by Child B 3.

Table 4.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Child B 3.

Child B 3	Baseline		Intervention	
	Weeks		Weeks	
	1-2	3-4	5-6	
Setting	3.40	3.13	3.73	
Theme	1.00	1.00	1.00	
Plot	0.95	0.87	1.00	
Resolution	1.25	1.67	2.00	
Sequence	1.25	1.67	2.00	
Total	7.80	8.33	9.73	

The average scores of the focus participants in Group B were similar during weeks 2 through 4 to baseline scores. There was an increase in the average starting with story 16 and continuing to the end of the study with the exception of the last story number 24. Figure 4 shows the graph of the mean scores from the focus participants in Group B.

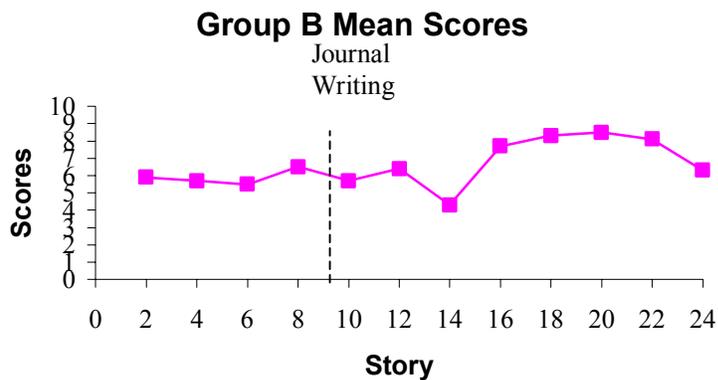


Figure 4. Mean Scores for Group B.

The participants in Group A had four weeks of baseline scores until their intervention of the journal writing exercise began during the last two weeks of the study. Child A 1 showed a slight increase during stories 18 and 20 when compared to the baseline scores. However during stories 22 and 24 there is a decrease in scores when compared to the participant's baseline

scores. This child was absent during one day of the study. Figure 5 shows the scores for child A 1. In the areas of setting, resolution, and sequencing of the story the child showed improvement after the intervention of story journaling. Table 5 shows the mean scores for child A 1.

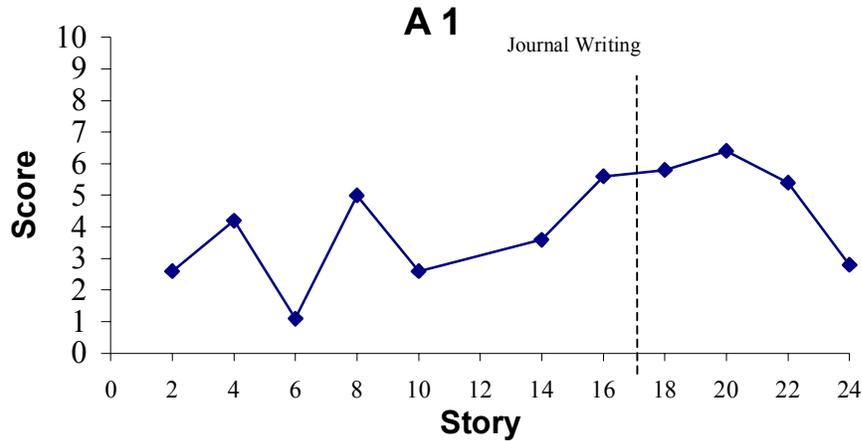


Figure 5. Retelling Points for Each Story by Child A 1.

Table 5.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Child A 1.

Child A 1	Baseline		Intervention
	Weeks	Weeks	Weeks
Child A 1	1-2	3-4	5-6
Setting	1.08	1.60	1.90
Theme	0.20	0.33	0.50
Plot	0.20	0.33	0.20
Resolution	1.00	1.00	1.75
Sequence	0.25	0.67	0.75
Total	3.02	3.93	5.10

The child A 2 showed no increase after the intervention of the journal writing exercise when compared with the baseline scores. Story six was the highest score by this participant. This child was absent during two days of this study. Figure 6 shows the scores for child A 2.

This child did not show any difference after the intervention of story journaling. Table 6 shows the mean numbers for child A 2.

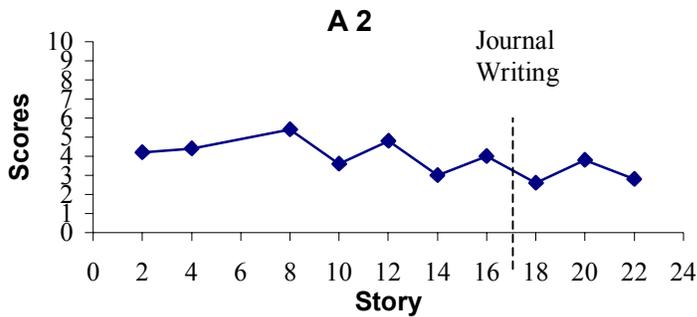


Figure 6. Retelling Points for Each Story by Child A 2.

Table 6.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Child A 2.

Child A 2	Baseline		Intervention
	Weeks	Weeks	Weeks
	1-2	3-4	5-6
Setting	2.07	1.70	1.60
Theme	1.00	0.50	1.00
Plot	0.60	0.40	0.40
Resolution	0.67	0.75	0.00
Sequence	0.33	0.50	0.00
Total	4.67	3.85	3.00

Focus participant A 3 displayed an increase in scores after intervention of journal writing when compared to the baseline scores after the intervention of the journal writing exercise for stories 18, 22, and 24. During story number 20 this child showed a return to baseline scores. Figure 7 shows the scores for child A 3. In the areas of Setting and Sequencing this child showed a difference between baseline scores and after intervention. Table 7 shows the mean numbers for child A 3.

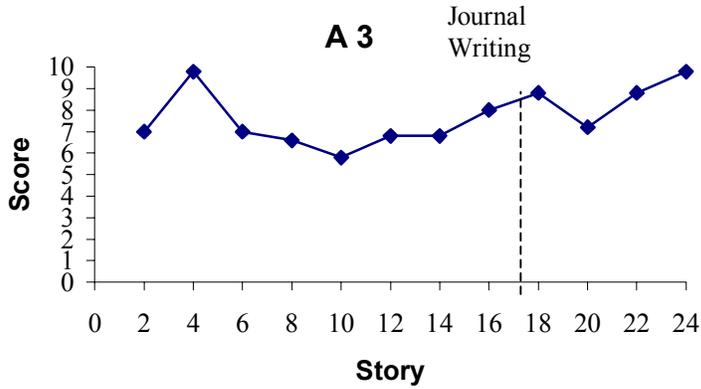


Figure 7. Retelling Points for Each Story by child A 3.

Table 7.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Child A 3.

Child A 3	Baseline		Intervention
	Weeks	Weeks	Weeks
	1-2	3-4	5-6
Setting	2.85	2.15	3.45
Theme	1.00	1.00	1.00
Plot	0.75	0.70	0.70
Resolution	1.75	2.00	1.75
Sequence	1.25	1.00	1.75
Total	7.60	6.85	8.65

The average scores of participants in Group A displayed similar scores after the intervention of journal writing when compared to the baseline scores for stories 18, 20, and 22. There is a slight increase in average scores for story 24. Figure 4 shows the mean scores displayed into a graph for the focus participants in Group A.

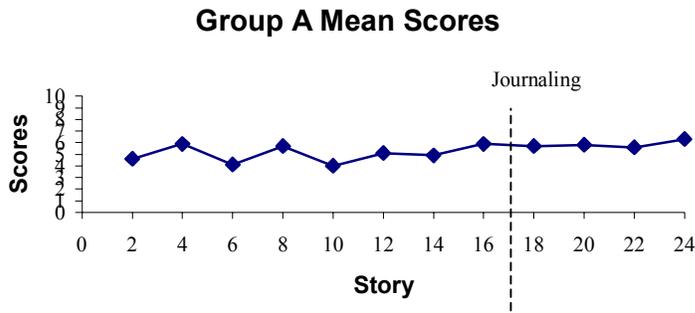


Figure 8. Mean Scores for Group A.

By looking at the comparison within the Morrow's (2001) story retelling analysis, we were able to analyze the data to find if the intervention of the journaling exercise had any influence on the mean numbers for both Group A and Group B. Table 8 shows the average numbers for group B in the areas of setting (introducing the story, main character, other characters, time or place), theme, plot episodes, resolution (resolves the story and ends the story), and sequence of the story. The participants in Group B had the intervention of the journaling exercise begin during week three. In the area of setting Group B participants mean numbers decreased after the intervention during weeks three and four in comparison to the group mean numbers found during the baseline. There was an increase of group mean numbers in the area of setting found during weeks five and six, two weeks after the intervention, when compared with the group average baseline numbers. In the area of remembering the theme of the story there was a slight decrease in mean numbers after the intervention when compared with the group average baseline numbers. For plot episodes remembered there was no difference of group mean numbers after the intervention when compared with the group mean baseline numbers. In the area of remembering the resolution of the story and ending the story there was a slight increase in the group average numbers after the intervention when compared with the group mean baseline numbers. During weeks five and six the group average numbers showed a greater difference when compared with the group mean baseline numbers. For the area of the sequence of the story there was an increase in the group mean number after the intervention when compared with the group average baseline numbers. There was greater increase in mean numbers during weeks five and six for sequence when compared with the group average baseline numbers. The overall total group average numbers decreased slightly after the intervention and

then increased by almost two points during weeks five and six when compared with the group average baseline numbers.

Table 8.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Group B.

Group B			
Weeks	1 & 2	3 & 4	5 & 6
Conditions	Baseline	Intervention	Intervention
Setting	2.49	2.02	3.02
Theme	0.92	0.82	0.91
Plot	0.69	0.67	0.65
Resolution	1.17	1.36	1.64
Sequence	0.67	1.00	1.64
Total	5.93	5.87	7.85

Table 9 shows the mean numbers for group A in the areas of setting (introducing the story, main character, other characters, time or place), theme, plot episodes, resolution (resolves the story and ends the story), and sequence. Group A had the intervention of the journal writing exercise starting with week five. In the area of setting, Group A participants increased their mean score after the intervention when compared with the mean baseline numbers. For the area of remembering the theme of the story the mean number remained the same after the intervention when compared with the mean baseline number. In the area of plot episodes remembered there was a slight decrease in the mean number after the intervention when compared with the group mean baseline number. For the area of remembering the resolution of the story and ending the story there was an increase in the group mean numbers after the intervention when compared with the group average baseline number. In the area of the sequence of the story there was an increase in the group average number after the intervention when compared with the mean baseline numbers.

Table 9.

Mean Numbers of Story Retelling by Categories and Week for Group A.

Group A			
Weeks	1 & 2	3 & 4	5 & 6
Conditions	Baseline	Baseline	Intervention
Setting	1.99	1.84	2.38
Theme	0.82	0.64	0.82
Plot	0.51	0.49	0.44
Resolution	1.18	1.27	1.27
Sequence	0.55	0.55	0.91
Total	5.05	4.78	5.82

Story Journaling

The story journaling entries of each of the participants in this study were collected and analyzed using Sulzby's (1989) stages of writing development. Each entry was then marked by which stage the journal entry reflected: stage one, writing through the use of drawing; stage two, writing using scribbling; stage three, writing using letter like forms; stage four, writing using reproducible letter strings; stage five, writing using invented spelling; stage six, writing using conventional spelling. Group B started their story journaling during week three of the study and each story journaling entry was then tallied with the number from that group who were coded to a particular stage. Table 10 shows the comparison between weeks three and four and weeks five and six. During weeks three and four the majority of the participants in Group B exhibited characteristics of stage one, (writing through the use of drawing) and stage five (writing using invented spelling). Weeks five and six indicated that fewer participants exhibited stage one (writing through the use of drawing), had an increase in stage four (writing using reproducible letter strings), and still had the majority displaying stage five (writing using invented spelling).

The participants in Group A started their story journaling during week five. Table 9 show that the highest number of participants during weeks five and six exhibited the characteristics of stage one (writing through the use of drawing). Stage four (writing using

reproducible letter strings), and stage five (writing using invented spelling) both had similar results and several of the participants exhibited characteristics of these two stages.

Table 10.

The Number of Occurrences in Each Writing Development Stage by Weeks.

	Group B		Group A	
	Weeks 3-4	Weeks 5-6	Weeks 5-6	
Stage 1	28	23	Stage 1	28
Stage 2	5	6	Stage 2	9
Stage 3	4	3	Stage 3	8
Stage 4	2	9	Stage 4	11
Stage 5	29	25	Stage 5	12
Stage 6	2	0	Stage 6	1

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Is there a difference in story comprehension between kindergarten age children who listen to a story and use story journaling afterwards and kindergarten age children who listen to a story and retell the story? The group mean scores showed the greatest difference between baseline overall scores and scores after the intervention of journal writing. It does appear that there was a positive influence of story journaling on story comprehension for kindergarten students after hearing a story read to them. By making connections between listening to stories read and writing in journals, children are better able to remember and retell story elements.

Story Retelling

The longer children were given the opportunity to story journal after hearing a story read to them, there appears to be a greater increase in story comprehension scores. Group B showed a much greater increase after four weeks of story journaling than Group A showed in just two weeks of story journaling. Both groups had similar baseline scores before intervention. When scores are compared for the first two weeks of journaling they are similar. The question remains whether the extra weeks of intervention would have also improved Group A's scores as it had for Group B's. So it may be possible that if the study had continued that Group A would have followed a similar pattern to Group B and also displayed improvement in scores.

This study also found that the participants included more structural elements in their retellings according to what researcher's have found in story retelling studies (Morrow, 1985). Nezworski et al (1982) found that children recalled settings, initiating events, internal responses, consequences, and reactions in stories. The participants in this study initially scored higher in the area of settings, theme, and resolution similar to Morrow's (1985) study with kindergarten children's retellings. After the intervention of story journaling, the participants improved scores in the areas of setting, resolution, and the sequence of the story. When children are given the opportunity to make literacy connections through journal writing, there is the prospect for further development. Although the process of retelling a story in and of itself has been shown through research to improve comprehension, this study has also shown that writing about stories after listening to them read enhances the learning experience in kindergarten children.

Story Journaling

The story journaling revealed several points when analyzed using Sulzby's (1989) protocol. While the majority of children fluctuated between stages one (writing via drawing) through five (writing using invented spelling) they were making connections on paper about the story and sharing how they felt. Reflective journaling is defined according to many researchers as a tool for students to express thoughts, feelings, and reactions (Hipple, 1985; Strickland & Morrow, 1990; Youngblood, 1985). Although reflective journaling is often associated with older students, this study showed that kindergarten children are capable of making literary connections through writing about a story they have heard and putting it into their own words, even through drawing about the story. Figures 9 through 14 show examples of Sulzby's stages of writing development.



Figure 9. Example of Stage 1 Drawing for Writing.



Figure 10. Example of Stage 2 Scribbles for Writing.



Figure 11. Example of Stage 3 Writing Using Letter-like Forms.

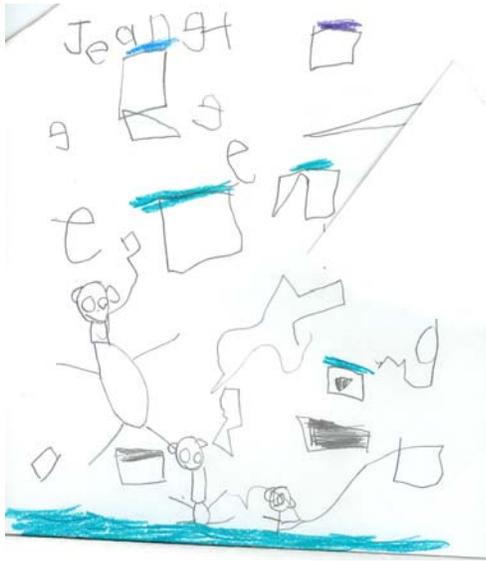


Figure 12. Example of Stage 4 Writing Using Learned Letters.

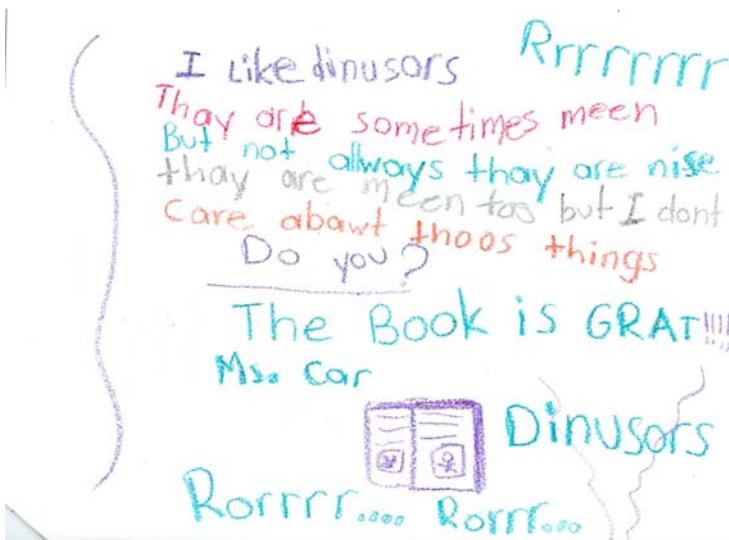


Figure 13. Example of Stage 5 Writing Using Invented Spelling.

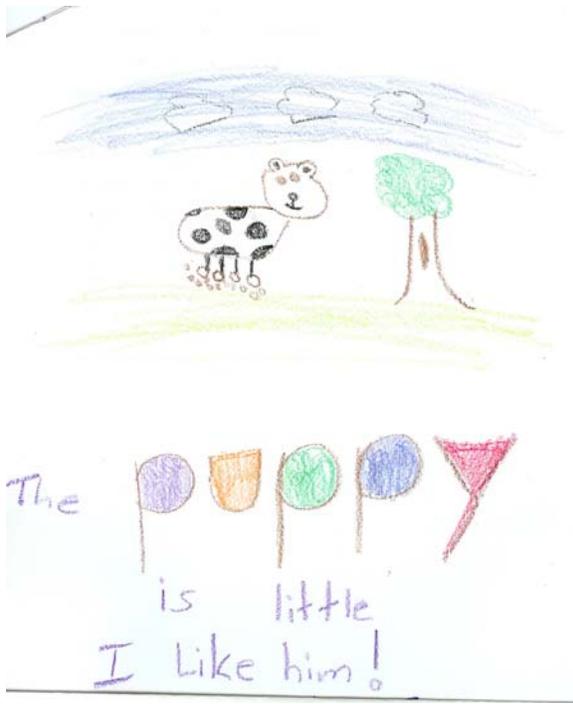


Figure 14. Example of Stage 6 Writing Using Conventional Spelling.

The journal writing experience in this study documented the emergent writing abilities of the class. When incorporated into the classroom during the course of a school year it allows the teacher to have an overview of the writing development in the class. This corresponded with Fhang's (1999) research in emergent writing producing a clear picture of how a student moved from scribbling into spelling. Many of the children in this study wrote notes about how they liked the story and would include notes to the researcher. Figure 15 illustrates one child's story journaling that included a note to the researcher and this child's thoughts about the story.

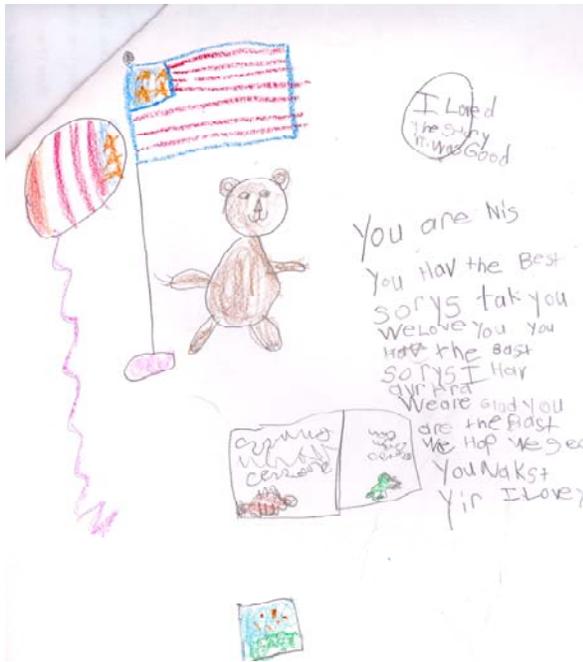


Figure 15. Example of Story Journaling.

Book language was also evident in some of their journal writings, either in pictures or scenes from the book, including talking characters with captions. Figure 16 illustrates one child's depiction of a scene from the book in their story journaling.



Figure 16. Example of Story Journaling.

By providing writing experiences for young children, creativity and self-expression can be fostered in the classroom. Researchers (Hipple, 1985; Youngblood, 1985) have recommended that journal writing experiences be included for children as a means of expression that provides adults with a window into what children are thinking.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS

This study has some implications for both further research and practical application in the classroom. The findings in this study have suggested that the inclusion of story journaling experiences in the classroom foster literacy development in kindergarten students. Through further research in the area of story journaling there is the possibility of finding connections between the stages of writing development and story retelling. Does the stage of writing development influence story comprehension? This study concentrated only on if the story journaling influenced story comprehension so with further investigation there is the possibility of discovering if writing development is linked to comprehension.

Another question for further research would be does the audience size during story retelling influence the child's story comprehension? Is there a connection between the enter action a larger audience may create where the child wants to include more details from the story in the retelling. Does a child respond to a peer audience or a single adult by retelling including more details from the story? In this study the focus participants only retold the story to the researcher and the question arises if students are asked to retell a story for their peers are they able to remember more details of the story.

This study showed that through providing opportunities to make connections during classroom experiences in literature and writing there was positive development in literacy both writing and story comprehension. Through the use of story journaling in the classroom over a longer period of a school year there is the potential to observe greater growth. By incorporating writing with literature in the classroom it provided opportunities for authentic assessment. If story journaling was used on a regular basis in the classroom it provides an ongoing example of writing development.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Morrow (2001) Story Retelling Analysis

Child's Name _____ Age _____

Title of Story _____ Date _____

Setting

- a. Begins story with an introduction _____
- b. Names main character _____
- c. Number of other characters named _____
- d. Actual number of other characters _____
- e. Score for "other characters" (c/d): _____
- f. Includes statement about time or place _____

Theme

Refers to main character's primary goal
or problem to be solved. _____

Plot Episodes

- a. Number of episodes recalled _____
- b. Number of episodes in story _____
- c. Score for "plot episodes" (a/b) _____

Resolution

- a. Names problem solution/goal attainment _____
- b. Ends story _____

Sequence

Retells story in structural order: setting,
theme, plot episodes, resolution. (score 2 for
proper, 1 for partial, 0 for no sequence evident) _____

Highest Score Possible 10

Child's Score _____

APPENDIX C

References for Story Books

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APPENDIX D

Example of a Parsed Story

Parsed Story of Jamaica Tag-A-Long by Juanita Havill

Setting:

- A. Beginning: Jamaica tries to beat her brother to the phone.
- B. Characters: Jamaica (little sister), Ossie (big brother), brother's friends (Jed, Buzz, and Maurice), little boy (Berto).

Theme:

Jamaica really wants to play basketball with her brother and his friends but even when she tries to play with them they won't let her.

Plot Episodes:

Episode one: Jamaica tries to tag-a-long with Ossie to play basketball

Episode two: Jamaica follows her brother and watches them play.

Episode three: Jamaica steals the basketball and tries to make a basket and misses. Ossie gets mad at Jamaica and tells her to leave.

Episode four: Jamaica goes to the swings but a little boy gets in the way.

Episode five: She tries the sand box but the little boy follows her and tries to help but just keeps messing up the sand castle.

Resolution:

- A. Jamaica realizes she is acting like her brother Ossie.
- B. She asks the little boy Berto to help her with the sand castle.
- C. Ossie comes over and asks if he can help, Jamaica says he can.

APPENDIX E

Story Reading Instructions

The teacher will be instructed to follow these directions when reading each story selected by the researcher.

- A. Read the title and author of the story.
- B. Introduce the main character and ask the questions relating to each story.
- C. Read the story without interruption.
- D. After the story is read, repeat the two questions from above and then ask, “What was your favorite part of the story?”
- E. Please allow for one response to the “thinking” questions from above and two responses to the last question.

APPENDIX F

Instructions for Reflective Journaling Activity

1. Please ask the children to use the sheet of paper to write about the story – favorite character, what they liked about the story, if they would recommend this story to a friend.
2. Their writing can include drawing, writing, or dictation.
3. Go for 10 minutes.
4. Make sure their names are on their papers.

APPENDIX G

Questions Asked by the Teacher Before and After the Story Reading.

No Jumping on the Bed, (Arnold, 1987)

Think about how Walter learns a lesson while we read this silly story.

And how many different people he finds on his funny journey.

Wanda's Monster, (Spinelli, 2002)

Who helps her solve this problem?

And does Wanda help anyone else?

Scardy Mouse, (Macdonald & Warnes, 2001)

What is he afraid of most?

What does he say at the end of the story?

The Rainbow Fish, (Pfister, 1992)

Who does he go see for help?

How does he finally have friends?

Officer Buckle and Gloria, (Rathmann, 1995)

What does Gloria do while Officer Buckle is giving safety tips?

What did Officer Buckle think about buddies at the end of the book?

The Scarecrow's Hat, (Brown, 2001)

Why does chicken want the hat?

How does she go about getting the hat?

Snowflake Bentley, (Martin, 1998)

What did he find out about snowflakes?

What did he like to take pictures of the most?

Andrew's Loose Tooth, (Munsch, 1998)

What does everyone keep giving him to eat?

Who finally helps him with his tooth?

How Much Is That Doggie in the Window? (Trapani, 1999)

What does he do to earn money?

What happens to the money?

APPENDIX G Continued

Mirrette on the High Wire (McCully, 1992)

Who comes to stay at the boarding house?

What does Mirrette learn to do?

Good Job Oliver! (Molk, 1999)

Do the other bunnies think he can grow strawberries?

What does Oliver do to protect his strawberries?

Clifford the Small Red Puppy (Bridwell, 1972)

Does she pick out the best puppy from the litter?

What made Clifford grow so big?

Trouble On The T-Ball Team (Bunting, 1997)

What is happening to all of the team members?

Does it happen to Linda too?

Newton (Tyger, 2001)

What are all the night sounds?

Is Newton afraid?

Franklin's Birthday Party (Bourgeois & Clark, 2001)

Where did Franklin want to take his friends for his birthday party?

Was it the best party ever?

Jamaica Tag-Along (Havill, 1989)

Why didn't her brother want her to play with them?

Who does Jamaica play with at the end of the story?

New Neighbors (Berenstain & Berenstain, 1994)

Are they happy about who their new neighbors are?

What is the bamboo fence for?

Shy Charles (Wells, 1988)

Does he talk to people even when his parents want him to?

How does Charles react when something happens to the babysitter?

APPENDIX G Continued

Albie the Lifeguard (Borden, 1993)

Who does Albie pretend to be?

Why does Albie decide to finally join the swim team?

Beverly Billingsly Borrows a Book (Stadler, 2002)

What does Beverly forget to do?

Will Beverly ever be able to check out another book from the library?

Arthur's Pet Business (Brown, 1990)

How does Arthur show he can be responsible?

Will Arthur have a pet of his own?

The Big Storm (Tregebov, 1993)

What does Kitty Doyle do with Jeanette every day?

What happens to Kitty Doyle?

Flop-Ear (Van Genechten, 1999)

Why does Flop-Ear feel different from the other rabbits?

What does Flop-Ear do to make them all the same?

Cliff Hanger (George & Minor, 2002)

What happens to the dog?

And what does the boy decide to do?

VITA
CARISA CARR

Personal Data: Date of birth: April 14, 1972
 Place of birth: Sara Sota Florida
 Marital Status: Married

Education: Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska; Psychology, B.S., 1995
 East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee; Early
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Professional Substitute Teacher, Greeneville Public Schools, Greeneville,
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Volunteer Leader, Weekly Program for Children Ages 0-3, Crossville,
Experience: Tennessee, 2002-2003.
 Leader, Vacation Bible School, Crossville, Tennessee, 2002-
 2003