

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE APPEAL IN FAVORITE COMICS
AND FAVORITE FICTION, AS REPORTED BY NINTH-GRADE
PUPILS IN THE JAMES P. ELDER JUNIOR HIGH
SCHOOL, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem and Its Purpose

The problem of this study is to compare certain elements of appeal in favorite comic books and favorite books of fiction read by 384 ninth-grade pupils in the J. P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas, during a three-months period from November 7, 1949, to February 7, 1950. The purpose of the investigation is to ascertain whether the same elements of appeal are common to both types of reading, and whether they compare favorably with the findings of other investigations reported in literature on the subject.

The J. P. Elder Junior High School, with an enrollment of 1085 pupils in 1949-1950, is the largest of the eight junior high schools in Fort Worth. It is located on the north side of the city in the residential district. Most of the parents are salaried workers. However, some own private businesses. Generally speaking, the standard of living is average, and most of the pupils are well cared for.¹

¹Interview with R. G. Wilkerson, principal of the J. P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas, April 14, 1950.

Limitations of the Study

Four limitations were recognized in the development of the present problem. First, the participants were limited to 384 ninth-grade pupils in the J. P. Elder Junior High School of Fort Worth, Texas. Second, the appeal according to types of comics and fiction included only funny, sad, exciting, fantastic, true-to-life, and romantic, whereas the appeal in themes included home life and family, love and romance, war and fighting, animals, airplanes, helping others, doing right, adventure, hero and heroine, sports, vocations, westerns, and school life. These themes were selected arbitrarily because of their frequency of appearance in the literature which children read. Third, only the fifteen books of fiction checked out of the school library most frequently from November 7, 1949, to February 7, 1950, were considered in determining the pupils' favorite fiction, although it is recognized that other books might have been wholly as popular at other periods of the school year. Fourth, only the order-blank sheet used by drug stores, news stands, and other businesses which handle comic books, was used for a reference as to what comic magazines are published.

Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary sources were utilized in the present investigation. The pupils, teachers, librarians,

and managers of certain businesses which sell comic magazines were included among the primary sources. Books, magazines, and reports comprised the secondary references.

Method of Procedure

At the beginning of the study, several drug stores and news stands were visited for the purpose of obtaining information on how many and what types of comic magazines were available. An order blank, containing the titles of the comics which were sold in Fort Worth, Texas, was obtained. This list was read to all the ninth-grade pupils, and the fifteen comics most frequently read were determined by a show of hands.

The second step was to obtain a list of fiction books which were checked out of the school library most frequently from November 7, 1949, to February 7, 1950. A list of fifteen titles was furnished by the librarian.

The third step in the development of the problem was the formulation and administration of a questionnaire for the pupils, from which could be obtained data on their favorite comic magazines and books of fiction, frequency of reading, and reasons for reading each magazine and each book. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Appendix of this study.

A fourth step was a review of the findings reported by other investigators. The elements of appeal and frequency of reading were noted.

The final step in the investigation was the making of an interpretation and analysis of the information obtained from the questionnaires and the making of a comparison of these data with the findings reported by related studies.

Significance of the Problem

Comic magazines have mushroomed into a gigantic industry and a significant social force. Americans buy approximately fifty million copies each month.² In 1948 the Marvel Comic Group made a survey in order to ascertain the reading habits of American youth as they pertain to comic magazines.³ The survey was conducted on a national basis with full regard for age, sex, economic status, and race of all respondents. The investigators reported 1,940 interviews among persons among the age group of eight to twenty years. Interviewing was done in thirty-four different cities of all sizes and in all geographic areas of the United States. The results of the survey show that eighty-three per cent of the youth between the ages of eight and

²Fawcett Comic Group, The ABC's of Comic Magazines, p. 3.

³"A Study of the Readership of Comic Magazines by Children," Survey, 1948, p. 1.

twenty years inclusive read the comics. The school classification of those pupils and the percentages who read comic magazines were as follows: elementary school, 95.7 per cent; junior high school, 95.2 per cent; high school, 77.8 per cent; college, 45.5 per cent; and no school, 58.8 per cent. These figures indicate that comic magazines are really a new medium of communication. Whether they represent a force for good in the country is a controversial issue. Since teachers are responsible for directing the required reading of junior high school pupils, it seemed significant to determine the elements of appeal in comic magazines and to compare them with those in the pupils' favorite books of fiction in order that desirable literature which would fulfill the pupils' needs might be provided.

CHAPTER II

THE APPEAL IN FICTION AND IN COMICS AND THE FREQUENCY OF PUPILS' READING ACCORDING TO VARIOUS INVESTIGATORS

The Appeal of Fiction

Reading is an activity which expresses and serves a great variety of needs and provides differently for different individuals under different circumstances. Required reading in many schools represents years of sustained effort by the Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association of America for the purpose of providing the best material for today's boys and girls. Regardless of these efforts, when children read for pleasure or choose their own books, they often do not select the "superior" books chosen by adults. For that reason, various investigations have been made of youth's reading interests. In other words, efforts have been made to determine why boys and girls choose certain books. What is the appeal? The discussions that follow are brief summaries of studies which have been made in an attempt to answer the preceding questions.

Ruth Strang conducted a study related to reading interests of pupils in grades seven through twelve in thirty

high schools.¹ The participants were asked to answer the two following questions: "What do young persons like you most want to read about? What kind of books or articles will you choose to read above all others?" Answers to the questions indicated that adventure, love, and mystery were the favorite themes.

The investigator found that in the seventh grade, interest in animals, adventure, and mystery was greater than interest in romantic stories. In other grades the themes of adventure, love, and mysterious excitement were of almost equal interest. Boys appeared to prefer mysterious excitement and adventure to love stories.

Data obtained from this study also indicated that pupils' interest in themselves was a strong competitor of the three perennial interests: adventure, love, and mysterious excitement. The pupils said that they wanted to read about their own lives and the troubles that appear in teen-age life. This interest was expressed in all grades, especially by girls.

In the upper grades, the pupils showed an interest in adult reading material, such as historical novels, travels, current events, and contemporary problems. "Westerns" were mentioned by very few boys or girls.

Comics were seldom mentioned after grade nine, although

¹Ruth Strang, "Reading Interest, 1946," English Journal, XXXV (January-December, 1946), 477-482.

humorous stories and joke books held a place in the reading program of these young people. Biography and autobiography interested a small number of pupils. Such magazines as Seventeen, Miss America, and Calling All Girls seemed to have stimulated the interest of both junior high school and senior high school girls in fashions, personal appearance, and boy-girl relationships.

The study also showed that, beginning with the eighth grade, both boys and girls indicated interest in books on vocational guidance and careers. Some of the books which the pupils suggested as being interesting dealt with the future and the pupil's place in the world of tomorrow. The author summed up this topic in the following comment;

In the titles we find interest in the activities of other teen-agers; desire to read something that will help them solve their problems of growing up, of family and teacher relationships, of boy-girl relationships, of vocational choice. They show concern for the future. Some look forward with eagerness; others with serious concern; still others with fear and dread.²

Norvell reported some results of a twelve-year study of children's reading interests in which more than 50,000 pupils and 625 teachers participated.³ The following findings were reported: (1) both sexes reacted favorably to stories

²Ibid., p. 482.

³George W. Norvell, "Some Results of a Twelve-year Study of Children's Reading Interests," English Journal, XXXV (January-December, 1946), 531-536.

of adventure. Boys were more favorably inclined than girls to strenuous adventure, including war. Girls preferred romantic love and stories of home and family life. (2) Even as low as the seventh grade, pupils indicated a marked tendency to enjoy books which appealed to adults. (3) Two out of every three literary selections commonly used in classrooms were better liked by girls than by boys. (4) The novel was the first choice of all pupils, followed, in order, by drama, short story, biography, essays, poetry, letters, and last, speeches.

Reese says that since the social instinct and love awaken during the adolescent period, pupils are eager for books that will help them to appear like typical young people of their age. They want to know what to say and what to do, how to make friends of both sexes, and how to develop social graces.⁴

Reese also reports that boys and girls alike are always interested in books that will help them to choose their careers so that they can establish a comfortable home and accomplish something worth-while. However, during adolescence there are certain differences in the reading interests of boys and girls. Boys still enjoy animal stories. Girls enjoy this material also, but they prefer pets, whereas

⁴Ruth Sara Reese, "Pleading Interest of Adolescents," Texas Outlook, XXVIII (December, 1944), 40.

boys prefer stories of wild animals. Boys are less interested in love stories than girls. As the romantic element enters into his favorite book, a boy likes it mixed with adventure and plenty of action. His ideal book contains a touch of mystery and the element of rivalry. The chief interest of girls, however, is the story of happy home and school life.

In an analysis of the junior high school and its curriculum, Cox reviewed the findings of various early studies on pupils' reading interests.⁵ Physical strength and self-control, implying feats of achievement, adventure, and action, headed the boys' list of interests. Kindness, love, and contemporary problems dealing with clothes and social acceptance were the girls' first choice.

Josette Frank, who wrote What Books for Children? also says that adolescent boys continue to choose their Tarzan books, although they are vitally interested in adult literature. They enjoy youthful tales of achievement, also. Girls choose books about girl heroines, with a dash of romance and adventure or with hints on desirable vocations.⁶

Jordan analyzed several early studies on children's reading interests made between 1896-1907. The results

⁵Philip W. L. Cox, The Junior High School and Its Curriculum, p. 162.

⁶Josette Frank, What Books for Children? p. 82.

showed that adolescent boys were interested in adventure. Girls were interested in sentimental, emotional books and in books on manners and problems of their daily lives.⁷

Jordan also compiled the results of over eight hundred observations relative to children's reading interests in eight public libraries of New York and near-by vicinities. Findings indicated that adolescent boys chose most frequently books that appeal to the instincts of mastery and fighting.⁸ Girls' major interests appeared to center around home and family life and school. In a later but similar investigation, including 3,598 pupils of Arkansas, Kansas, and Washington, D. C., in grades six through high school, Jordan found that boys' major interest in reading was adventure. Girls chose books that contained sentiment, kindness, emotion, adventure, and problems of daily life.⁹

Another study of reading interests as reported by 1559 high-school pupils in North Carolina resulted in similar findings. Adventure was the first interest of boys. Fictional stories of teen-age problems was the first interest of girls, whereas adventure ranked second.¹⁰

⁷Arthur Melvill Jordan, Children's Interest in Reading, pp. 4-12.

⁸Ibid., pp. 15-27.

⁹Ibid., pp. 29-51.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Terman and Lima conducted a study related to the reading interests of two thousand adolescent school children. They also found that boys chose books of adventure and mysterious action. Girls chose stories about home and school life.¹¹

Uhl's early investigation relative to the interest of junior high school pupils in informational reading selections was made with eighty-two pupils in Evanston, Illinois. Pupils were asked to read certain selections silently and then, without any class discussion, to report in writing whether they liked them and what was the reason for their report. The investigator concluded that pupils like factual material if it is presented in an interesting manner and is on their level of comprehension. The findings of Uhl's investigation relative to reading interests reported by one thousand Wisconsin pupils in grades nine through twelve practically paralleled the findings of many other studies in which it was found that dramatic action and adventure ranked first in appeal for both boys and girls.¹²

A summary of the opinions and findings of the six investigators who have been cited in the previous discussions

¹¹Lewis M. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading, pp. 74-75.

¹²Willis L. Uhl, "The Interest of Junior High School Pupils in Informational Reading Selections," Elementary School Journal, XXII (September, 1921-January, 1922), 352-360.

TABLE 1 -- Continued

Elements of Appeal	Investigators										Total			
	Strang	Norvell	Reese	Cox	Frank	Jordan's Studies				Terman, Lima		Uhl Studies		
						1	2	3	4			1	2	
Animals.			x		x									2
Air-planes.														
Helping others.														
Doing right.														
Heroes, heroines.			x	x	x		x							4
Sports.	x		x	x	x									4
Westerns														
Careers, vocations.	x		x		x									3
School life.			x				x			x				3

An analysis of data in Table 1 shows that the element of adventure ranked first as an appeal. Being true to contemporary life was second. Romance ranked third. The following other ranks were attained by the specified elements

of appeal: fourth, heroes and heroines; fifth, home and family; sixth, war or fighting, and animals; and seventh, sports. Westerns were not mentioned.

The Appeal in Comics

The affinity between youth and comics is too obvious for controversy. Wherever there are young people, generally there are comic books, and wherever there are comic books, generally there are young people. Neither can it be disputed that children read comics without coaxing. Any interest which entices the whole juvenile population should not be ignored by adults who are responsible for children's education and welfare. Within recent years, various educators have sought to determine the appealing elements in comics, just as they have made many efforts to find out why children read certain types of books. The findings of studies on this problem are contained in the succeeding discussions.

In order to determine what elements in the comics fascinated adolescents, the Children's Book Committee of the Child Study Association of America examined and evaluated one hundred comic magazines. The story contents were classified as follows: adventure, fantasy, animal stories, war, crime and detectives, real stories and biography, jungle adventure, fun and humor, love interest, and re-told classics.

The investigators found that stories of adventure ranked first in popularity among children's favorite comics, as did danger and suspense. Fantastic adventures which held appeal were related to feats of superhuman prowess and speed, miracle men who possessed specific powers, magicians, and weird scientists who displayed magical inventions that projected them readily into other worlds or into the future. Other appealing elements included the character's ability to overcome all obstacles, to help and protect the weak, and to avenge wrong and punish evil-doers.¹³

The investigators also concluded that family drama is generally treated as humorous in the comics, and the children find peculiar delight in reading of the mishaps and misadventures of ordinary people. Stories of jungle adventure do not find a large place in comics, and romantic love enters into only a few of the comics. For the most part, heroes and heroines are noble, courageous, and chivalrous. It was also observed that one outstanding element is common to all comics, and that is action, which represents life as young readers would live it in an effort to escape from their daily routine.

¹³Josette Frank, "What Is in the Comics?" Journal of Educational Sociology, XVIII (November, 1944), 214-222.

Witty, Smith, and Coomer investigated the reading of comics among 2500 children in grades four through eight. They concluded that the interest in this type of reading is maintained with about the same intensity from grades four through six, but the number of comics read in the junior high school is slightly lower than in the elementary grades. The differences between the sexes, relative to frequency of reading comics, were neither consistent nor highly significant. The only important conclusion was that/ boys and girls are both generally attracted to the comics. The investigators concluded that such reading is simply an activity which parallels the child's interest in the highly exciting and adventurous offerings of other reading, the radio, and the motion picture.¹⁴

Marston in his report on why 100,000 Americans read comics, summarized the evolution of comics. He says that the first period, from 1900 to 1920, included comics that were supposed to be funny. Between 1920 and 1930 the comic stopped trying to be humorous and became adventurous. The third period, which began in 1938, was characterized by a radical departure from previous patterns. At that time comics were not meant to be humorous; they were not concerned primarily with dramatic adventure; their

¹⁴Paul Witty, Ethel Smith, and Ann Coomer, "Reading the Comics in Grades VII and VIII," Journal of Educational Psychology, XXXIII (January-December, 1942), 173.

emotional appeal, instead, became wish-fulfillment. As an example, "Superman" satisfies the universal human longing to be strong, to overcome opposing obstacles, and to have good overcome evil.¹⁵ The author emphasized the findings of his investigations and studies in the following excerpt, "So there is the latest formula in comics--super strength, altruism, and feminine allure, combined in a single character."¹⁶

The Marvel Comic Group's interviews with approximately two thousand young people between the ages of eight and twenty years, mentioned previously, indicated that children from all types of homes read the comics. With heads of the home engaged in the following occupations, the specified percentage of pupils in each category read comics, according to the survey: professional, 76.5; proprietors, 83.0; clerical, 80.3; craftsmen, 82.7; operatives, 88.3; service workers, 88.6; farm workers, 82.0; housewives, 88.1; not employed, 66.0; and others, 92.6.¹⁷ The same survey showed that Superman and Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Batman, Looney Tunes, Walt Disney, and Patsy Walker were the pupils' favorites when the boys and girls were considered together. The boys' favorites were, in the order of

¹⁵William Moulton Marston, "Why 100,000 Americans Read Comics," American Scholar, XIII (33-34), 35-41.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 44. ¹⁷Marvel Comic Group, op. cit., p. 5.

their rank, Superman, Donald Duck, Captain Marvel, Batman, and Walt Disney. The girls reported Patsy Walker as their first choice, with Donald Duck, Archie, Superman, and Millie the Model following next in order.¹⁸

Fawcett's investigation revealed that children asked for specific brands of items which were advertised by comics. Among these items, in the order of the frequency of requests, were cereals, desserts, milk fortifiers, tooth paste, hair tonic, automobiles, and tooth powder. No indications were given as to the various elements of appeal.¹⁹

Other investigations of the appealing elements in comics have been made among pupils below the junior high school level. They are included here because it appears that certain elements are appealing, regardless of the age or sex of the reader. Probably one of the most significant of these investigations was conducted by Witty, who made a study of 334 pupils in the elementary grades of Evanston, Illinois, relative to their reading. He concluded that the comics appeared to satisfy the pupils' desire and need for experiences that are adventurous and exciting. He also concluded that these two elements appeared to be much

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹⁹Fawcett's Comic Groups, "A Study of the Readership of Comic Magazines by Pupils," Survey (1948), p. 13.

more important than the item of humor, because many of the comics which children called favorites are devoid of humorous situations or instances. The investigator also concluded that pupils' interests in comics are similar to those found in other forms of reading, in the motion picture, and in radio. He recommends that teachers should attempt to surround pupils with a variety of good literature rich in elements of action, surprise, adventure, and excitement.²⁰

Witty made another study of comics among 2,500 elementary school children. He found that girls read comics more frequently than do boys. He concluded that sex differences are not so prominent or consistent in reading comics as in other reading pursuits. A compilation of tabulations shows that the differences between sexes are neither consistent nor highly significant. He also found that boys and girls who read comics receive about the same average marks in school and are about as well adjusted and effective in social relationships as those pupils who do not read comics extensively. In addition, he found that some children who read comics often follow reading programs which are very rich and desirable. He also agreed with other investigators who found that interests in comics

²⁰Paul Witty, "Children's Interest in Reading the Comics," Journal of Experimental Education, X (December, 1941), 100-104.

are general and consistent from grade to grade through the elementary school.

Gruenberg, in a discussion of the comics as a social force, says that comics have made a feature of factual material in contrast to fiction and fantasy. Certain titles and a concern for contemporary life suggest the pervading educational purposes, such as current events, history, social studies, and science. No specific appeals were mentioned.²¹ //

In 1940 Hill and Trent surveyed the reading interests of 240 elementary school children in the Philadelphia schools relative to their interests in comics. Their preferences were for excitement and mysterious action, followed by the element of humor. The investigators also concluded that children's interests in comics are very similar to their interests in reading.²² ✓

The opinions and findings relative to the appeal in comics, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, are summarized in Table 2. Each element of appeal is listed, along with the investigator who reported it.

²¹Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg, "The Comics as a Social Force," Journal of Educational Sociology, XVIII (November, 1944), 211.

²²George E. Hill and M. Estelle Trent, "Children's Interest in Comic Strips," Journal of Educational Research, XXXIX (September, 1940), 30-36.

An analysis of data in Table 2 shows that adventure is the main element of appeal in comics, according to the reports of seven investigators. Fantasy, romance, home and family, helping others, doing right, and heroes and heroines tied for second place. Humor, verisimilitude, and war or fighting tied for third place. Sadness, animals, airplanes, sports, "westerns," and careers or vocations were not reported by any investigator.

A comparative study of the data in Tables 1 and 2 reveals that adventure is the major element of appeal in both fiction and comics. In fiction, verisimilitude and contemporaneousness ranked second, whereas romance ranked third. In comics, kindness in helping others, conduct, and heroes and heroines tied for second rank; whereas humor, fantasy, verisimilitude, romance, and war or fighting tied for third place.

Frequency of Reading Fiction and Comics

In 1926, Terman and Lima reported a study on the frequency of reading among 230 pupils from twelve to fourteen years of age, which revealed that, on the average, these pupils read three books each month. This figure indicates that they evidently read occasionally rather than regularly, else the number of books read monthly would have been larger.²³

²³Terman and Lima, op. cit., p. 26.

Witty, Smith, and Coomer investigated the frequency with which 2500 children read the comics, but they reported only the number of magazines read. Their findings showed that an average of two magazines were read regularly, three and one-half were read often, and eight were read occasionally. Moreover, the number of magazines read in the eighth grade was slightly lower than the number read in the seventh grade. These data indicate that most of the pupils read either often or occasionally, rather than regularly.²⁴

Brink surveyed the frequency of reading periodicals and newspapers among 1532 high-school pupils in Chicago. Almost half of the pupils said that they read magazines regularly. Approximately three fourths of the respondents also read a newspaper regularly, and comics ranked first as the appealing element.²⁵

In 1949 Herndon investigated the reading interests of 349 pupils in the high school of Waxahachie, Texas. The results showed that an average of 3.2 fiction books were read by each pupil during the first semester. Such an average indicates that the pupils read occasionally rather than regularly. Approximately ninety-five per cent of the

²⁴Witty, Smith, and Coomer, op. cit., p. 173.

²⁵William G. Brink, "High School Pupils' Interest in Magazines and Newspapers," School Review, XLVIII (January, 1940), 40-48.

group read at least one newspaper regularly; about eleven per cent of them read more than one. Comics were the main interest of these respondents.²⁶

Feingold investigated the frequency of reading among 1800 urban high-school pupils in 1944. The findings revealed that sixty-nine per cent of the group were regular readers of at least one daily newspaper. Comics were the major appeal of both boys and girls.²⁷

Summary

An analysis of the findings reported by investigators in the preceding twenty studies related to pupils' interests in reading fiction and comics revealed the following data:

1. The element of adventure ranked first as an appeal of favorite fiction. Being true to contemporary life was second, whereas romance ranked third.
2. Adventure also was the main appeal in comics. Fantasy, romance, home and family, helping others, doing right, and heroes and heroines tied for second place. Humor, verisimilitude, and war or fighting tied for third place.
3. Pupils appeared to read fiction occasionally rather than regularly.

²⁶Rosabel Herndon, "Reading Interests of Students of Waxahachie High School for the First Semester of the 1948-1949 School Year" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, August, 1949), pp. 2, 58, 65.

²⁷G. A. Feingold, "Newspaper Tastes of High School Pupils," School and Society, LIX (April, 1944), 316-319.

4. Pupils appeared to read comic magazines occasionally, but they seemed to read comics in the newspapers regularly.

CHAPTER III

THE APPEAL IN FAVORITE BOOKS OF FICTION AS REPORTED BY PUPILS IN THE J. P. ELDER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, FORT WORTH

When the present study was initiated, the librarian of the J. P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas, was requested to help determine the favorite fiction of the ninth-grade pupils who participated in the investigation. As a result, the books which were checked out of the school library during a three-month period were examined and the highest-ranking fifteen were determined. Table 3 contains data on the number of times each of these was drawn out during the experimental period.

An analysis of data in Table 3 shows that Silver Chief was checked out eighty-two times, and Black Stallion was called for sixty-three times. Each of the following books was drawn from the school library fourteen times: Lassie Come Home, Yea! Wildcats, and Dreams of Glory. Each of the following was requested twelve times: Wilderness Champion, Big Red, and Batter Up. Smoky was stamped eleven times, whereas the following were checked out ten times each: Seventeenth Summer, Thunder Head, Just Jennifer, Party Line, Goal to Go, and Whoa! Matilda.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF TIMES EACH OF FIFTEEN BOOKS OF FICTION
 WAS CHECKED OUT OF THE JAMES P. ELDER JUNIOR
 HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY BY NINTH-GRADE PUPILS
 DURING THE PERIOD OF NOVEMBER 7, 1949,
 TO FEBRUARY 7, 1950

Book	Number of Times Checked Out
<u>Silver Chief</u>	82
<u>Black Stallion</u>	63
<u>Lassie Come Home</u>	14
<u>Yea! Wildcats</u>	14
<u>Dreams of Glory</u>	14
<u>Wilderness Champion</u>	12
<u>Big Red</u>	12
<u>Batter Up</u>	12
<u>Smoky</u>	11
<u>Seventeenth Summer</u>	10
<u>Thunder Head</u>	10
<u>Just Jennifer</u>	10
<u>Party Line</u>	10
<u>Goal to Go</u>	10
<u>Whoa! Matilda</u>	10

An analysis of these data shows that the largest number of pupils preferred fiction dealing with animal life.

After the favorite books of fiction were determined, each pupil answered a questionnaire on favorite fiction and comics. A copy of this questionnaire is included in the Appendix of the present study. Table 4 contains the results of the pupils' reports on their favorite books.

An analysis of data in Table 4 shows that sixty-three of the 384 pupils indicated that their favorite book was Black Stallion; fifty-five indicated Lassie Come Home; fifty-one, Silver Chief; forty-two, Seventeenth Summer; thirty-one, Smoky; twenty-five, Goal to Go; seventeen, Thunderhead; fifteen, Batter Up; thirteen, Just Jennifer; eleven, Dreams of Glory; nine, Whoa! Matilda; seven, Wilderness Champion; six, Party Line; four, Big Red; and none, Yea! Wildcats. It appears that the title of the last-named book must have been attractive, but that the contents were disappointing.

The preceding data show that each of the following books was reported as a favorite by more than ten per cent of the group and seemed to be the most popular among the favorites: Black Stallion, Lassie Come Home, Silver Chief, Seventeenth Summer, and Smoky. Four of these are animal stories, and one is a book of romance and contemporary problems of youth. It is interesting to note that related studies, included in Chapter II, show that animals ranked low rather than high among appealing elements.

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF NINTH-GRADE PUPILS WHO REPORTED EACH
OF FIFTEEN FAVORITE BOOKS OF FICTION

Names of Favorite Books	Number of Pupils Reporting
<u>Black Stallion</u>	63
<u>Lassie Come Home</u>	55
<u>Silver Chief</u>	51
<u>Seventeenth Summer</u>	42
<u>Smoky</u>	31
<u>Goal to Go</u>	25
<u>Thunderhead</u>	17
<u>Batter Up</u>	15
<u>Just Jennifer</u>	13
<u>Dreams of Glory</u>	11
<u>Whoa! Matilda</u>	9
<u>Wilderness Champion</u>	7
<u>Party Line</u>	6
<u>Big Red</u>	4
<u>Yea! Wildcats</u>	0
Others	35
Total	384

In order to familiarize the reader with the plots of the pupils' favorite books of fiction, brief reviews are included in the succeeding paragraphs. No attempt is made

to describe the stories fully, but enough information is included to indicate the types of books selected as favorites.

Seventeenth Summer (by Maureen Daly). -- The time of this story of young romance, which ranked fourth among the pupils' favorite fiction, was the first day of vacation in Angie Morrow's seventeenth summer. Jack Duluth, a salesman for his father's bakery, first saw Angie, barefooted, in the radish garden. He was her first date and "steady" throughout the summer. Jack's rival was a Swede. He was a bit too sophisticated and too old for Angie, but he made the seventeenth summer interesting for all concerned.

Summer passed quickly for Angie, enlivened by picnics, swimming, watermelon feasts, a younger sister Kitty, and household chores; but one unforgettable event was a dinner at Angie's house with Jack as the invited guest. Her unsteady hands wavered when passing the dishes, and slow conversation made the affair a miserable one. Finally summer ended, as did her courtship with Jack, and Angie entered college, sure that nothing again would be like her seventeenth summer.

This story contains romance and incidents of home and family life. It also portrays youth's problems in a way which they understand better than do adults.

Silver Chief (by Jack O'Brien). -- The main character in this popular and exciting animal story is Silver Chief, a small Siberian Husky. After his mother had been shot by an Indian, he wandered to the cabin of Jim Thorne of the Northwest Mounted Police. Jim tamed and trained him to be leader of the sled dogs.

Laval, a desperate criminal who stole furs from the Indians, came to Thorne's cabin to kill him. He was attacked by Silver Chief and held until Thorne had covered him with his gun.

On another occasion Thorne suffered severe head injuries and lost his memory. When he recovered and remembered his dog, Silver Chief was brought in and reunited with his master, the reunion providing a satisfactory end to this fascinating plot.

This story contains exciting episodes, tinged with danger and suspense. All of these elements conceded to be appealing to adolescents make up a good story.

Thunderhead (by Mary O'Hara). -- This horse story began as Ken discovered the tiny colt during a rainstorm and carried him to the dry barn. Because the colt was so ugly, the family called him "Goblin" and concluded that with such an ugly form, he could never become a race horse.

During a family conference Ken's mother looked at the cloudy sky and suggested that "Thunderhead" would now be a

more appropriate name than the "Goblin," and so he was re-named.

Thunderhead spent weeks away from the barn but was eventually found in a canyon with an albino stallion. Much excitement is provided in the episodes of Ken's attack by a bald eagle and his attempt to reach Thunderhead, who was fighting the albino for supremacy over the herd.

After Ken's many other adventurous escapes, the story ends with Thunderhead's completing his training for a race. Near the last lap, he jumped the fence and injured his leg, so this was his first and last race.

Again, the animal theme is the appealing element in this book. Added to that is fast action, which emphasizes the danger and excitement that hold the reader's attention.

The Black Stallion (by Walter Farley). -- This thrilling horse story begins as Alec Ramsey saw the black stallion for the first time at a port in Arabia where he boarded a ship for England. The crew encountered misfortune, and the ship was wrecked. Alec grabbed a floating rope, which was tied around the stallion's neck, and was saved. For a time the two were on an island together. Finally they successfully signaled to a ship. After their rescue, they came to the United States, where Alec trained the black stallion and raced him victoriously against the fastest horse in the country.

Danger, suspense, and excitement characterize this story, which centers around one of youth's favorite themes -- animals. In addition, achievement, prowess, and the overcoming of difficulties are other elements emphasized in the story.

Just Jennifer (by Janet Lambert). -- This home-and-family story is about Jennifer, a pretty girl of sixteen, who took charge of her eight younger brothers and sisters when their father, General Jordan, left for overseas duty. She carried on the work at home and also helped Lord Cecil recover from the shock of losing his brother and sister in the London blitz. Jennifer's patience and understanding helped him adjust sensibly to a new world, while she kept a home for the younger children of her family.

The elements of home and family life are supplemented in this story by altruism, kindness, and sacrifice. In addition, there is an atmosphere of excitement connected with the war and the accompanying blitz.

Lassie Come Home (by Eric Knight). -- Every citizen of Greenall Bridge knew Lassie. People around town said that one could set his watch by the time this beautiful and intelligent dog ran to meet her master after school. One day she failed to meet him. Investigation disclosed that the family had sold Lassie to the Duke of Rudling. She was not happy in her new home, and during a walk with a

man-servant, she ran away. Many hardships appeared in her life as she traveled through all climates to arrive again in Greenall Bridge and be reunited with her young master.

In addition to having an animal as the main character, this story weaves in bits of home and family life. The element of adventure is also emphasized in Lassie's wanderings.

Yea! Wildcats (by John Tunis). -- The setting of this sports story, which has an exciting title, is in a small town, where the high school supported the basketball team faithfully through most of a successful season. The defeat that changed the course of things was the championship game, lost by one point. The coach was dismissed by men who were demanding champions. This group of men tried to force the team to use a paid player and offered bribes many times on their eastern tours. The story ended with the players' realization that they needed more than five strong players, as the coach had told them many times.

Strange, but true, is the fact that sports is not an appealing element in this book of fiction. Lack of fast action, excitement, and thrilling incidents tend to add to its unpopularity.

Dreams of Glory (by Janet Lambert). -- This story takes place at West Point, where the Parrishes lived while David attended West Point Military Academy. Their friends, the

Houghtons, lived in a palatial home not far up the Hudson. Carol Houghton and Penny Parrish were almost constantly together. The Parrishes went to New York to spend the week end in the Houghton's penthouse, to see the Army-Notre Dame game. Penny got lost in the crowd at the game. In her wanderings she met a famous actress. This chance meeting inspired Penny to become an actress, but her dreams of glory were short-lived. She was reunited with her family and enjoyed dances at the Academy, a trip to Florida, and a summer romance, which are highlights of the book for young people.

Romance, excitement, and youth's everyday problems are the major elements of appeal in the story. These are supplemented by glimpses into the home and family of the main characters.

Smoky (by Will James). -- This, another horse story, is about Smoky, a range colt. He was the wildest of the herd of wild horses, and felt a new sensation when he saw a new creature--man--and when he felt the end of a rope. Clint Spears, a bronc buster of the Rocking R outfit, captured, handled, and rode Smoky. To tame the wild horse required months of patience and wisdom on Clint's part, but the two became fast friends, and Smoky once saved Clint's life.

A lashing from Clint's brother, Jeff, who was a cattle rustler, enraged Smoky, and Jeff was stamped to death.

Once again Smoky was an outlaw until his second capture for rodeo performances. Poor care and little feed weakened him, and he became so thin that he was considered useless and was sold to pull a junk cart. One day he was recognized by Clint, who took him back to the Rocking R, and the story ended happily for the two.

Keen excitement characterizes this animal story. A quick tempo accentuates the suspense and danger connected with the capture and training of the wild colt and the stamping to death of a cattle rustler.

Party Line (by Louise Baker). -- The main character in this story is Miss Elmira, an efficient, aging spinster who was the telephone operator in Mayfield. She knew all the transactions of each citizen from Bennett's pharmacy to the end of Horgan Street.

Many trying situations arose in the development of this story. Uncle Willie was the "cross" the Bakers had to bear. His newspaper never carried news reports but had columns of personal items and acid attacks on many of the town's personalities. Uncle Willie too, entertained romantic notions about Miss Elmira.

The Old Doctor was a town favorite, and Miss Elmira saved pennies for years for an unnecessary operation just to prove her faith in him. Other laughable situations hold the attention of those who are interested in small-town happenings.

Home and family life, interspersed with humor and intriguing situations, characterize this story. The true-to-life situations also add to its interest.

Goal to Go (by Jackson Scholz). -- This sports story concerns Jeff Craig and Sam Cobb, who met en route to Annapolis. Neither knew that the other was planning to play football there. Coach Minton, head coach of the Naval Academy, made Jeff a quarterback on the B team, and Jake Carson a quarterback on the A string. Rivalry existed between the two until Jake resorted to unethical tactics and was replaced by Jeff Craig.

In the final game with the Army, Jeff was injured by rushing, after an extra point was kicked. Jeff was suffering with his ankle but felt the pain vanish when he learned that he was to be captain of the team the following year.

Excitement is not the keynote of this sports story. Heroism is portrayed, clean play is emphasized, and wrongdoing is punished, but the book lacks fast-moving action.

Whoa! Matilda (by Janet Lambert). -- This story about an automobile named Matilda begins as Colonel Kane was assigned to overseas duty. His daughter Candy went to live on a farm in Connecticut. She and a friend, Jane Martin, traveled with a show to sell war bonds, until Jane's husband was injured in battle and returned home, an amputee.

Barton, a private, was Candy's first love. His old coupe was called Matilda, and it was entrusted to Candy's care when Barton went overseas. The entire story is based on things that happened because of Matilda.

Adventure and excitement, then sadness and grief, are outstanding elements in this story. Added to these are incidents in home and family life and readjustments after the war.

Wilderness Champion (by J. W. Lippincott). -- The first scene of this animal story shows a crate of pups being shipped by the railroad agent. The case broke, and Ready, the smallest pup, escaped to the woods. Old King, a wolf, adopted and raised him.

Jim, a Ranger, made friends with Ready and brought him to live at his cabin. After killing the fiercest mountain lion and a savage coyote, Ready became known as the wilderness champion. He accompanied Jim to Florida, where his fame grew. There he trailed a buck through swamps, everglades, and onto a highway, where the buck fell. He would not touch his master's game, but he stood guard. The buck was given to a park official and Ready received much praise.

The strange attraction between the world and the pup and the danger and excitement connected with the fierce mountain lion and savage coyote are outstanding elements of

appeal in this story. The dog's heroism and loyalty are likewise strong centers of interest.

Big Red (by J. A. Kjelgaard). -- In this story the author gives a sincere analysis of a famous horse's personality, based on the life of Man o' War. The author explains quarters, feeding, breeding, grooming, and training, and describes in detail various races and records established by "Big Red."

The success of "Big Red" is followed minutely. Then the story tells of "Big Red's" sons and daughters. They, like him, always did a little more than was required. Each inherited other good points of his sire, especially a fighting heart. A movie contract was offered to "Big Red's" owner, but he refused because the plot of the picture told of a fixed race, and he would not participate in such tactics.

The animal theme is the main element of appeal in this story. Most of the material is factual and lacks action, excitement, and adventure.

Batter Up (by Jackson Scholz). -- The main character in this sports story is Clever Coleman, who finished his college career by pitching a no-hit, no-run game. Big-league scouts were in the stands watching, as was Cleve's father, who was proud of his son's ability. Praise from his father was important to Cleve, because he had been a great shortstop in his day. Now he was an "old timer,"

living on the meager pay of a small coaching job. Cleve did not believe that there was more to baseball than money until he hurt his pitching arm in the Pacific Coast League. He was knocked out of the box, and then he understood what his father's philosophy had meant.

Lack of fast-moving action robs this story of interest. The baseball setting is about the only element of appeal present, and it is not well executed.

Frequency of Reading Fiction

Table 5 contains data on the pupils' frequency of reading fiction. Frequencies reported included "regularly," "sometimes," and never."

TABLE 5

PUPILS' FREQUENCY OF READING FICTION

Frequency of Reading Fiction	Number of Pupils Reporting Each Frequency
Regularly	152
Sometimes	232
Never	5

Data in Table 5 show that 152 pupils reported that they read fiction regularly. A larger number, comprising 232 pupils, said that they read fiction occasionally. A minority of five pupils reported that they never read this type of

material. From these reports it was concluded that a majority of the ninth-grade pupils in the James P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas, read fiction sometimes rather than regularly, and that an insignificant number never read in this field. These data compare favorably with information on frequency of reading reported by various other investigators, as contained in Chapter II of this study.

Elements of Appeal

The questionnaire administered to the pupils contained the following six adjectives which described stories: funny, sad, exciting, fantastic, true-to-life, and romantic. Each pupil was asked to check the word which described his favorite book. An analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaires is presented in Table 6.

An analysis of data in this table shows that 246 pupils read their favorite book because it was exciting; seventy-three because it was true-to-life; thirty-six because it was romantic; twenty-four because it was sad; four because it was funny; and one because it was fantastic. These data indicate that the exciting and thrilling held the most appeal for the ninth-grade pupils under consideration. The element of reality or verisimilitude was second in frequency of mention; the romantic element was third;

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF NINTH-GRADE PUPILS IN THE JAMES P. ELDER
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL WHO REPORTED EACH OF VARIOUS
REASONS FOR READING FAVORITE BOOKS OF FICTION

Reason for Reading Each Book	Title of Book						
	<u>Black Stal- lion</u>	<u>Lassie Come Home</u>	<u>Silver Chief</u>	<u>Seven- teenth Summer</u>	<u>Smoky</u>	<u>Goal to Go</u>	<u>Thun- der- head</u>
<u>The story is:</u>							
Funny	1	1	1				
Sad		13					
Adventurous, excit- ing, mysterious.	56	30	46	9	27	25	10
Fantastic							
True to life . . .		11	4	11	4		7
Romantic				22			
<u>The theme is about:</u>							
Home life, family .				6			
Love, romance . . .				30			
War, fighting . . .							
Animals	55	43	41		22		15
Airplanes							
Helping others . .		2	3				

TABLE 6 -- Continued

Title of Book									Total
<u>Batter Up</u>	<u>Just Jen- nifer</u>	<u>Dreams of Glory</u>	<u>Whoa! Ma- tilda</u>	<u>Wilder- ness Champion</u>	<u>Party Line</u>	<u>Big Red</u>	<u>Yea! Wild- cats</u>	Others	
								1	4
		1	1	1	1	1		6	24
14		6	2	6	2	3		10	246
									0
1	10	3	4		3			19	173
	3	1	2					8	36
	9	8	5		5			12	45
			4					4	38
								1	1
				3			4	2	185
								1	1
	2				1			4	12

TABLE 6 -- Continued

Reason for Reading Each Book	Title of Book						
	<u>Black Stal- lion</u>	<u>Lessie Come Home</u>	<u>Silver Chief</u>	<u>Seven- teenth Summer</u>	<u>Smoky</u>	<u>Goal to Go</u>	<u>Thun- der- head</u>
Doing right		3			2		
Adventure	8	6	7	6	3		1
Heroes and heroines		1				4	
Sports						21	
Western					5		1
Vocations and school life . . .						10	
Other reasons . . .						10	

TABLE 6 -- Continued

Title of Book									Total
<u>Batter Up</u>	<u>Just Jen- nifer</u>	<u>Dreams of Glory</u>	<u>Whoa! Ma- tilda</u>	<u>Wilder- ness Champion</u>	<u>Party Line</u>	<u>Big Red</u>	<u>Yea! Wild- cats</u>	Others	
								4	9
	2	3		4					40
									5
15								1	36
								5	11
		5							15
		5							15

sadness was fourth; being funny was fifth; and being fantastic was last.

Further analysis of Table 6 reveals that the favorite of the largest number of pupils, Black Stallion, was read because it was exciting. The favorite reported by the next largest number of pupils, Silver Chief, was read also because it was exciting. Altogether, 246 pupils reported that the element of excitement was their reason for reading books which they called their favorite fiction. Similar findings were reported by other investigators in related studies summarized in Chapter II of this study.

In addition to adjectives which described the stories in their favorite fiction, the questionnaire listed the following themes: home life and family, love and romance, war and fighting, animals, airplanes, sports, and western life. Each pupil was asked to check the theme which appealed to him most in his favorite book of fiction. The resulting data, also contained in Table 6, show that 185 pupils said that they read their favorite book because it was about animals; forty-five, because it was about home life and family; forty, because it was about adventure; thirty-eight, because it was about love and romance; thirty-six, because it was about sports; twelve, because it was about helping others; eleven, because it was western; nine, because it was about doing right; five, because it was about heroes and heroines;

one, because it was about airplanes; one, because it was about war and fighting; and one, for an unspecified reason. A comparison of these data with Table 1 of this study (pp. 13-14) shows that animals were not reported as a major element of appeal by other investigators, but that adventure was ranked in first place.

From the preceding data it was concluded that animals held the strongest appeal for the largest number of ninth-grade pupils included in this study. Home life and family ranked second, according to frequency of mention; adventure, third; love and romance, fourth; sports, fifth; helping others, sixth; western stories, seventh; doing right, eighth; heroes and heroines, ninth; and war and fighting and airplanes, last. A comparison of these data with information in Chapter II of this study shows that exciting adventure is an appealing element common to the findings of various investigators and of the present study, but animals were not included as a major appealing theme by a majority of other investigators.

Summary

Four major findings resulted from an analysis of questionnaires answered by 384 ninth-grade pupils in the James P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas. The first finding was that the pupils' favorite books of fiction

included the following, in the order of their rank:

(1) Black Stallion, (2) Lassie Come Home, (3) Silver Chief, (4) Seventeenth Summer, (5) Smoky, (6) Goal to Go, (7) Thunderhead, (8) Batter Up, (9) Just Jennifer, (10) Dreams of Glory, (11) Whoa! Matilda, (12) Wilderness Champion, (13) Party Line, (14) Big Red, (15) Yea! Wildcats. Three of the four highest ranking books were about animals and were exciting and adventurous. The appeal of excitement was common both to the present study and to other investigations.

The second major finding was that a majority of the pupils reported that they read fiction sometimes, whereas over half reported that they read regularly. Only five said that they never read fiction. These data coincide with the findings of other studies.

The third major finding was that the element of excitement was the appeal of a majority of the favorite books; verisimilitude ranked second; romance, third; sadness, fourth; humor, fifth; and fantasy, last. The three highest-ranking elements were common both to this study and to other investigations.

The fourth major finding was that the animal theme was the element of appeal that characterized the favorite books of fiction reported by the largest number of pupils; home life and family ranked second; adventure, third; love and

romance, fourth; sports, fifth; helping others, sixth; western life, seventh; doing right, eighth; heroes and heroines, ninth; and airplanes and stories about war and fighting tied for the last position. Animals were not a common element of appeal in other reported studies. However, adventure and romance were elements common to all of the studies.

When these findings were analyzed, it was found that exciting adventure, verisimilitude, and romance were elements of appeal in pupils' favorite fiction, a conclusion which was also reached in other related studies.

CHAPTER IV

THE APPEAL IN COMICS AS REPORTED BY NINTH-GRADE PUPILS IN THE JAMES P. ELDER JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

Favorite Comic Magazines

As has been stated previously, an investigation was made of the comic magazines which were available in Fort Worth, Texas. From a list contained in an order blank supplied by a drug store, the pupils were given an opportunity to name their favorites. This was done by a show of hands.

The following titles, listed according to frequency of mention, were found to be among the fifteen favorites:

- (1) Young Romance, (2) Archie, (3) Crime Does Not Pay,
- (4) Patsy Walker, (5) Sports Stories, (6) Girls, (7) Seventeen,
- (8) Mutt and Jeff, (9) Tom and Jerry, (10) Miss America,
- (11) Crime, (12) Date with Judy, (13) Tips to Teens, (14) True Heroic Stories, and (15) Boy.

An analysis of the themes of these comics shows that the highest ranking favorites centered around the themes of adventure, romance, and contemporary problems of the average young adolescent. This finding compared fairly favorably with the reports of other investigators who found that

adventure was the main appeal in comics; romance, contemporaneous and true-to-life problems ranked third.

Table 7 contains data on the number of pupils who reported each favorite comic magazine. The largest number who reported a favorite is included first, and so on down to the smallest number. An analysis of the data in Table 7

TABLE 7
NUMBER OF PUPILS WHO REPORTED EACH OF
FIFTEEN FAVORITE COMIC MAGAZINES

Name of Favorite Comic Magazine	Number of Pupils Reporting
<u>Young Romance</u>	76
<u>Archie</u>	52
<u>Crime Does Not Pay</u>	48
<u>Patsy Walker</u>	37
<u>Sports Stories</u>	30
<u>Girls</u>	25
<u>Seventeen</u>	19
<u>Mutt and Jeff</u>	18
<u>Tom and Jerry</u>	15
<u>Miss America</u>	13
<u>Date with Judy</u>	5
<u>Tips to Teens</u>	5
<u>True Heroic Stories</u>	5
<u>Boy</u>	0
Others	22

shows that seventy-six pupils reported that their favorite was Young Romance. The following other titles were reported by the specified numbers of pupils: Archie, fifty-two; Crime Does Not Pay, forty-eight; Patsy Walker, thirty-seven; Sports Stories, thirty; Girls, twenty-five; Seventeen, nineteen; Mutt and Jeff, eighteen; Tom and Jerry, fifteen; Miss America, thirteen; Crime, thirteen; Date with Judy, five; Tips to Teens, five; True Heroic Stories, five; Boy, none; and others named on the questionnaires by the pupils but not included in the favorite fifteen, twenty-two.

An examination of these comics reveals that exciting adventure, romance, contemporaneousness, and true-to-life problems, home and family, and doing right are the major elements of appeal. All of these elements were also reported in various other investigations, as is shown in Table 2, p. 22.

In order to familiarize the reader with the stories or plots of the comics, brief reviews are included in the succeeding paragraphs. No attempt is made to describe the material in full, but enough is included to indicate the type of the stories.

Young Romance. -- The latest issue includes the following stories:

(1) "Untouched." -- The central theme is contained in this sentence: "She was like a child--pure and simple,

knowing but laughter and love and a zest to live! For a guy like Steve Whitcomb, who knew all the tricks, it would be too easy."

(2) "At Your Own Risk." -- The theme is: "Beware this woman--she will take your life and remold it to her own intricate designs. She will take your integrity and grind it beneath her spiked heels. She will do it subtly and you will not be conscious of the change until it is too late."

(3) "The Girl I Picked from the Phone Directory." -- In this story Dean Baily picked a name from the telephone book --Jane Carver--called her, made a date, and fell in love with her during wrestling matches, a roller-coaster ride, and a ride home.

An examination of this magazine shows that the major elements of appeal are romance and adventure. Contemporary problems of young adolescents are also interwoven.

Archie. -- In the March-April issue, Archie, a high-school boy, had been late to school four times and was sent to bed for punishment. He dreamed that he was taken to court, tried, and sentenced to the projection chair--a device to project him thirty years into the future. Atomicars, skyscrapers in Riverdale, and strangely dressed men puzzled him. His family had left town disgraced; his old good friends, Reggie and Jughead, were successful businessmen with

families. The alarm clock aroused him from his dream, and he rushed off to school just as his father called, "No school; this is Saturday."

Exciting adventure characterizes this magazine. Incidents of home and school life and parental problems of youth also are included.

Crime Does Not Pay. -- This series is about boys who did wrong and are being punished. As an example, Johnny lost his only money in a slot machine. He was jealous of his girl Fran because she dated a boy who had a new motorcycle. As Johnny wandered the streets, he was witness to a murder and left with the gun. The murderers later traced the gun and involved Johnny in a counterfeiting racket, until a fickle girl and the Federal Bureau of Investigation interfered. Johnny was sentenced to two years for concealing a murder weapon but profited by this ordeal and looked forward to early release because of good behavior.

Excitement and romance are the outstanding elements of appeal in this story. Emphasis is also placed on doing right and punishing wrongdoers.

Patsy Walker. -- An example of the problems in home life is shown in "Follow That Car." Here Patsy Walker, attired in shirt and blue jeans, made a date with Buzz to listen to be-bop records. Her father changed their plans

by promising to let them use his car to go to a drive-in movie. They called for his "dreamboat" at the Auto Laundry but got the Judge's car instead. Patsy's father was given a speeding ticket when he tried to drive to the Judge's house before the mistake was discovered.

Excitement, romance, and home-life problems are the main appeals in this magazine. The treatment of youth's contemporary problems in an interesting way adds to the attraction of the story.

Sports Stories. -- Each issue contains three feature-length, true stories of real sports heroes. These stories are published in season with the current sport. One story is of Bob Feller's rigid training, and of the help he constantly receives from his father. The pictures illustrate his pitching technique and show curve ball, fast ball, and slow ball, which have all brought him fame.

The excitement of sports is the keynote appeal in this magazine. Heroes and home life also are emphasized, as is factual material on sports techniques.

Girls. -- This is a "Fun and Fashion" magazine. The March issue contains fashion advertisements from stores as any fashion magazine does. This is the only comic book which is priced at fifteen cents. The others are ten cents. The feature articles illustrate the type of material contained in the magazine;

(1) "Let's Go See" is an article with pictures about "Cinderella" and "The Inspector General."

(2) "Good Looking" was written for girls who wear glasses.

(3) "Polly Gives the Bride Away" is a story of twins who did not behave at a marriage ceremony.

(4) "Tizzie, Business Woman" is about Tizzie Wilkins who has technicolor dreams about careers but spends her time serving tables and filling short orders.

Girls' present-day problems and the choice of a vocation are the principal themes discussed in this magazine. Humor also plays a part, as do love and romance.

Seventeen. -- The latest issue of this magazine, which contains comics, features "Charm Corner," with questions, answers, and illustrations that are designed to improve manners and appearance. Various issues feature such questions as, "Is your sweet tooth stronger than your wisdom tooth?" and, "Is your heart in your eyes when you look at unobtainable Eddie?"

A story of "Art for Art's Sake" is also included, as is a romance feature, "Happiness Is a Guy Named Larry." The final article entitled "Stitchin' Time," gives fashion hints.

Problems related to personal appearance and behavior are the main features of this magazine. Romance is included

also, but this element is not emphasized as much as in some of the other magazines.

Mutt and Jeff. -- The March-April issue contains the usual collection of comic strips. Each is ridiculous slapstick, often based on a pun. Mutt always becomes involved, and Jeff is straight-man. Mutt tries to marry the boss' daughter, become rich quickly, trade his "jalopy," or sell insurance. Often there is no plot, but the characters' foolish antics provide mirth.

Humor is the main element of appeal in Mutt and Jeff. Bits of romance break the monotony of the foolish episodes, but often the comedy is "slap-stick."

Tom and Jerry. -- In this fantastic story, the animal characters are the same Tom and Jerry of motion-picture fame. Often no lines are included but the pictures tell the story. For instance, impossible and ridiculous torture is inflicted on Tom by the mouse Jerry. Tom almost catches Jerry many times, but he always escapes. Furniture is destroyed, property damaged, trees uprooted, but the cat never catches the mouse.

Animals are the main interest in this story. Humor is not omitted, neither is action, but none is used very effectively.

Miss America. -- April's issue of this romantic comic magazine included the following three features:

(1) "For Girls Only" -- answers to letters that "I'm too young to marry"; "I'm taller than my boy friend"; "How should I act on a dinner date?" etc.

(2) "Fashion Why's" -- hints about clothes for slim girls and bigger girls.

(3) Romance feature, "Jealousy." This story tells of a Navy nurse whose father is her superior and whose patients are handsome young officers.

Romance is the outstanding characteristic of this magazine. Contemporary and real-life problems relative to fashions are included also, as are romance and vocations. However, none of these themes is strongly emphasized.

Crime. -- This magazine is a collection of cases based on actual occurrences. One of these is "The Lip Reader," in which Chief Investigator Bryant sends Bill Garrod to catch a customs broker, Berliner, who has defrauded the government of customs duties. A long search ends when Berliner is spotted in a crowd of people in a news-reel. A deaf girl is summoned to read Berliner's lips. The reading reveals his plot, and he is captured as he tries to leap from a window.

Action and adventure are the major elements of appeal in this magazine, but they are rather slow. Reference also is subtly made to the choice of a vocation, such as teaching lip reading, and to the punishment of evil-doers.

Date with Judy. -- This comic is about home and school life in which a high-school girl, Judy, becomes entangled in serious situations. In "Just Plain Geometry" she cannot answer questions or "construct" a circumference equal to the sum of two given circumferences, one equal to their difference, because she is watching her boy friend. A "grouchy old teacher" keeps her after school and teaches her triangles by using Judy, her boy friend, and her rival to form a triangle. The story ends with the teacher's having a soda with the biology professor.

Home and school problems of youth from the basic standpoint of contemporary American life form the theme of this magazine. Romance is included also, but in an uninteresting manner.

Tips to Teens. -- This magazine is read mostly by girls, since most of its tips are charm and personality builders. Features in a recent issue included:

(1) "Hands Be Pretty; Hands Be Smooth," which explains all the steps in a good manicure.

(2) "Palace Teacher," which depicts Anna Leonowens, a widowed English schoolteacher, who, in 1862, brought to the Siamese a new way of life--democracy.

(3) "Speck Has a Party," which is the story of a younger brother who tells of the cruelty of an older sister.

(4) "Polly in the Kitchen," which gives the recipe for cherry short-cake.

Personal problems relating to grooming and personality are the main attractions in this magazine. Careers, helping others, and home and family life are included also, but none of the appeals is very strong.

True Heroic Stories. -- All issues of this magazine deal with the same theme--true stories of present-day heroes. Excitement, adventure, and a will to win are emphasized in all of the issues.

Boy. -- Each issue contains three feature-length stories about teen-age life. As an example, in a recent issue Mr. Newland's bill to establish a recreation program and a Boys' Club had been vetoed by Mayor Billings. Simultaneously, Billings' son Roger became involved in a gang fight on the baseball diamond when hoodlums broke up the game, stole equipment, ridiculed the team, and destroyed bicycles. Billings then recognized his responsibility, established the club, and paroled the delinquent juveniles to the counselor of the club.

Problems of recreation and home are the major themes in this magazine. Excitement is in evidence, but the magazine lacks appeal because of the style of writing.

Pupils' Frequency of Reading Comics

On the questionnaire each pupil was asked to indicate whether he read comics regularly, sometimes, or never. A tabulation of the answers is contained in Table 8.

TABLE 8

PUPILS' FREQUENCY OF READING COMICS

Frequency of Reading Comics	Number of Pupils Reporting Each Frequency
Regularly	129
Occasionally	251
Never	6

An analysis of data in Table 8 shows that 129 pupils reported that they read comic magazines regularly. A larger number, comprising 251 pupils, said that they read this type of material occasionally. A minority of six reported that they never read the comics. From these data it is concluded that a majority of the ninth-grade pupils read comic magazines occasionally, rather than regularly, and that a minimum never read this type of material. These data compare favorably with the findings of various other investigators, as reported in Chapter II of this study.

Elements of Appeal

Data in Table 9 are related to the pupils' reasons for reading comic magazines. The questionnaire included the same five adjectives to describe the appeal of favorite comic magazines as were used to describe the appeal of favorite books of fiction. These include the following:

funny, sad, exciting, fantastic, true-to-life, and romantic. From the data in Table 9 it is seen that 123 of the 384 pupils reported that they read their favorite comic magazine because the story was true-to-life; 102, because it was exciting; eighty-two, because it was funny; seventy, because it was romantic; six, because it was fantastic; but no pupils read a magazine because it was sad. A comparison of these data with the information presented in Table 2 (p. 22) reveals that exciting adventure was the major appeal in other studies reported by various investigators, whereas being true to life ranked highest in the present study and exciting adventure was second.

Eleven themes of stories were included in the questionnaire on both favorite books of fiction and favorite comic magazines. These themes included the following: home life and family, love and romance, war and fighting, animals, airplanes, helping others, doing right, adventure, heroes and heroines, sports, and western life.

Data in Table 9 relative to the theme of the pupils' favorite comic magazine shows that 118 of the 384 pupils read their favorite because it was about home life and family; ninety-seven, because it was about love and romance; thirty-seven, because it was about doing right; thirty, because it was about helping others; twenty-two because it was

TABLE 9

NUMBER OF NINTH-GRADE PUPILS WHO REPORTED EACH OF
VARIOUS REASONS FOR READING FAVORITE
COMIC MAGAZINES

Reasons for Reading	Titles of Comic Magazines					
	<u>Young Ro- mance</u>	<u>Archie</u>	<u>Crime Does Not Pay</u>	<u>Sports Stories</u>	<u>Patsy Walk- er</u>	<u>Girls</u>
<u>The story is:</u>						
Funny		29			13	
Sad						
Exciting	2	6	34	22	10	
Fantastic	1					
True to life	20	17	14	8	7	22
Romantic	53				7	3
Home life and family . .	4	43			27	11
<u>The theme is about:</u>						
Love and romance	71				9	7
War and fighting			5			
Animals						
Airplanes						

TABLE 9 -- Continued

Reasons for Reading	Titles of Comic Magazines					
	<u>Young Ro- mance</u>	<u>Archie</u>	<u>Crime Does Not Pay</u>	<u>Sports Stories</u>	<u>Patsy Walk- er</u>	<u>Girls</u>
Helping others			8			3
Doing right			22			4
Adventure		6	13			
Heroes and heroines . .						
Sports				30		
Western life						
Vocations						5
School life						
Other reasons . . .	1	3			1	

about heroes and heroines; and six, because it was about war and fighting. Seventeen other unspecified reasons were given. An examination of these data leads to the conclusion that the themes of home life and family appealed to the largest number of pupils. Love and romance ranked second; doing right, third; sports and helping others, fourth; adventure, fifth; animals, sixth; heroes and heroines, seventh; and war and fighting, eighth.

It is interesting to note that the greatest number of pupils in the James P. Elder Junior High School reported that they read their favorite comic magazine because it is about home and family life. The greatest number also said that they read their favorite because it is true to life. The second largest number reported that the theme of their favorite comic magazine is love and romance, and the second largest number reported that they read comics because the story is exciting. In the reports of the other investigations contained in Chapter II of this study, exciting adventure ranked first as an appealing element in comics, and verisimilitude and romance both ranked third.

Summary

A summary of data in Table 9 is contained in the following statements: (1) The fifteen most frequently read comic magazines include the following, in the order of the

frequency mentioned: Young Romance, Archie, Crime Does Not Pay, Patsy Walker, Sports Stories, Girls, Seventeen, Mutt and Jeff, Tom and Jerry, Miss America, Crime, Date with Judy, Tips to Teens, True Heroic Stories, and Boys. (2) A majority, or 254 pupils out of 384 participants in the study, read comic magazines only sometimes; 129 read them regularly; and six never read them. (3) The elements of appeal, in the order of frequency mentioned, were described as being true to life, exciting, funny, romantic, fantastic, and sad (no one reported this appeal). (4) The themes of the favorite comic magazines, in the frequency of mention, include home life and family, love and romance, doing right, sports, helping others, adventure, animals, heroes and heroines, and war and fighting.

From these data it was concluded that excitement and adventure and verisimilitude and romance were common elements of appeal both in former studies and in the present investigation. However, they were not assigned the same rank by all investigators. It was also concluded that pupils read comics often or occasionally rather than regularly.

CHAPTER V

A COMPARISON OF THE APPEAL IN PUPILS' FAVORITE BOOKS OF FICTION AND IN FAVORITE COMIC MAGAZINES WITH FINDINGS OF RELATED STUDIES

Chapters III and IV of this study contain detailed information on 384 ninth-grade pupils' favorite books of fiction and favorite comic magazines, the frequency of reading each, and the reason for their choice of each. Data in this chapter show a comparison of the findings reported in the present study and the reports contained in previous findings by other investigators.

Table 10 contains a comparison of the elements of appeal in favorite fiction and favorite comics as reported by pupils in the James P. Elder Junior High School and findings of certain other investigators. A summary of data presented in this table is contained in the following findings:

(1) The most appealing types in both favorite fiction and favorite comic magazines are those providing excitement and verisimilitude, according to the present study. In the related studies, these elements applied to fiction, but not to comics.

TABLE 10

COMPARISON OF THE ELEMENTS OF APPEAL IN PUPILS'
FAVORITE FICTION AND FAVORITE COMIC MAGAZINES
AND FINDINGS OF OTHER INVESTIGATORS

Elements of Appeal	Number of Investigators Reporting		Number of Pupils in James P. Elder Junior High School Reporting	
	Appeal in		Appeal in	
	Fiction	Comics	Fiction	Comics
Humor	0	1	4	82
Sadness	0	0	24	0
Exciting adventure.	10	5	246	102
Fantasy	0	0	1	6
Being true to life.	7	1	73	123
Romance	5	2	36	70
Home and family . .	3	2	45	118
War and fighting .	2	0	1	6
Animals	2	0	185	17
Airplanes	0	0	1	0
Helping others . .	0	2	12	30
Doing right	0	2	9	37
Heroes and heroines	4	2	5	9
Sports	1	0	36	30

TABLE 10 -- Continued

Elements of Appeal	Number of Investigators Reporting		Number of Pupils in James P. Elder Junior High School Reporting	
	Appeal in		Appeal in	
	Fiction	Comics	Fiction	Comics
Westerns	0	0	11	0
Vocations	3	0	15	5
School life	3	0	15	3

(2) Airplanes, war and fighting, and heroes and heroines ranked low in both favorite fiction and favorite comic magazines, both in this and in other studies.

(3) Animals ranked high as a theme in favorite fiction but ranked low as a theme in favorite comic magazines in the present study. This appeal ranked low in both fiction and comics in related studies.

(4) Helping others and doing right ranked low in themes of favorite books but ranked much higher in the themes of favorite comic magazines in the present study. In related studies these themes received similar ratings.

(5) Adventure ranked lower in comics than in fiction in the present study and in related studies.

Further analysis of data in Table 10 shows that exciting adventure is the major element of appeal in adolescents' fiction according to the findings of previous studies as well as of the present investigation. The greatest variation is found in the appeal of animals. This subject ranked low in both fiction and comics, according to the related studies, but ranked second in popularity in the present study. Romance ranked third among former investigations, but was fifth in fiction and fourth in comics in the present study.

Verisimilitude was the major appeal in comics, according to the present study, whereas exciting adventure was reported as predominant in the related studies. A final analysis of data in Table 10 leads to the conclusion that exciting adventure is a common element of appeal which ranked high in both fiction and comics, both in related studies and in the present investigation.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The problem of this investigation is to make a comparison of the elements of appeal in favorite books of fiction and in favorite comic magazines and the frequency with which each was read, as reported by 384 ninth-grade pupils in the James P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas, with the findings of other investigators who have made similar studies.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the favorite comics and favorite fiction presented the same or similar types of stories and themes, and whether these types and themes were similar to those reported in other studies. The significance of the problem lies in the fact that if pupils' reading desires or needs can be determined, they can be met more effectively.

In the beginning of the study, a list of all comic magazines available in Fort Worth was read to the ninth-grade pupils, who indicated their favorites by a show of hands. When the results were tabulated, the following fifteen titles ranked highest in frequency of choice: Young

Romance, Archie, Crime Does Not Pay, Sports Stories, Patsy Walker, Girls, Seventeen, Mutt and Jeff, Tom and Jerry, Miss America, Crime, Date with Judy, Tips to Teens, True Heroic Stories, and Boy.

Next, the school librarian was asked to furnish a list of the fifteen books of fiction which had been checked out most frequently by members of the ninth grade during the period from November 7, 1949, to February 7, 1950. The following titles were selected: Silver Chief, Black Stallion, Lessie Come Home, Yea! Wildcats, Dreams of Glory, Wilderness Champion, Big Red, Batter Up, Smoky, Seventeenth Summer, Thunderhead, Just Jennifer, Party Line, Goal to Go, and Whoa! Matilda.

After the favorite comic magazines and favorite books of fiction were determined, a questionnaire related to the reasons for reading each and the frequency of reading was administered to the 384 pupils enrolled in the ninth grade. They were asked to indicate whether they read both fiction and comics regularly, occasionally, or never. In addition, they were asked to check their reasons for their choice of favorites. Choices to be checked in both categories included the following adjectives descriptive of the type of stories: funny, sad, exciting, fantastic, true-to-life, and romantic. Choices to be checked relative to the themes included the following: home life and family, love and romance,

war and fighting, animals, airplanes, helping others, doing right, adventure, heroes and heroines, sports, and western life.

Next, related studies were analyzed. Elements of appeal in both fiction and comics were noted, as was the pupils' frequency of reading.

Conclusions

An analysis of the findings led to the following general conclusions relative to the reading habits of ninth-grade pupils in the James P. Elder Junior High School, Fort Worth, Texas:

1. The two most appealing types in both favorite fiction and favorite comic magazines are excitement and verisimilitude.
2. The only appealing theme common to both favorite fiction and favorite comics is home life and family.
3. Airplanes, war and fighting, heroes and heroines, and western life ranked low in appeal in both favorite fiction and favorite comic magazines.
4. Animals ranked high in appeal in favorite fiction but ranked low in favorite comic magazines.
5. Adventure ranked lower in comics than in fiction.
6. A majority of the pupils read both fiction and comics occasionally rather than regularly. Only a very small minority read neither comics nor fiction.

The following conclusions are related to a comparison of the present findings and those reported in related studies:

1. The elements of excitement and verisimilitude are common to favorite fiction, according to both sources; excitement is common to comics.

2. Fantasy, war and fighting, airplanes, heroes and heroines, and western life ranked lower than the other twelve elements considered in the study in both fiction and comics, according to both sources.

3. The greatest variation concerned the choice of animals as an appealing element in fiction. The subject ranked first in theme appeal, and second in general appeal, including both theme and type, according to the present study; it ranked low in related studies.

Recommendations

An analysis of the findings reported in previous discussions led to the following general recommendations:

1. The reading interests of all pupils should be investigated in order that a reading program which would meet their needs and interests might be offered.

2. The reading of comic magazines should be used as one of the indicators of the reading interests of junior-high-school pupils.

3. Provision should be made for an enriched reading program that will encourage pupils to read better material and cultivate a taste for better literature.

4. Teachers and librarians should suggest a list of good books which meet the needs of pupils as indicated by their reports on the elements of appeal which most strongly attract them.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Sex: (check) _____ boy, _____ girl

I read books of fiction (check): _____ regularly, _____ some-
times, _____ never.

Below are listed fifteen books of fiction which have been popular with the ninth-grade pupils in this school. Check your favorite book.

_____ Black Stallion

_____ Just Jennifer

_____ Lassie Come Home

_____ Dreams of Glory

_____ Silver Chief

_____ Whoa! Matilda

_____ Seventeenth Summer

_____ Wilderness Champion

_____ Smoky

_____ Party Line

_____ Goal to Go

_____ Big Red

_____ Thunderhead

_____ Yea! Wildcats

_____ Batter Up

Other favorite books: _____

Check why you like your favorite book of fiction:

Because the story is: _____ funny, _____ sad, _____ adventur-
ous, exciting, mysterious, _____ fantastic, _____ true to
life, _____ romantic.

Because the theme is about: _____ home life, family, _____ love,
romance, _____ war, fighting, _____ animals, _____ air-
planes, _____ helping others, _____ doing right,

_____adventure, _____heroes and heroines, _____sports,
 _____western life, _____vocations and school life.

Other reasons why I like this book: _____

I read comic magazines (check): _____regularly, _____some-
 times, _____never.

Below are listed fifteen comic magazines which are popular here in Fort Worth. Check your favorite comic magazine.

_____Young Romance	_____Tom and Jerry
_____Archie	_____Miss America
_____Crime Does Not Pay	_____Crime
_____Sports Stories	_____Date with Judy
_____Patsy Walker	_____Tips to Teens
_____Girls	_____True Heroic Stories
_____Seventeen	_____Boy
_____Mutt and Jeff	Other favorite comic magazines: _____

Check why you like your favorite comic magazine:

Because the story is: _____funny, _____sad, _____exciting,
 _____fantastic, _____true to life, _____romantic,
 _____about home life and family.

Because the theme is about:

_____love and romance, _____war and fighting, _____ani-
 mals, _____airplanes, _____helping others, _____doing
 right, _____adventure, _____heroes and heroines,

_____ sports, _____ western life, _____ vocations, _____ school
life.

Other reasons: _____

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