

THE TEACHING OF CHILDREN'S POETRY: AN EXPLORATION OF
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES IN UNIVERSITY COURSES OF
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE, ENGLISH, LANGUAGE ARTS,
AND READING EDUCATION

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2004

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Jacko, June Marie, *The Teaching of Children's Poetry: An Exploration of Instructional Practices in University Courses of Children's Literature, English, Language Arts, and Reading Education*. Doctor of Philosophy (Reading Education), December 2004, 225 pages, 29 tables, references, 96 titles.

There are no studies which focus on the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level. This project aimed to describe the instructional practices utilized in the teaching of children's poetry at universities across the United States. Limited to the practices of the university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) at the time of this study, this investigation attempted to ascertain the general perceptions of poetry held by these university professors and adjunct instructors, their in-class instructional practices, and the types of poetry assignments given. Additionally, this study revealed both the poets typically highlighted and the goals held by professors and instructors in courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. A mixed-methods design provided the framework for the descriptive data gleaned from the Poetry Use Survey. Quantitative data analysis yielded descriptive statistical data (means, standard deviations, ranges, percentages). Qualitative data analysis (manual and computer-assisted techniques) yielded categories and frequencies of response. Major findings included respondents': (a) belief that the teaching of poetry was important, (b) general disagreement for single, "correct" interpretations of poetry and general agreement in support of multiple interpretations, (c) general disagreement whether current curricular demands have prevented or impaired their teaching of poetry,

(d) high frequency of reading poetry out loud in class, (e) emphasis on inclusion of award-winning poets in assignments, (f) instructional emphasis on variety and breadth in the selection of poets highlighted in a particular course, (g) goals for inclusion of poetry centered on pedagogical issues (e.g., frequent use, appreciation of craft; writing models; thematic uses) in language arts and across content areas.

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by

June Marie Jacko

DEDICATION

For Joan:

Who reminded us that love is life's greatest gift.

And, for Janice:

Whose gift of life offered hope.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jerome Bruner acknowledges, “No one creates in a vacuum.” This was well illustrated by the people mentioned here—their many voices, their intersecting and (sometimes) competing influences, and, most of all, their abundant support and strong encouragement. Each of these people, in one way or another, contributed to the crafting of this document. I am profoundly grateful to the following people:

For Joe, my husband: who encouraged me to pursue a doctorate (and then endured seven years of it). Your model of high-functioning continues to challenge and stretch me. I appreciate all you have done.

For David and Kevin, my boys: who have taught me perspective, who have thwarted all attempts at perfection in parenting, and who have taught me to laugh, cry, and love more than I thought possible—even (and especially) through the most difficult and demanding days of this doctoral experience. You have brought me great joy.

For Joseph and Frances Barber, my parents: who instilled in me a sense of duty, a strong work ethic, and a solid spiritual foundation. I am grateful for the many untold sacrifices you have made on my behalf.

For Janice, Joan, Jean, Judy, and Joe, my siblings: who have shaped my drive to succeed...the littlest sister just trying to keep up. Thank you for supporting my efforts to reach and grow and mature.

For Dr. M. Jean Greenlaw, my major professor: whose keen sense of what was essential steered my course through peaceful--and turbulent--waters. I am profoundly grateful for your guidance, your listening ear, and your voice of reason.

For Dr. Herman Totten, my minor professor: whose seasoned expertise, bright enthusiasm, and unflinching kindness were so appreciated. Thank you for taking part in this endeavor, despite the rigorous demands of your schedule.

For Dr. Robin Henson, a committee member: whose assistance with the development of this study was peppered by colorful bits of verse, witty discourse, and solid advice. I have appreciated and greatly valued your participation and guidance.

For Dr. Leslie Patterson, a committee member: whose global perspective and quiet encouragement never failed to challenge and expand my thinking. You have been a powerful influence in my professional development. Thank you.

For Dr. Nora White, a committee member: whose qualitative expertise challenged me to reach further, understand more, and continually situate my thinking and research “at the paradigm level.” I am grateful for your contribution to this committee and to my emerging role as researcher.

For Drs. Lettie Albright, Betty Carter, Leslie Patterson, Kathleen Tice, and Sylvia Vardell: for expert assistance, advice, and guidance in the development of the survey created for this study. I am beholden to each of you for your significant contributions to this project.

For Dr. Nancy Hadaway: for assistance in securing the sample for this study and for recognizing my potential way back when. Thank you.

For President Shirley Ernst and Members of the Children’s Literature Assembly: for your generous response—in words, in numbers, in spirit—to the survey that became the centerpiece of this study. You have opened new doors for the advancement of research in children’s poetry. It has been my privilege to represent your voices in this piece.

For Janet Wong, poet: for creating a poem specifically for use in this dissertation.

For Jill Kleister, UNT Graduate Reader: for patience with my impatience and tremendous assistance in formatting this document.

For Jane Gaudet: for managing the printing, mailing, and retrieval of this survey. I appreciated the calm professionalism and enthusiastic interest you sustained throughout this project.

For Kathy Pole: whose generous assistance in data analysis allowed for the agony and the ecstasy of denuding Nudist. I admired the persistence of your inquiries into, and your genuine desire to become invested in, data that was completely removed from your own doctoral work.

For Angela Nelson: who maintained the sample database and fielded pedestrian computer questions while juggling twins, a preschooler, and a dog. Thank you.

For Kathy Wilde: whose gentle and consistent hand shepherded my boys with love, kindness, prayer (and a meal or two) through the long days (and nights) of residency and the demanding days of dissertation writing. I will always treasure the patient and stable influence you have provided in our lives.

For the Hall and Schwab Families, our Texas “Friends Like Family”: for your encouragement, interest, and kindness throughout this process.

For Sylvia Vardell: whose advice, counsel, humor, and TIRELESS support--via email pep-talks (complete with suggested “to-do” lists), phone calls, and chicken and artichoke lunches--always brought about fresh perspectives, newfound respect, and deep appreciation. I am honored to call you my mentor and my friend.

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LIST OF POEMS

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The following poems are taken from *A Lucky Thing* by Alice Schertle, and are used with permission from Harcourt, Inc.:

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“One”	191

The following poem is taken from *I Feel the Same Way* by Lilian Moore, and is used with permission from Marian Reiner:

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The following poem is taken from *The Tree is Older than You Are*, edited by Naomi S. Nye, and is used with permission from Jennifer Clement:

“Lemon Tree”	56
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The following unpublished poem is provided by Janet Wong, and is used with permission from the poet:

“Shoes On My Feet”	62
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The following poem is taken from *Worlds I Know and Other Poems* by Myra Cohn Livingston, and is used with permission from Marian Reiner:

“Shell”	64
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Right Here

Right here
on this
 clean
white page

I'll scatter some words,
 watch them grow.
 I'll plant
a meadow.

I'll dig a pond right here.
Dig down deep until
 the water
 and the words
 run clear.

I'll build me a barn.
 Lay the lines out straight and
raise the roof!

Write
here.

(Schertle, 1999)

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

If You Catch a Firefly

If you catch a firefly
 and keep it in a jar
You may find that
 you have lost
A tiny star.

If you let it go then,
 back into the night,
You may see it
 once again
Star bright.

(Moore, 1996, p. 48)

Poetry is often a significant and joyful part of children's early oracy and literacy experiences (McClure, 1985; Perfect, 1999; Spinner, 1990; Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002). The playful nature of rhymed verse, the satisfying predictability of repetitive text, the sweet comfort of familiar images typically delight young children. Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002) write, "For many, nursery rhymes and other poems were the first forms of literature experienced; these poems symbolize the reassuring sounds of childhood" (p. 44).

But, these "reassuring sounds" seem to be quieted for school-aged children. William Jay Smith observes, "How natural and harmonious it all is at the beginning; and yet what happens along the way later to make poetry to many children the dullest and least enjoyable of literary expressions?" (Haviland & Smith, 1969, p. iv). Scholars (Terry, 1974; see also Chance, 2001; Perfect, 1999; Spinner, 1990) report that

throughout their school years children regard poetry with “increasing antipathy” (Spinner, 1990, p. ii), viewing it as “esoteric and generally irrelevant in their lives” (Spinner, 1990, p. 1). And, while poetry for some becomes merely “difficult” (Ostrowski, 2002), p. 94), for others poetry becomes “the literary equivalent of liver” (McClure, 1985). How is it, it seems reasonable to wonder, that children’s initial joy and playfulness with words gives way to distaste, dread, and loathing?

In *The Art of Teaching Writing*, Calkins (1986) relates an experience about contemporary poet Georgia Heard, whose insights into poetry helped shape her own. In the chapter “Poetry,” Calkins (1986) speaks about the students’ initial (and unwarranted) negative reactions to Heard during her visit to a 6th grade classroom. Ultimately, it was revealed, the students’ responses proved to be negative reactions to poetry, not to the poet.

When Heard asked students to share their feelings about poetry, their responses ranged from “It’s boring”; “It’s for girls”; “It is too hard to understand”; to “Poetry is for rich people; it’s for snobs” (Calkins, 1986, p. 298). One student, Vanessa, summarized well the perceptions of fellow classmates, when she conceded that poets “are talking above us and about us. They don’t want us to understand” (Calkins, 1986, p. 298). Eventually, the students were won over by Heard’s enthusiasm, skill, and talent. The scenario, however, illuminates two important points: Many school-aged children hold negative associations to and/or have had limited experiences with poetry.

In their 1993 study, Kutiper and Wilson found that students’ poetry choices were, indeed, limited--dominated by Shel Silverstein’s and Jack Prelutsky’s contemporary humorous verse. While this finding confirmed earlier research (Fisher & Natarella,

1982; Kutiper, 1985; Terry, 1974) regarding children's preferences for narrative over lyric poetry, a preference for humorous verse, and a general dislike for complicated poetry laden with figurative language, Kutiper and Wilson's study served to punctuate children's limited range of experiences with and limited exposure to high quality poetry (e.g., poetry by winners of the National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE] Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children).

While Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown (2002) admit, "Children's appreciation of poetry can be broadened and deepened by a good teacher" (p. 44), they also qualify that the prudent teacher will "proceed with caution on less-liked aspects of poetry" (p. 44) until students become familiar with and engaged in the genre. The authors suggest using rhyming, humorous, narrative poetry which is characterized by familiar, recognizable experiences, before venturing into less familiar territory. Indeed, Terry (1974) entreated, thirty years ago, "If students have had little exposure to poetry, the wise teacher will begin with their expressed preferences" (p. 56).

Bridging the gap between familiar, preferred poetry to more complex, "sophisticated" poetry may be a slow, deliberate process. Terry (1974) qualifies, "The comic is always enjoyable, but an appreciation for poems other than the humorous is developed through continuous experience with poetry" (p. 41). But how, exactly, will elementary and middle school children manage the transition from the familiar to the complex? How will students traverse the road where "poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom" (Frost, as cited in Tiedt, 2002, p. 5)? And, just who will provide those continuous experiences with quality poetry?

It is worth considering, in this light, the types of experiences classroom teachers bring to the teaching of poetry. Further, it is worth considering whether these experiences impede or enhance an appreciation of poetry for the children classroom teachers instruct. If it is true that “children’s appreciation of poetry can be broadened and deepened by a good teacher” (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 44), then how might the courses undergraduate and graduate students encounter in teacher-training programs prepare them to be “good teachers” of poetry? Whitin (1984) sharply asserts, “The demise of poetry is further compounded by the inadequate preparation of undergraduates to teach poetry by teacher-training institutions and by the negative experiences that these undergraduates have had with poetry during their pre-collegiate years” (p. 3). But, what, really, do we know about the opportunities afforded preservice and inservice teachers as they engage with the genre of children’s poetry in their preparatory or continuing coursework?

To date, the research in children’s poetry has focused on children’s preferences (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Terry, 1974), children’s concepts of and attitudes toward poetry (Ford, 1987; Thompson, 1996), and children’s performance of poetry as a way of understanding poetry (Bianchi, 1999; Comeaux, 1994). The importance of environments that cultivate children’s aesthetic responses to poetry (McClure, 1985, 1990; Thomas, 1986), as well as the impact of poetry on children’s writing (Apol & Harris, 1999; Erdman & Gaetz, 1988; Grainger, 1999; McClure, 1985, 1990) and on their cognition and behavior (Hudspeth, 1986; Thomas, 1986) have garnered scholarly attention. Additionally, while Shapiro (1983) and Elster and Hanauer (2002) have uncovered actual instructional practices, Whitin

(1984) has described expert recommendations for ideal practices in the teaching of poetry with elementary children.

However, while our net has been firmly cast about *children's* experiences with poetry, we know very little about the instruction classroom teachers may have experienced in their own teacher training programs. Indeed, we know very little about how children's poetry is taught at the university level or about the opportunities afforded preservice and inservice teachers as they engage with this genre in their preparatory or continuing coursework. "It stands to reason," notes Sylvia Vardell, Professor of Literature for Children and Young Adults, "that children's exposure to poetry may be bound by their teachers' knowledge of poetry, but the evidence thus far has been largely anecdotal" (S. Vardell, personal communication, March 25, 2003).

How might the treatment of children's poetry in children's literature, English, and/or reading/language arts courses influence future and/or practicing teachers' appreciation and understanding of poetry? What opportunities exist as today's preservice teachers prepare to become tomorrow's educators? What opportunities exist as inservice teachers broaden and deepen their understanding of poetry and its importance within the literacy curriculum?

If poetry is to reveal itself as nurturing "a love and appreciation for the sound and power of language" (Perfect, 1999, p. 1), pervasive feelings of resistance in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms (Calkins, 1986; Chance, 2001; Ostrowski, 2002) must be confronted. Students come to regard poetry, claims Spinner (1990), "as uniquely confusing and ambiguous, an obvious collusion between the poet and the teacher who engage in a privileged, exclusive dialogue" (p. 1). Indeed, in his piece on

effective literacy instruction, Ostrowski (2002) writes, “Even students who enjoy writing poetry can resist studying the poetry of others” (p. 94).

But, the resistance to poetry does not end in grade school or high school. Instructors of university children’s literature and reading/language arts courses report that college students often bring to their courses negative attitudes toward poetry (Hadaway, Young, & Vardell, 2002; Lipsett, 2001; Mathis, 2002). In an informal survey conducted in her English methods class, Lipsett (2001) asked students how they felt about poetry. “The overwhelming majority of my methods students,” reveals Lipsett (2001), “said that they did not like poetry, having had negative experiences with it in their pre-college and during-college lives...” (p. 58). Students’ negative reactions, however, only illuminate one part of the teaching-and-learning poetry equation. Benton (as cited in Perfect, 1999) acknowledges the fear and mystique that often surrounds the teaching of poetry for teachers. He writes:

Handling poetry is the area of the ... curriculum where teachers feel most uncertain of their knowledge, most uncomfortable about their methods, and most guilty about both... The neglect shows both in our knowledge and our pedagogy... Worry about the rightness, both of a poem’s meaning and of our teaching methods predominates, and the worry is conveyed to the children so that the classroom ambience of poetry becomes one of anxiety at a difficult problem with hidden rules rather than one of enjoyment of a well-wrought object. (p. 731)

Perfect (1999) notes, “Anxiety about rules or rightness is not the least of it” (p. 731). Often beneath the constraints of mandated curricula, poetry may be relegated to special occasions--or, omitted altogether. Indeed, Tiedt, Tiedt, and Tiedt (2001) claim, “In an assessment-driven curriculum, poetry is not typically given a large place” (p. 259). It seems somewhat reasonable, then, that poetry’s inherent value as a legitimate arrow in the language arts’ quiver may be questioned by preservice teachers, classroom

teachers, and even university professors. That “poetry is considered a ‘frill,’ supplemental rather than essential to the language arts curriculum” (McClure, 1985, p. 410) or that it is relegated by “our curricular side step” to “an optional status” (Denman, 1988, p. 57) are somewhat pervasive notions—even among those educators devoted to the teaching of language and literature. Literacy educators, then, must confront and grapple with the question, “Why poetry?”

Poetry, its advocates would argue, gratifies the soul, bringing new meanings and fresh perspectives to life. Poetry brings beauty and truth, delight and sorrow to “the best words in their best order” (Coleridge, n.d.), allowing “undisputed rewards for those willing to receive them” (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1982, p. 131).

Consider these observations about poetry’s necessity in the very fabric of our human existence. Fletcher (2002) declares, “At funerals, graduations, fiftieth wedding anniversaries, birthday parties, at the inauguration of a president, people gather to read—what? Not stories. Not articles or plays. They read poems... partly because poems are so intimate” (p. 7). Consider, too, Ciardi’s (1959) proclamation: “Poetry is the natural language of man’s most exalted thoughts” (p. 678). Or, consider perhaps Archibald MacLeish’s assertion: “To feel emotion is at least to feel... If poetry can call our numbed emotions to life, its plain human usefulness needs no further demonstration” (as cited in Livingston, 1990, p. 11).

To justify its inclusion and use in language arts programs, however, *more* demonstration—more proof, more tangible results, more justification—beyond the hazy, ill-defined merits of literary appreciation and the veneration of exalted language and form, does seem to be required.

Poetry advocates claim that poetry is an essential component of the language arts curriculum. It promotes language development and facilitates emergent literacy, provides strong content-area connections, and strengthens writing and critical thinking (Cullinan, Scala, & Schroder, 1995; Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002). Additionally, while poetry allows for aesthetic response and literature appreciation (Cullinan et al., 1995; McClure, 1985; Whitin, 1984), it also affords both listeners and readers opportunities to discuss and defend divergent viewpoints (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995; 1978).

Hadaway et al. (2002) assert that the characteristics of poetry--its "brevity of form," its "strong oral quality" (p. 197), and its "crystallized focus" (p. 198)--afford poetry its unique role. "Indeed," claim the authors, "we would advocate that poetry is an ideal entry point into a literature-based curriculum and literacy development" (Hadaway et al., 2002, p. 197). Spinner (1990) expands upon this notion, claiming, "While all language experience nurtures mental growth, the demanding exactitudes of poetic discourse are theorized to increase significantly the growth potential inherent in language transactions" (p. 2).

Tiedt (2002) justifies "taking time for poetry" (p. 5) for five distinct reasons. She contends that poetry: (a) conveys a love of language and introduces new vocabulary; (b) adds the creative component of humor to the learning process; (c) helps students become aware of ways of knowing through different senses; (d) provides the element of musicality to students' lives, and (e) supports students' development of a sense of self-worth. Such justification should, entreats Denman (1988) "...challenge our creative energies. We should be inspired by the knowledge that we can pass on to our students

something universally beautiful...Their lives will be a bit richer as a result of our efforts” (p. 58).

University-level instructors and their students may “take full advantage of all the possibilities of this form of literature” (Tiedt, 2002, p. 5), as occasions for poetry are permitted. In Lee Bennett Hopkins’s (1998) *Pass the Poetry, Please!*, J. Patrick Lewis muses, “Poetry is a blind date with enchantment” (pp. 114-115), and X. J. Kennedy professes, “Poetry helps us travel beyond ourselves” (p. 110). As professors and students traverse that enchanted road where “poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom” (Frost, as cited in Tiedt, 2002, p. 5), perhaps both might extend their nets broadly enough to catch the elusive “firefly” that is poetry. Perhaps, too, in letting it go-- in sharing it, in discussing it, in creating meaning from it--teachers and students might see poetry’s brilliance revealed. Star bright.

Statement of the Problem

There are no studies which focus on the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children’s poetry at the university level. This descriptive study sought to ascertain the actual instructional practices employed in university courses of children’s literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education, where the genre of children’s poetry is included in the preparatory or continuing coursework of preservice and/or inservice teachers.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to describe, via a researcher-developed survey (see Appendix A), the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at colleges and universities across the United States. Limited to the practices of university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) at the time of this study, the Poetry Use Survey sought to provide a snapshot of the instructional practices employed solely by those members as they taught or included children's poetry in their university-level courses.

This study specifically sought to ascertain the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and instructors of the CLA, their in-class instructional practices, and the types of poetry assignments given in courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. Additionally, this study sought to reveal both the poets typically highlighted and the goals professors held for their students as they engaged with the genre of children's poetry in such courses.

In gathering data on the instructional techniques employed, I focused, especially, on respondents' methods of sharing children's poetry (solo, choral reading, performance techniques), methods of tapping response, (written/discussion formats, artistic interpretations), methods of building background knowledge (accessing prior students' experiences, sharing biographical information about poets), and methods of evaluation and analysis of poetry (focus on form, type, etc.).

As previously noted, we know very little about the educational experiences afforded preservice and inservice teachers as they prepare for and/or engage in their

own classroom teaching of children's poetry. This study is significant in that it took the preliminary steps to uncover what is "actually happening" in university courses of children's literature, English, language arts, and reading education—places where the genre of children's poetry is included or taught. This is relevant, not only because there are no previous studies that focus on this aspect of children's poetry, but also because this glimpse at current practices allows us to consider future practices.

As the broad paintbrush sweeps across this dissertation, the reader might consider *which* instructional practices appear to enhance appreciation, promote inclusion, and substantiate the use of children's poetry in our classrooms (at whatever level). A formal look at those aspects, however, is purely speculative here, and remains the work of future studies.

Research Questions

The primary question addressed in this study was: What are the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level? Five sub-questions comprised that general question.

Question 1.1: What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and/or instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and/or reading education courses?

Question 1.2: What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Question 1.4: Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why?

Question 1.5: What are the goals professors hold for their students in the teaching of children's poetry?

The genesis of this study began with a lifelong passion, love, and appreciation of poetry. The genesis of the five questions, specific to this study, began with an examination of the literature related to poetry research and the identification of a gap in our knowledge. Conversations with colleagues, committee members, and especially with my major professor helped clarify the goals of and the need for this study

It was, undoubtedly, the convening of the expert focus group (see chapter III), an assembly of more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978), which spurred the development of the survey and some necessary clarifications regarding the goals--and the practical issues surrounding survey research.

In preparing for the focus group meeting, a pre-session agenda specified three key questions that would drive our session. Participants were asked to consider these questions before attending the focus group session: a) What questions might we ask literacy professors about the treatment of children's poetry in their teacher-training courses?, (b) How can we get at the actual practices employed, in reading or children's literature courses, as literacy professors teach children's poetry to preservice and inservice teachers?; and, (c) What types of questions will help us gather this information, without appearing threatening or condescending?

The five questions that would drive this study were developed, refined, and implemented based, in part, on the responses and suggestions of focus-group participants. Information gleaned from the review of the literature assisted in refining and clarifying the purposes for individual survey items.

Definition of Terms

Aesthetic reading: “In transactional theory, a type of reading in which attention is focused on ‘what is being lived through, the idea and feelings being evoked during the transaction’ (Rosenblatt, 1978)” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 272).

Aesthetic stance: That stance along the Aesthetic/Efferent continuum, as adopted by the reader, which “derives ultimately from what the reader does” during the reading event “as attention is fixed “on the actual experience he is living through” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 27).

Efferent reading: “A type of reading in which ‘the attention is focused on abstracting out, analyzing, and structuring what is to be retained after the reading, as, e. g., information, logical argument, or instructions for action’ (Rosenblatt, 1991)” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 272).

Efferent stance: That stance along the Aesthetic/Efferent continuum, as adopted by the reader, which contributes “to the end result that [the reader] seeks--the information, the concepts, the guides to action, that will be left with him when the reading is over” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 27).

Children’s literature: “...good quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction” (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 2).

Children’s poetry: Poetry for children ages 3-13, as defined in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Award of Excellence in Poetry for Children (NCTE, 1998 - 2004) poetry held to the same standards as that of for adults, yet for children, the content of children’s poetry “comments on life in dimensions that are meaningful for children” (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2001, p. 351).

Children’s Literature Assembly (CLA): A professional assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), which “provides a forum for interested people with all points of view and levels of experience in the field of children’s literature” (NCTE, 1998 - 2004).

Choral reading: “Group reading aloud” (Harris & Hodges, Ed., 1995, p. 272); “...the oral interpretation of poetry by two or more voices” (Trousedale & Harris, 1993, p. 199).

Choral speaking: “...the interpretation of poetry by several voices speaking as one” (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2001, p. 391).

Face validity: “The extent to which a casual, subjective inspection of a test’s items indicates that they cover the content that the test is claimed to measure” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 759). In this study, face validity refers to the expertise offered and expert judgments made by university professors who assisted in the generation of survey questions.

Focus group: “A research discussion group conducted by a moderator and designed to create a free-flowing conversation about one or more issues related to a general topic” (Edmunds, 1999, p. 130); “A carefully selected group of people who are brought together to give their opinions and offer their perspectives on specific topics (Fink, 2003, p. 142).

Inservice teachers: practicing, classroom teachers.

Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award: Awarded every three years by the International Reading Association (IRA) “to a promising new poet of children's poetry (for children and young adults up to grade 12) who has published no more than two books of children's poetry” (IRA, 1996 - 2005). Any reference to the Lee Bennett Hopkins Award, herein, was assumed to mean this particular IRA award.

Limerick: “A form of light verse, usually five lines with a rhyme scheme of *aabba*, with the first, second, and fifth lines having three feet, and the third and fourth lines, two feet” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 138).

Lyric poetry: “Personal or descriptive poetry with no prescribed length or structure that possesses a singing quality” (Terry, 1974, p. 61).

Narrative poetry: “A verse that relates a particular event or episode, or tells a long tale” (Terry, 1974, p. 61).

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Award of Excellence in Poetry for Children: Award presented by the Poetry Committee of NCTE, established in 1977 and given annually until 1982. Since 1982, the award has been given every three years. This award recognizes excellence in children's poetry and is given to a living American poet's aggregate work for children ages 3–13. Criteria: Literary Merit; Poet's Contribution; Evolution of Poet's Work; Appeal to Children (NCTE, 1998 - 2004).

Newbery Medal: Awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) of the American Library Association (ALA), “to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” (ALA, 2004).

Oracy: “...coined by British educator Andrew Wilkinson (1965) meaning ‘general ability in the skills of speaking and listening’; analogous to “literacy” (as cited in Cullinan, 1993, p. 15).

Performance techniques: those techniques that assist in dramatizing a poem for an audience, via physical movement, voice modulation, and/or memorization.

Poem: “A metrical form of composition in which word images are selected and expressed to create powerful, often beautiful impressions in the listener or reader” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 272).

Preservice teachers: students preparing to become teachers.

Verse: “A language form in which simple thoughts or stories are told in rhyme with a distinct beat or meter” (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 38); “poetry without imaginative and conceptual power” (Harris & Hodges, Ed., 1995, p. 272); “merely a rhyme” (Terry, 1974, p. 61).

Reader-response theories: those theories that acknowledge the reader as central to the sense-making, meaning-making process of reading

Schema theory: “a view that comprehension depends on integrating new knowledge with a network of prior knowledge” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 227).

Transactional theory: “the view that meaning is constructed in communication through language by an active, fluid interchange of ideas within a given context, as between reader and text or between speaker and audience. Also *transactional model*” (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 259).

Assumptions

I acknowledge the following assumptions made in the pursuance of this study. It was assumed that at the university level, instructors of children’s poetry would: (a) be influenced by their own prior experiences with poetry, in general, (b) be influenced by their own prior experiences with the teaching of children’s poetry, specifically, (c) exhibit a range of instructional techniques and strategies, (d) devote a range of time to the teaching of children’s poetry, (e) elaborate on their instructional decisions, attitudes, and biases in the teaching of children’s poetry with candor.

It was also assumed that, in general: (a) children’s poetry in the language arts curriculum is a necessary and vital inclusion, (b) award-winning poets (especially those winners of the NCTE Award of Excellence in Poetry for Children, the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poets Award, the Newbery Medal) represent high quality children’s poetry, (c) poetry and verse are distinguishable by their literary merits.

Limitations

I acknowledge the following limitations related to this study. These statements represent restrictions to the study, given time and other constraints. The following limitations apply to this study: (a) the Poetry Use Survey, expressly designed for this study, was created based on the input of a five-member (expert) group of university professors, (b) In the expert focus group convened for the purposes of the generation of survey questions, no member represented the field of English, (c) because identification of university professors in the selected sample could not be accomplished, the survey was sent to all members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA); university professors and adjunct instructors identified themselves in order to complete the survey, (d) the Poetry Use Survey, the researcher-created survey designed for this study, yielded descriptive data only; this data, obtained solely from university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the CLA at the time of this study is representative of that organization only and is not intended to be generalized to other populations.

Description of Design

Via a mixed-methods design (cf. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), this descriptive study involved the creation, implementation, and analysis of data from a researcher-created survey. University professors and instructors of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education were surveyed regarding their instructional practices in the teaching of children's poetry. The six-page Poetry Use Survey yielded both quantitative and qualitative data.

This study was conducted in three phases: (a) the process of survey development (see chapter III), (b) administration of the mail-out survey (see chapters III and IV), (c) collection, analysis, and synthesis of data (see chapter IV).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Eighth-grade teacher Dagny Boland (1998) opens her poetry unit with a bunch of grapes and an apple. The students gather in a circle as Boland bites an apple and begins reciting Eve Merriam's (1996) "How to Eat a Poem" (p. 34). The students observe. Their teacher crunches and proclaims, "Don't be polite./Bite in!" There is chin-wiping and a repeated performance. The students are engaged. Claims Boland (1998), "This unexpected beginning helps my students to realize that poetry requires a different kind of reading—slower, less directional, more image-based than prose" (p. 12). What a delicious way to taste the genre of poetry!

But, perhaps Boland is the exception. Perhaps teachers are afraid of poetry, as much anecdotal evidence suggests (Hadaway et al., 2002; Mathis, 2002). Perhaps it is for poetry as Lucy Calkins (1986) declares for writing, "When students resist writing; teachers resist teaching writing" (p. 4). Perhaps teachers resist poetry, because their students resist poetry. Perhaps the fear of not finding the "correct interpretation" is so insurmountable a barrier that teachers cannot envision poetry for their students as a delectable treat, "ready and ripe now," just waiting to be greedily consumed.

How might educators—at any level—invite participation in the genre of poetry? How might educators honor their students' responses and explore the ways in which their students make sense of poetry? How can educators draw upon previous poetry research to inform their instructional decisions? How might schema theory, reader-response theories, and sociocultural perspectives help educators understand and value

their students' meaning-making endeavors? Most importantly, how might those understandings impact the selection, presentation, and discussion of children's poetry in courses where preservice and inservice teachers engage with the genre?

Poetry Research

To date, the research in children's poetry has focused on children's preferences (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Terry, 1974), children's concepts of and attitudes toward poetry (Ford, 1987; Thompson, 1996), and children's performance of poetry as a way of understanding poetry (Bianchi, 1999; Comeaux, 1994). The importance of environments that cultivate children's aesthetic responses to poetry (McClure, 1985; Thomas, 1986), as well as the impact of poetry on children's writing (Apol & Harris, 1999; Erdman & Gaetz, 1988; Grainger, 1999; McClure, 1985, 1990) and on their cognition and behavior (Hudspeth, 1986; Thomas, 1986) have garnered scholarly attention. Additionally, while Shapiro (1983) and Elster and Hanauer (2002) have uncovered actual instructional practices, Whitin (1984) has described expert recommendations for ideal practices in the teaching of poetry with elementary children. Spinner's (1990) naturalistic inquiry examined the types of experiences that promote and sustain adult interest in the reading and writing of poetry.

This chapter will present a review of the relevant literature, as follows:

(a) Poetry Research: Children's Poetry Preferences; Children's Concepts of and Attitudes toward Poetry; Children's Performance of Poetry; Children's Aesthetic Responses to Poetry; The Impact of Poetry on Children's Writing, Cognition, and Behavior; Instructional Practices in the Elementary Classroom; and Poetry and the Adult

Enthusiast; (b) Schema Theory and the Teaching of Poetry; (c) Reader-Response Theories and the Teaching of Poetry; and, (d) Sociocultural Perspectives and the Teaching of Poetry. In general, these individual pieces served as the background for asking the specific research questions addressed in this study (see chapter I).

Children's Poetry Preferences

Ann Terry's (1974) seminal work focused on the poetry preferences of students in grades 4, 5, and 6 ($N = 422$). Terry's national survey sought to answer the question: "Given the opportunity to hear both traditional and modern poems, various forms and content, and poems containing particular poetic characteristics, what would children prefer?" (p. 2). Because Terry's study is considered the landmark contemporary study in children's poetry preferences and was used as the model for several subsequent studies (cf., Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Bryan & Agee, 1979), a somewhat detailed description of her study is given here.

In the Terry (1974) study, students from four regions of the United States (represented by Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Texas) listened to a total of 113 poems (approximately 10-12 poems per day), over ten days. To ensure that children, across regions, heard the same reading of each poem, a professional reader was enlisted, and cassette tapes were distributed to the participating teachers. After listening to each poem twice, students ranked their preferences on a five-point scale from *It's great!* to *I hate it*. Illustrations of Snoopy, Charles Schulz's "Peanuts" cartoon character, accompanied the scale, with Snoopy "dancing for joy" for *It's great!* to Snoopy "slumped in dejection" for *I hate it* (Terry, 1974, p. 14). After listening to the

final poem of the day, students wrote brief comments, citing specific reasons for liking or disliking that final poem.

Collapsed across grade levels ($N = 422$), the most popular poem was John Ciardi's "Mummy Slept Late and Daddy Fixed Breakfast," with approximately 91% of the students selecting the categories "It's great!" or "I like it" to describe their response to the poem (Terry, 1974, p. 15). The results of the Terry study indicated that children in grades 4, 5, and 6 exhibited a preference for humorous, rhyming, narrative verse over lyric poetry. Children in these intermediate grade levels revealed a distinct dislike for haiku and for poetry that was laden with figurative imagery and/or poetry that was difficult to understand.

William Carlos Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow" was the students' least-liked poem in Terry's (1974) poetry sample, with approximately 64% of the students selecting the lower two categories, "I dislike it!" and "I hate it!" in response to hearing that lyric, imagery-dependent poem. Among the most-disliked poems, Langston Hughes appears twice ("April Rain Song" [#3] and "Dreams" [#5]), and Carl Sandburg appears four times ("Fog" [#15]; "Phizzog" [#16]; "Street Window" [#23]; and "Buffalo Dusk" [#25]). (Note: numbers in brackets indicate the specific poem's position on the list of 25 "Most Unpopular Poems"; see Terry, p. 16.)

Presence on the "Most Popular" list did not make a poet immune to appearance on the "Most Unpopular" list. While David McCord's "The Pickety Fence" enjoyed status as number 14 on the "Most Popular" list, "This Is My Rock" placed number 18 on the "Most Unpopular" list. In addition, Gwendolyn Brooks appears with "We Real Cool" (#15) on the best-liked list but also appears on the most-disliked list with "Rudolph Is

Tired of the City” (#22). Robert Frost’s “The Pasture” took position number 20 on the “Most Unpopular” list of survey poems.

It is worthwhile to note that approximately 60% of the students selected between the bottom two categories, “I dislike it!” and “I hate it!” to describe their response to the haiku, “A bitter morning” by J.W. Hackett (#2 on the “Most Unpopular” list). Equally noteworthy is the fact that among the 25 most unpopular poems, seven of the nine total haiku appear—with three haiku in top ten of the “Most Unpopular” poems (Terry, 1974, p. 16). While teachers in Terry’s (1974) survey reported that their students enjoyed writing haiku, the data do not support students’ preference for haiku as a poetic form to hear read aloud. Consider the disconnect between teacher’s expectations and children’s responses. In a quote from the teacher questionnaire, one teacher exclaimed, “I was simply amazed! My children did not like the haiku. They didn’t think they were poems” (p. 48).

Contrast this with the children’s responses to the five limericks included in the survey. Of those five limericks, four captured a position on the best-liked list. Argues Terry (1974), “The form and humor [of the limerick] seem to have built-in appeal for upper elementary children” (p. 17). Interestingly, while some of the children in the survey tied their dislike of the haiku to its brevity, they did not seem to mind the short, rhymed, patterned lines of the limerick.

Citing these specific poems clearly substantiates the general conclusions drawn by Terry (1974) nearly thirty years ago. In essence, Terry’s survey revealed that children like: (a) humorous, rhyming, narrative poetry, especially limerick, (b) the poetic elements of rhyme, rhythm, and sound, (c) poetry of familiar, enjoyable, everyday

experiences and poetry about animals, and (d) contemporary over traditional poetry. Children's favorite poems usually contained more than one of these popular characteristics.

Children disliked sentimental, serious poems that were difficult to understand--especially free verse and haiku. "The Red Wheelbarrow," highly dependent upon imagery, is a lovely poem that adults often appreciate and enjoy. However, in the Terry (1974) study, children's responses to William Carlos Williams's free-verse poem were overwhelmingly unfavorable. Equally unfavorable responses were given the poetic form haiku. Children's reported reasons for disliking haiku indicated that its short, unrhymed, subtle qualities were almost wholly lost on them. In response to a haiku used in the study, one 6th grade boy wrote, "It doesn't make any sense at all" (p. 19).

Additional information gathered from the Terry (1974) study includes that, in general: (a) students in grades 4, 5, and 6 enjoyed the same poems, with differences in the degree of liking. The peak interest in poetry among these intermediate students occurred in the 4th grade and then consistently declined over grades 5 and 6; (b) boys and girls tended to prefer the same poems, with significant differences occurring only for certain poems. In general, however, girls tended to have a higher preference for poetry than boys; (c) children in different types of school settings (e.g., inner city, rural, metro-area, suburban schools) tended to prefer the same poems, with differences in degree of preference. Enthusiasm for poetry was greatest among inner city students and least among suburban students; (d) students in these intermediate grade levels expressed a preference for contemporary over traditional poems; (e) these students preferred poetry that was familiar to them; (f) regional content of a poem did not affect students'

preferences for that poem (e.g., students from cold regions did not prefer Frost's "Stopping By Woods" more than students from warm climates); and, (g) students in these upper elementary grades did not enjoy the poetic form of haiku.

"One conclusion is paramount above all others," asserts Terry (1974), "poetry is a neglected literary form in most elementary school classrooms" (p. 58). That students' interest peaks in the 4th grade and consistently wanes thereafter, indicated to Terry that, "Teachers do not seem to help students raise their level of appreciation for poetry by consistently exposing them to this literary form" (p. 50). She concludes, "It seems that if children are to enjoy and develop appreciation for poetry, it must first find its way into the classroom" (p. 58).

An often-overlooked piece of the Terry study involves questions posed to the participating *teachers*, via a teacher questionnaire ($n=42$). In response to the question, "Do children tend to like the poems teachers read?" Terry's (1974) data reveal an obvious disconnect between the poetry that teachers liked and the poetry children preferred (cf. Mackintosh, 1926; others). Of the twenty survey poems that teachers indicated were their favorites, eight poems—40% of the poems teachers selected as their favorites--were rated by the children over the bottom two categories, "I dislike it!" and "I hate it!" Only two of the poems which teachers selected as their favorites, "Lone Dog" (Irene Rutherford McLeod [#9 on "Most Popular List"]) and "Eletelephony" (Laura Richards [#10 on "Most Popular List"]) were among the children's most favored choices. However, when asked which of the survey poems teachers found most enjoyable and wished to remember for later use, in general, teachers' and children's favorites tended

to coincide. "It is possible," acknowledges Terry (1974), "that some teachers were influenced by their children's enthusiasm for certain poems" (p. 40).

Asked, "How often do you read poetry to your children?", and given five options (every day; once a week; approximately once a month; occasionally; and very seldom), 50% of the teachers responded "occasionally" and 25% responded that poetry was shared "approximately once a month." Terry's (1974) observation here is daunting: In a nine-month school year, these children will hear poetry read only nine times per year. Given four options (often, occasionally, very seldom, and never), teachers were asked how often their children wrote poetry. Twenty-six of 42 (62%) teachers reported occasionally, while 13 of 42 (31%) teachers reported very seldom.

When asked their main source for obtaining poems to use with children, 79% of the teachers reported that poetry anthologies were their primary source. Terry (1974) advised:

Considering these results, it seems most important that college courses in children's literature provide undergraduate students with information about the wide variety of poetry anthologies available to teachers. Professors of children's literature should also help these students establish criteria for selecting poems within these anthologies that will interest children. (p. 53)

In general, the results of the teacher questionnaire revealed that teachers: (a) seldom read and share poetry, (b) select inappropriate poems, with choices inconsistent with children's preferences, (c) offer infrequent opportunities for students to write poetry. Terry recommended (1974), "To maintain and broaden children's interest, poetry should be shared in a variety of ways as a natural part of the on-going language arts program" (p. 55).

Using the Terry (1974) study as a model, Fisher and Natarella (1982) focused on the poetry preferences of children in grades 1, 2, and 3 ($N = 792$). Their national study yielded similar, although not identical, findings to the Terry (1974) study. Drawn from the same schools used in Ann Terry's (1974) study, students in these primary grades listened to eight tape-recorded poems per day for eight days and then rated each poem on a three-point scale (3 = a star; 2 = OK; 1 = no). Classroom teachers recorded the students' comments regarding why they liked or disliked selected poems.

Consistent with the findings of Terry's study (1974) with intermediate grade children (grades 4, 5, and 6), Fisher & Natarella (1982) found that for children in grades 1, 2, and 3: (a) there were no overall sex differences in poetry preference, (b) children at all three grade levels preferred narrative poetry, limericks, and rhymed verse over free verse, lyric poetry, and haiku, (c) these primary children preferred poems about the fantastic and strange, poems about animals and familiar experiences, and poems about nature (d) the children showed a strong preference for rhymed poetry and for poetry with strong sound elements (i.e., alliteration and onomatopoeia), and (e) poetry which relied upon metaphor, simile, or personification were generally disliked.

In contrast to Terry's (1974) findings with intermediate children, Fisher and Natarella (1982) found that children in different grade levels and school settings did respond differently to the survey poems. Additionally, these primary students indicated a small preference for traditional over modern poetry. In concert with the Terry (1974) study, it is worthwhile to note that with nearly a decade separating their investigations, John Ciardi's "Mummy Slept Late and Daddy Fixed Breakfast," the number one poem in Terry's study, placed at number seven in the Fisher and Natarella (1982) study.

Again using the Terry (1974) study as a model, Kutiper (1985) expanded the work of children's poetry preferences to include students in grades 7, 8, and 9 ($N = 375$). Kutiper's purposes were: (a) to determine which of the 100 survey poems students in these grade levels most enjoyed, (b) to analyze the most popular selections by poetry type, content, and poetic elements; (c) to compare preferences by gender and grade level; (d) to compare students' expressed preferences with studies by Terry (1974) and Bryan and Agee (1979); and (e) to compare modes of presentation as it influenced students' preferences.

The 7th, 8th, and 9th grade suburban students in Kutiper's (1985) study were grouped by three modes of presentation: (a) listening only (Mode 1), (b) listening and reading (Mode 2), and (c) reading only (Mode 3). Students were exposed, via the various presentation modes, to ten poems per day over ten days. Students recorded their poetry preferences using 5-pt rating scale (*It's great; I like it; It's O.K.; It's not O.K.; No, I don't like it*). On the form, students indicated if they had previously heard or read each poem and provided written responses to two poems per day (the final poem of the day and one other). It is important to note that no previous studies had explored mode of presentation or the relationship between degree of preference and presentation mode.

Kutiper (1985) concluded: (a) gender did not affect students' preference for poetry; (b) grade level did reveal a significant difference in degree of preference for poetry. However, while Terry (1974) revealed "a descending degree of liking for poetry across the three grade levels, with fourth graders liking survey poems better than fifth graders; fifth graders, better than sixth" (p. 29), Kutiper (1985) noted that "...no

consistent trend in this study supports a steady decline in preference for poetry as grade in school increases” (p. 58). In the Kutiper study, there did exist, at each grade level however, “significantly different degrees of preference,” with 8th graders showing the highest degree of preference for poetry.

Poems were ordered by mean-scores. Of the 25 most popular poems, the most preferred poem, across grade levels, was Shel Silverstein’s “Sick.” It is worthwhile to observe this finding in the context of its time. Unlike Terry’s (1974) investigation of poetry preferences, Kutiper’s 1985 study post-dated the wave of popularity brought by Silverstein’s *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974) and *A Light in the Attic* (1981). Of the 25 least popular poems in Kutiper’s (1985) study, the least-preferred poem was the haiku “A Bantam Rooster.”

Again, it is worthwhile to note that John Ciardi’s “Mummy Slept Late and Daddy Fixed Breakfast” appeared as number four on Kutiper’s (1985) list of “Twenty-Five Most Popular Poems.” Children’s and Young Adult expert Richard Abrahamson (2002) notes that Ciardi’s poem was chosen as one of the most popular poems across grade levels (i.e., Fisher & Natarella, 1982 [grades 1-3]; Terry, 1974 [grades 4-6]; Kutiper, 1985 [grades 7-9]; Bryan & Agee. 1979 [grades 10-12]). Abrahamson (2002) urges educators to consider this finding as “worth special attention” (p. 21). Clearly, the poem’s narrative form, coupled with its elements of humor and everyday events, appeal to students from elementary grades through high school.

The most significant contribution made by Karen Kutiper’s (1985) study was the examination of mode of presentation as it relates to students’ poetry preferences. Kutiper hypothesized a significant difference in the degree of preference for poetry

across modes of presentation. This hypothesis was supported with 60 of the 100 survey poems indicating a significant difference in mean score by mode.

Of those students who only listened to (Mode 1), who listened to and read (Mode 2), and who only read the poems in the survey (Mode 3), mode of presentation did not seem to influence the *most popular* poems. However, students at these grade levels tended to prefer reading survey poems *by themselves* rather than listening to them, or listening to and reading them simultaneously. The least popular mode of presentation was Mode 2, listening and reading in combination. In general, “Although there were no significant differences in preferences by sex or grade level, statistically significant differences existed among the mean scores of subjects in the three modes [of presentation]. Students preferred reading poems rather than listening to them or listening to them and reading them simultaneously” (Kutiper, 1985, p. viii).

Kutiper (1985) cautioned, “These findings contrast with traditional approaches to poetry instruction and raise some questions about the results of previous preference studies which used listening only to determine poetry preferences of students at various grade levels” (p. 62). Commenting on these results nearly twenty years after Kutiper’s 1985 study, Abrahamson (2002) also cautions: “This calls into question the standard English teacher practice of playing the record of the poet reciting the poem as students read along in their books” (p. 21). Discussing the results of Kutiper’s (1985) study, Abrahamson also urges care in dealing with “poems that were serious, or without obvious rhythm [which] scored highest by the group who read them silently” (p. 21). This would indicate, claim Kutiper & Abrahamson (1990) that “time to read a poem

silently seems to be a most important instructional consideration when working with this type of poetry” (p. 125).

Findings from Kutiper’s (1985) study were generally consistent with previous research (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Terry, 1974). In general: (a) students preferred rhyme, humorous narrative form, content based on familiar experiences, (b) haiku and free or blank verse least popular forms. It is worthwhile to note, however, that Kutiper’s study did illuminate some changes in students’ responses to both the limerick and haiku.

While still popular upon students in her sample, some middle and junior high school students began to find the limerick somewhat beneath their levels of literary sophistication. Consider these responses to two limericks in Kutiper’s (1985) poetry sample. One 8th grade student wrote, “Perfect for youngsters. Not very mature for junior high and high school,” and a 7th grader pointedly observed, “I thought it was childish and stupid” (p. 101).

While haiku retained its status as a generally disliked form, a developing *appreciation* for haiku was also noted among these older students. Consider the poles of these responses from two 9th grade students: “I never like haiku, too short, no rhyme” and “I think haikus are great because they say so much in so little words” (Kutiper, 1985, p. 99).

To confirm the findings of the earlier poetry preference studies (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Terry, 1974), Kutiper and Wilson (1993) examined school library circulation records to determine if these records supported students’ reported poetry preferences. The researchers examined the most highly circulated

volumes of poetry from three elementary school libraries in three U.S. metropolitan area school districts during the 1991-1992 academic year.

The findings of this study revealed that the humorous, contemporary, narrative verse of Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky dominated the circulated volumes in each of these schools. Of the most popular poetry books circulated, Prelutsky's *The New Kid on the Block* (1984) ranked number-one; Shel Silverstein's *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974) and *A Light in the Attic* (1981) ranked second and third, respectively.

Additionally, not only did volumes of poetry by National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) award-winning poets not circulate widely, but selections by NCTE poetry winners were not widely available in these school libraries, "even though these poets reflect a higher quality of language and usage than is found in the light verse so popular with students" (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002, p. 44). Kutiper and Wilson (1993) acknowledge that while "real interest in poetry goes beyond Prelutsky and Silverstein" (p. 34), the authors do concede that "the works of these poets can provide a bridge that connects young children's poetry preferences to a lifelong interest in poetry (p. 33).

It is noteworthy to examine the stability of recent poetry preference studies' findings for children in grades 1 through 9 (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Terry, 1974). Poetry that was imagery-laden and/or difficult to understand was consistently disliked among students in these grades. On the other hand, humorous, rhyming, narrative poetry was consistently liked and chosen as students' favorites of the most popular across all grade levels. Consider Kutiper and Wilson's (1993) observation concerning their findings as contrasted with those in Terry's

(1974) study. Kutiper and Wilson (1993) note that while Terry's study "was conducted before the rampant popularity of Prelutsky and Silverstein, the top 10 poems in her study reflected the same characteristics found in the poems of Prelutsky and Silverstein" (p. 32).

Why examine poetry preference studies in the first place? Kutiper and Wilson (1993) assert:

Poetry preference and circulation studies provide valuable information that can help teachers as they plan classroom experiences. Using poetry that so obviously speaks to the preferences of young children is a natural invitation to enjoy and appreciate poetry...This interest must be cultivated slowly and sensitively by caring teachers who themselves are truly interested in the genre. (p. 34)

Children's Concepts of Poetry

Ford (1987) in the United States, and Thompson (1996) in England, considered young children's concepts of poetry. Both studies revealed that even young children were able to differentiate poetry from prose formats.

In the Ford (1987) study, the easiest task for the 340 students in grades K-3 was the identification of orally-read rhymed verse as "poetry" and narrative text as "story," with over 80% of the children completing those two aural tasks correctly (p. 172). In both visual and aural measures, that poetry rhymed and had a shorter length than prose were the two most commonly cited features children relied upon to distinguish the two textual forms. Statistically significant grade level differences (among K - 3 students) existed for the majority of the concepts on Ford's poetry questionnaire, with advancing improvement at each grade level on such measures as defining a poem, citing

differences and similarities between poems and stories, and identifying poems by title. Children in the Ford (1987) study expressed positive attitudes about poetry.

The Durham Poetry Project, carried out in primary schools in northeast England, focused on the constructs held and the metalanguage used by children ages six and ten to describe the genre of poetry. Thompson's (1996) ethnographic research explored the discourse data of children in different classrooms (ages six and ten) and in different schools as they engaged in "separate but related activities" (p. 2).

In noting the children's perceptions of poetic form, the researcher found that children indicated genre awareness "that seems to be developmental and age-related" (p. 10). As young as six years of age, the children in this study recognized that poetry was identifiable by its visual impact (the author's deliberate contouring of written language), its aural quality (poetry's emphasis on rhyme and rhythm), and its affective elements (poetry's ability to tap into feelings and its typical focus on certain topics).

Responding to a poem's visual properties, one child commented, "It looks like a rhyme... it's more like a poem" (p. 3). Of its aural quality, one child revealed, "What makes me think it is a kind of a poem is the way she said it... like its' more like a song" (p. 4). And, of its affective potential, one child who responded to the feelings and imagery attendant to poetic expression, concluded, "Poetry is about trees and stuff" (p. 7).

Thompson's (1996) observations, insights, and conclusions include: (a) children as young as six were able to distinguish "between texts that are poems and those which are not" (p. 10), (b) by age ten, children displayed a more developed understanding of the poetic genre, (c) children six and ten had limited metalanguage to talk about poetry

and/or used such language inappropriately. That is, while these children may demonstrate awareness and knowledge of the genre implicitly, they may either lack or use inappropriately the terminology for specialized features of poetry (its form, its aural qualities, etc.). Such conclusions are worthy of pedagogical consideration, as educators consider the developmental aspects of children's understanding of the poetic genre.

Children's Performance of Poetry

"When a poem comes to life, and performance is the teacher, the words don't just go from the page to the stage, they dance and sing and weep and purrr! [sic]," writes a participant from one of Poetry Alive!'s summer workshops for teachers and other literacy professionals. After engaging in a week of poetry performance techniques, strategies, and actual performance, this participant felt so confident in the power of poetry performance, she projected that upon utilizing her newfound knowledge with her own students, they would no longer say, "I don't understand that poem." (Poetry Alive!, 1997).

Consider Trousdale and Harris's (1993) description of choral reading:

Encountering a poem on the printed page may be a delightful experience. But most poetry is meant to be read aloud...A single voice reading a poem takes on an added dimension when one hears it effectively read aloud by another. A single voice reading a poem adds a depth, a directness, a personal immediacy that the printed page cannot provide. The human voice call forth—literally—a resonating response from within the listener which is not possible in an encounter with a printed page. And when several voices or many voices join together to give expression to a poem, the experience takes on tremendous impact—for both participants and audience (pp. 197-198)

Poetry performance enjoys a range of possibilities from the protected communal classroom practices of choral reading and speaking (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2002; Trousdale & Harris, 1993) to the full, all-out, dramatic exhibition of “jumping into texts as performers” (Bianchi, 1999, p. 1). Wherever, and however, this underutilized approach to poetry finds its way into classrooms and into the hearts and minds of children and teachers, it appears it offers significant impact. “The process of coming to know through performative ways with words,” writes Bianchi (1999), “is a craft that has been awaiting our attention for years” (p. 269).

In her 1999 qualitative study, Bianchi (1999) presents the case studies of three 1st grade girls during a ten-week “immersion unit” in the reading, writing, and performance of poetry. Drawing on the work of Bakhtin, Dewey, Rosenblatt, and others, Bianchi traces the evolution of Danielle, Sara, and Christina, as these very different children “expand their repertoires of ways with words as speakers, readers, and writers” (p. viii). As she illuminates the significance of poetry performance in each of the girl’s lives--Danielle, “the performer”; Sara, “the quiet child”; and Christina, “the writer”-- Bianchi hopes the reader “will hear the voices of the children portrayed here as a symphony...rather than as three solos” (p. 264). Indeed, we do.

Consider the words of Danielle, “the performer,” as she reflects in an exit interview with researcher Lisa Bianchi, on the features of certain poems that engage her:

To me, I find poems like that [snaps fingers]. I have it—In a minute, I get a poem. It’s like—because I love beautiful poems. I like loud, I like quiet. But I really like the little bits of the loudish kinds in the middle because the—What do you call it? The low ones, the quiet ones, I’m not used to, because I’m not a quiet girl. (Bianchi, 1999, p. 151)

Consider, too, Sara, “the quiet child,” whose “Rehearsal Notes” included the self-reminder: “Sound alive, not dead” (Bianchi, p. 195). And, finally, consider Christina, “the writer,” who, while recognizing “specific ways in which her immersion in the performance of poetry fed her life as a writer,” (Bianchi, p. 258) found writing more enjoyable than acting. Christina noted, “Because, like, it [writing] makes you go into your own world of making your poem come alive for you. Not what somebody else did” (Bianchi, p. 259).

So powerful is poetry performance in integrating the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, that Comeaux (1994) suggests performance of poetry should become “the center of a language arts program” (p. 77). Comeaux notes that while poetry, “the most tightly structured form of language” (p. 77), utilizes metaphor and rhythm to achieve its impact, it is the performance of poetry which “emphasizes the inseparability” (p. 79) of those elements. “In performing poetry, students are actively using language in its fullest, and perhaps most significant, sense as they experience the capability of language to evoke feelings, to suggest images, and to describe the essence of things” (p. 79). Through performance, “the performer comes to know the poem” (p. 79), body and soul.

The benefits of a performance approach to poetry are evident, asserts Comeaux (1994). To perform a text, students not only must read for comprehension, but also must read fluently. Their bodies must communicate, via movement, the very essence of the poem. Additionally, because they are “totally involved in the experience” (p. 80), students are actively engaged, are motivated to read, and find success in completing a reading of a text.

Children's Aesthetic Responses to Poetry

Amy McClure's (1985) qualitative work in a rural 5th and 6th grade classroom ($N = 43$ children and 2 teachers) reveals the importance of cultivating environments that promote children's aesthetic responses to poetry. The environment in which McClure (1985) conducted her year-long (i.e., from September through June) ethnographic study was nurtured by two teachers who not only viewed poetry as "integral to life and the total curriculum," but perceived their instructional roles as "facilitators of a developmental process" (p. 413). The physical classroom space "reflected the teachers' emphasis on flexibility, self-selection and interaction" (p. 414), with an extensive collection of poetic works readily accessible to the children. In addition to both modern and traditional anthologies, this classroom collection also included files of poetry both authored professionally and written by former students.

Given an environment in which teachers immersed their students in poetry, supported their meaning-making endeavors, and exposed them to a wide array of poets and poetry, the children McClure (1985) observed displayed understandings of and responses to poetry that were complex and wide-ranging. "A supportive context" concluded McClure (1985), "was critical in effecting these higher-level responses" and was characterized by "teacher sanctioning of peer interaction, support for experimentation, focused praise and feedback, acknowledgement of frustration, clear behavioral expectations, and flexibility in time and space" (p. ii).

In contrast to previous studies, the children in this classroom generally enjoyed reading and writing poetry, and over the year acquired an extensive repertoire of knowledge about poetry and poets. Additionally, while these intermediate grade

students continued to enjoy light verse and humorous poetry, children in this classroom not only developed preferences for more sophisticated poetry but began constructing meanings about the use of various poetic elements both in their own writing and in their readings of other poets. As the year progressed, personal understandings of poetry became dependent upon social interactions with, and tapping into the insights, of others. Writes McClure (1985), "By the year's end, most children viewed poetry as something which could be understood by making use of insights from teachers or peers. Few could construct interpretations of professional poetry on their own; sense-making was essentially a social activity" (p. 421).

Using a nonequivalent control group design with two 6th grade classrooms in a suburban school district in Ohio, Thomas (1986) echoed the findings of McClure's (1985) qualitative design. Over the course of an academic year, one experimental group received in-depth experiences with poetry, while a control group did not. Using the Terry (1974) poetry preference scale, with slight modifications, as a pre- and posttest to assess changes in preferences and responses, Thomas (1986) found that the experimental group "responded more frequently to specific details in the poems and their written comments were more evaluative than those of the control group" (Abstract). Additionally, the experimental group exhibited more pretest to posttest gains in poetry preferences than did the control group. Interestingly, while the experimental group's gains reflected preferences for poetry with varied content and a variety of poetic types (e.g., humorous verse, free verse poems, poetry about nature), overall, both groups continued to express preferences for humorous and familiar poems. These conclusions

continue to support previous findings of poetry preferences among children (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Terry, 1974).

The Impact of Poetry on Children's Writing, Language, and Cognition

Does poetry impact children's writing? Do the merits of poetry, its crystallized focus, its careful assemblage of "the best words in the best order" (Coleridge, n.d.), really bring about changes in children's ever-emerging sense of composition?

McClure's work (1985; 1990) offers a resounding "yes" to this question. In her 1990 book *Sunrises and Songs*, an amplification, collaboration, and reworking of her 1985 dissertation, McClure (1990) frames the poetry writing success of children in Sheryl and Peggy's 5th and 6th grade combined classroom as a social, collaborative process "done in the company of trusted friends who provided encouragement and suggestions for making a piece 'sound more poetic'" (p. 120). It is no surprise that sound dominates their understandings of poetry, having heard, read, and engaged in daily exposure to poetry.

When highly engaged by an enthusiastic teacher, when deliberately encouraged, and when carefully nurtured, children do tend to respond to poetry in positive ways (Bianchi, 1999; Hudspeth, 1986; McClure, 1985; Vardell, 2003). Attitudes toward poetry, specifically tied to the writing of poetry, were examined by Erdman and Gaetz (1988).

Investigators Erdman and Gaetz (1988) studied the effects of utilizing the process approach to writing (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1986) as a primary component of poetry instruction. Conducted in the upper Midwest with elementary students in grades

2 and 5, this experimental design yielded promising results for both the teaching of poetry and writing.

The participants were 2nd grade students ($N = 45$) from a middle-class public school (experimental group: $n = 21$; control group: $n = 24$), and 5th grade students ($N = 40$) from an inner city public school (experimental group: $n = 19$; control group: $n = 21$). Pre- and posttest attitude surveys, designed by the investigators, were administered to assess students' attitudes about poetry and writing before and after the treatment or control situation. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, the attitude survey consisted of 18 items; thirteen items measured attitudes toward writing and five items measured attitudes toward poetry.

Control classrooms received regular instruction in language arts, as prescribed by the districts' curricula. In control classrooms, textbooks emphasized grammar, and writing instruction was teacher-directed and product-oriented. The lessons in control classrooms were taught by the regular classroom teachers.

In the experimental groups, participants received 45-60 minutes of poetry instruction per day over a three-week period. These investigator-taught classes presented a balance of classic and contemporary poetry and the process approach to writing, as outlined by Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986), was employed. In their investigation, Erdman and Gaetz (1988) define five phases of the writing process as prewriting, writing, rewriting, copyediting, and publication. Employed sequentially, these phases acted as the template for poetry and writing instruction.

In the *prewriting* phase, instruction emphasized brainstorming, modeling, and the reading and discussion of poetry. In the *writing* phase, students wrote poetry based on

self-selected topics. The role of the teacher during this phase was one of “encourager, reference, questioner, and a listener” (Erdman & Gaetz, 1988, p. 54). During *rewriting*, classmates’ praise and input helped shape the poet’s work in progress. In the *copyediting* phase, students were expected to adhere to conventional spellings and correct punctuation, and the final copy was to be neatly prepared. *Publication* of finished poems took the form of a class anthology.

The posttest results of the study revealed that students in the treatment groups at both grade levels exhibited significant ($p < .05$) positive attitude increase toward poetry. Students in 5th grade displayed a significant ($p < .05$) positive attitude increase toward poetry and writing. Students in 2nd grade showed a significant ($p < .05$) positive attitude increase toward poetry but not toward writing. Erdman & Gaetz (1988) conclude, “The process approach to writing as a part of poetry instruction offers classroom teachers many opportunities to foster positive attitudes toward poetry and writing” (p. 55).

Apol and Harris (1999) collaboration in a 5th grade suburban Detroit classroom centered on students’ engagement of poetry via choral reading, poetry performance, and writing. Prior to students’ own written productions, classroom teacher Jodi Harris and poet Laura Apol utilized Fleischman’s (1988) *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* as the vehicle through which dialogic poetry would be modeled and performed.

The researchers created a deliberate sequence of activities designed to: (a) identify students’ understandings of poetry, (b) introduce a “wide range of poetic possibilities” (p 315), (c) include time for students’ reflection on their own and others’ poetic processes, (d) feature the reading and performance of Fleischman’s poems, and finally, (e) support the writing and performance of students’ own dialogic poems.

The project began with an informal poetry survey ($N = 26$), given by Jodi on the second day of school. Students were asked to complete open-ended statements, such as, “Poetry is...,” “When I think of poetry, I think of...,” “I think poetry should be about...,” and “I have written poems about...” (p. 315). Apol and Harris (1999) note, “The survey responses indicated that most of the students had very basic (both limited and limiting) perceptions of poetry—a finding that surprised us, given that this was a school with a strong language arts program” (p. 316).

Students’ perceptions of poetry, as indicated by this informal survey, revealed that nearly half of the class mentioned form, most mentioned rhyme, and many tied poetry to feelings. Students’ conceptions of poetry’s content revealed such topics as nature, people, events, and funny stories. Only a few students held broad conceptions of the nature of poetry. One student remarked, “Poetry can be anything to anyone” (p. 316).

Previous experiences with poetry writing revealed that six in the class of 26 students (23%) had never written a poem. Other students cited poetry writing as tied to class assignments in previous grade levels, and/or poetry written for family and personal events (e.g., a mother’s birthday; a pet’s death). One student claimed to have written one poem, but “forget what it was about” (p. 316). These informal findings, Apol and Harris (1999) note, substantiate Fisher’s (1994) notions of children’s ideas about poetry as “very incomplete and rudimentary” (p. 316).

The authors begin this piece by wondering:

If the root of poetry (historically and developmentally) is first and foremost oral and aural, then how do we and our students regain access to poetry that will please our ears, that will rise and fall with our voices, that will engage our muscles, our lips and our tongues. (Apol & Harris, 1999. p. 315)

The methods the researchers used so that these students might “regain access to poetry” (p. 315) were deliberate, well-grounded (cf. Shapiro, 1985), and carefully executed. Before poet Laura Apol arrived, classroom teacher Jodi exposed her students to a variety of authors and poems, and students participated in whole-class choral readings and whole class writing of poetry. The researchers purposefully erected this scaffolding so that the upcoming experience “would lead students beyond a superficial encounter to a deeper understanding and appreciation of poetry” (p. 316).

The poet’s arrival ushered forth the next phases of this project. After the distribution of *Joyful Noises* (Fleischman, 1988), the researchers modeled the reading of these dialogic insect poems. After much whole- and small-group practice, students eventually chose one poem and practiced and polished it for a videotaped performance. Some chose to “embellish their readings” (p. 317) with body motions, and volume and pitch changes. As a result of their preparation for performance, students experienced deep connections to the texts. They observed how poetic form and content fused and how the poet’s placement of common lines was intentional—not happenstance. Apol and Harris (1999) observed, “Students were quick to notice how poetic form and content fit together—boatmen who need to row together would unite their voices for a solid “Stroke” at regular intervals throughout the poem...” (318).

Only after this thorough introduction did the researchers embark on the excursion of students’ writing of poetry. To prepare for the next phase, Laura entreated the students to be “thinking like writers” (p. 318), by paying attention to and drawing from their life experiences. After a week of brainstorming, drafting, arranging and rearranging lines, the class undertook a Friday audio- and videotaped performance of

their original, dialogic poetry. The poems were assembled into class collection: *Our Very Own Joyful Noise*.

The products, note the authors, were “creative, deliberate, frequently clever, and often thought provoking” (p. 318). The experience concluded with a reflection phase, in which students considered the origins of their ideas, the ways in which they arranged their poems, and the processes of their writing. Apol and Harris (1999) resolve, “These students recognized that poetry could be found everywhere in the world around them, and that the poet’s job is to watch, to listen, to notice and record moments when poems occur” (p. 321).

Some by-products of this experience were unintentional. Students learned about alliteration, onomatopoeia, and assonance; they addressed vocabulary and spelling. Further, the researchers noted substantial changes in the students’ perceptions of poetry, as reflected in the results of a second informal survey. Strict adherence to the “overpowering characteristics” (p. 321) of rhyme or rhythm as essential to poetry subsided and “funny stories were mentioned as a possibility rather than a definition of poetry” (p. 321). One student mused, “Poetry is like music. It is meant to make you laugh, cry, and smile. It’s like having a river of words run through your head” (p. 321).

Approaching the topic of poetry writing from the perspective of language, Grainger (1999) describes how children’s “poetic voices in action” (p. 293) provided context for their writing of poetry. The author describes how the talk that surrounded the children’s writing, reading, and performance of poetry affected and enhanced their interactions with the genre. The author asserts, “Children’s knowledge of poetry is not only grounded in all the poetry they’ve heard, but also in their everyday social

experiences, the conversations they've listened to and participated in, and the poetic games and songs they've played" (p. 296).

Grainger's (1999) original intent for this investigation with eight to ten-year-old children in the United Kingdom was "to immerse the class in poetry and investigate the talk which surrounded their written composition" (p. 292). However, in listening to the many hours of taped interactions among the children, the author concedes that her focus shifted to "the playful nature of their informal talk during our poetry sessions" (p. 252). Seemingly irrelevant and off-task at first glance, the children's "wordplay and conversational chatter" (Grainger, 1999, p. 252) overtook the author's interest and reshaped the study's focus.

Of this chatter, Grainger (1999) noted two crucial features: (a) that children had great capacity for and spontaneously reproduced memorized dialogue, songs, and poems and (b) that children delighted and experimented in wordplay as they interacted with one another during poetry sessions. Grainger writes, "The children seemed to grasp words and phrases physically, making personal purchases and possessions of them, by turning them over in their mouths and repeatedly tasting them for flavour and sound" (p. 294). As they worked, they played with words. One student who fashioned the phrase "The Jolly Cog," repeated it over and over, rolling the phrase through various patterns of intonation and rhythm. Another student exhibited great delight and ownership in muttering a rhyming phrase that incorporated her name, "Dionne, See on, Dionne, See on, Dionne, See on, Dionne, See on."

Other "odd words and catchphrases"—from interesting words ("metamorphosis," and "zany") to political slogans ("Britain is Booming")—peppered the students' language

of as they experimented with words. In these played-with “language snatches,” the children’s “pleasure seemed to stem from the felt arrangement of this verbal music, and in the conscious savoring of the words themselves, which were sometimes captured and shaped into poems...” (Grainger, 1999, p. 295).

In the article’s final section, “Implications for Classroom Practice,” the author’s recommendations are rendered in a highly personal way. In keeping with the conversational tone of this piece, Grainger (1999) offers, in first-person, the modifications and expectations she plans to implement in her own classroom—a somewhat jarring, albeit refreshing and welcome, posture to find in a formal piece. Among these self-directed implications for poetry instruction (which just might be relevant to others who are listening, of course), Grainger expresses her desire to: (a) encourage students’ informal talk, (b) honor and support students’ intertextual connections, (c) more explicitly explore the oral tradition as it relates to poetry, including jump-rope chants, advertising jingles, cheerleader calls, and pop songs, and (d) more fully exploit performance poetry as a means “to develop more practices that build upon [students’] knowledge, experience, and pleasure in physical rhythms and strong beats” (p. 296).

Grainger (1999) concludes:

All poetry, however elaborate, has its origins in the common soil of everyday conversations: in the cadence and color of other’s voices, which bring melodic rhythms and poetic resonance to our ears. These children’s conversations in the classroom were intensely playful; they relished the chance to revisit and experiment with the lore and language of the playground, the tunes of popular songs, and the sounds and savors or words. This poetry can potentially both move their emotions and excite their intellects, enabling them to reflect upon their lives and deepen their understanding and use of language. (p. 296)

Exposure to an enrichment program called Suggested Activities of Music and Poetry for Language Enrichment (SAMPLE) became the centerpiece of Hudspeth's 1986 study. Hudspeth examined "low-achievers" in two 4th grade language arts classes to determine students' cognitive growth, assessed via pre- and posttest California Achievement Test (CAT) results on language arts subtests and a writing test. The purpose of Hudspeth's (1986) investigation was to compare SAMPLE to traditional classrooms, describe behaviors, and describe responses of children and parents to the SAMPLE program.

The SAMPLE class outperformed the traditional class on language mechanics and total language (CAT). Differences in the improvement score means favored SAMPLE: language mechanics (5 years) and total language (2.7 years). Writing test favored SAMPLE. Language expression and reference skills were not of statistical significance.

Parent responses to the enrichment program stressed positive changes in children. The author concludes that the SAMPLE program, a music-poetry language arts program, proved not only to be of practical value to teachers but produced positive student and parent responses.

Instructional Practices in the Elementary Classroom

In his examination of the written works, recorded interviews, and speeches of NCTE award winning poets (from David McCord, 1977 winner to John Ciardi, 1982 winner) and specialists in the field of children's poetry, Whitin (1984) explored the extent to which children's poets (i.e., John Ciardi, Aileen Fisher, Karla Kuskin, Myra Cohn

Livingston, David McCord, and Eve Merriam) and poetry experts (i.e., May Hill Arbuthnot, Lee Bennett Hopkins, and Leland Jacobs) agreed with Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading. Whitin (1984) elicited these experts' suggestions for the teaching of children's poetry "so that the reading of and listening to poetry can be preserved as an aesthetic experience, as defined by Louise Rosenblatt" (p. 14).

Consider these powerful comments included in Whitin's (1984) analysis, from poet John Ciardi (1975) and poetry expert Lee Bennett Hopkins (1974), in clear support of aesthetic response as a basis for poetry instruction. From Ciardi (1975):

A poem is not simply something printed on the page. A poem is an event, and it happens when a poet and a reader meet inside the form in such a way that the reader makes real for himself those connections between things that the poet saw as real in the construct of his own world and as able to be communicated. The reader makes this confirmation in much the same way that the poet made the suggestion: by using his intellect, imagination, and memory. Reading a poem is an act of participation in the poem. By participating, the reader not only makes the performance whole, but makes it, in one essential sense, uniquely his." (In Whitin, 1984, pp. 52-53)

And, from Hopkins (1974):

The taste for poetry is soured by the dissection of words, phrases, and lines such as:

What does this word mean?

What does this phrase refer to?

What does the author really mean?

If a lengthy discussion about a poem is necessary, the selection is either not right for the class or the moment. Poems should be shared for their rhythm, their visual imagery, and for the emotional response a child feels when he hears or reads them. (In Whitin, 1984, p. 86)

Whitin (1984) concluded, "If poetry is to be preserved as a primarily aesthetic experience for children, then schools must reevaluate how poetry and children come together" (p. 111). From the summarized comments and suggestions of the children's poets and poetry experts in his study, Whitin (1984) concluded that three particular uses

of poetry in the school that are worthy of attention: (a) Continual Use (Poetry read and recited on a regular basis), (b) Integrated Use (Poetry tied to content areas), and (c) Spontaneous Use (Poetry tied to serendipitous happenings and discussions). Additional considerations from the experts in Whitin's (1984) study included "greater acceptance of students' feeling and personal reactions" (p. 111), "increased opportunities for children to express personal feelings about poetry through the arts," and "increased time provided for children to read and recite favorite poems with each other" (p. 112).

In an analysis of 6th grade basal reading manuals, Sheila Shapiro's (1985) sought to determine whether the manuals' recommended teaching procedures reflected the pedagogical procedures recommended by authorities in the field of children's literature and related areas. An assessment instrument, based on five criteria "deemed necessary for effective poetry instruction" (Shapiro, 1985, p. 368), was developed and applied to every poetry lesson in eight 6th grade manuals. Synthesized from expert opinion, these criteria served as the basis for this descriptive study's analysis.

The five criteria are as follows: (a) poetry should be presented in a meaningful context; (i.e., students should be made "ready" for the poem by relating its content to personal experience, exploring intertextual connections, etc.); (b) poetry should be orally interpreted by the teacher (i.e., by way of introduction, the teacher orally "performs" the poem with appropriate vocal inflection, rhythm, etc.); (c) poetry instruction should encourage active participation (i.e., use of small group discussion formats to share feelings and express personal responses); (d) poetry instruction should be an exploration of feelings, thoughts, and ideas (i.e., personal response—the experience of the poem—should be primary and should initially override discussion of

its more technical aspects); (e) poetry appreciation should be extended by providing opportunities to share the poetic experience in interesting and meaningful ways (i.e., enriching the poetic experience through choral speaking, art, music, etc.).

Shapiro (1985) found that the instructional emphasis in basal readers [of that time] was upon poetic form rather than content and included activities that reinforced cognitive skills rather than affective response to poetry. In general, Shapiro concluded that the suggested teaching procedures in her sample of 6th grade basal reader manuals did not reflect pedagogical procedures recommended by expert opinion and research, but rather, tended to be superficial examinations of poetic text.

Nearly twenty years after Shapiro's (1985) descriptive study of instructional procedures offered in 6th grade basal reading manuals, Elster and Hanauer (2002) sought to provide systematic empirical research regarding how teachers share poetry with children in classrooms. In their examination of ten Kindergarten through 4th grade classrooms, the researchers focused on the ways in which participating teachers performed the texts, how the children engaged in reading the texts, and the kinds of discussions and activities that surrounded those readings. The researchers analyzed the ways in which poetry reading and storybook reading differed.

Elster and Hanauer (2002) examined the ways in which poetry reading differed from story reading in classrooms. Noting not only that the "majority of classroom reading and writing instructional activities involve narrative and informational texts, not poems" and that "models of text comprehension (e.g., Spiro & Taylor, 1987; Stein & Glenn, 1979; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983) focus on narrative and informational text, yielding story grammars and informational text structure taxonomies, with no attention to

genres of poetry” (Elster & Hanauer, 2002, p. 93), the researchers wondered how poetry contributed to literacy learning.

In contrast to story reading, Elster and Hanauer (2002) found that, indeed, the readings of poems was characterized by more expressive reading style, multiple readings, and children’s active participation. Additionally, poetry readings tended to include discussions that were aesthetic in nature, which were often focused on the linguistic features of the poetic texts.

While the authors contend that “Reading and writing poetry has been both privileged and excluded in modern U.S. language arts education” (Elster & Hanauer, 2002, p. 92), the findings presented here serve as a powerful illustration of the positive direction of instructional practices since Shapiro’s 1985 study.

Poetry and the Adult Enthusiast

What types of experiences, wonders Spinner (1990), promote and sustain adult interest in the reading and writing of poetry? Echoing others (Dias, 1996; Mullican, 1992; Perfect, 1999; Prelutsky, 1983), Spinner contends that despite early pleasurable experiences with verse, by adolescence, most children come to view the language of poetry “as inaccessible and esoteric and...generally irrelevant in their lives” (ii). Via private interviews Spinner sought: (a) to ascertain the profile of the adult who exhibited sustained interest in the reading and writing of poetry, and (b) to substantiate, by those reported experiences, possible classroom strategies in English/language arts instruction (proposed here primarily for the secondary level) that might support poetic expression.

Significant “in its recognition that learning nurtured by activities outside the traditional curriculum is often equally as valid as that which takes place in the classroom“ (p. 11), this naturalistic inquiry sought to develop the profile of the “Poetry Enthusiast.” The recurrent experiences of twenty adults (ten patrons of poetry and ten amateur poets) in *both* academic and nonacademic realms contributed to this profile. While this investigation did not attempt “to prove that specific practices have caused the development of long-term interest in poetry,” it did seek “to establish that certain practices have generally preceded such interest” (p. 83).

Patrons, self-described as “appreciators, though not serious practitioners, of poetry” (p. 87), and amateur poets, members of a local poetry society who shared, refined, and critiqued one another’s original work in progress during monthly poetry workshops, contributed to profile of the “Poetry Enthusiast” ($N = 20$; $n = 10$ patrons and $n = 10$ amateur poets). The “Poetry Enthusiast” profile was later categorized and its prominent features assessed for instructional use among “Poetry Professionals” ($N = 20$; $n = 10$ master teachers of poetry and $n = 10$ professional poets).

Among the conclusions drawn from this study, Spinner (1990) found that, in general, sustained interest in poetry was encouraged and nurtured among adults who: (a) reported childhood environments in which oral language experiences were vital to social experiences among parents, siblings, and playmates (e.g., the recitation and reading of nursery rhymes, singing, chanting in play, storytelling), (b) were read to as children (significantly, “the emphasis of the reading was upon the dramatics of presentation, a play with language that encompassed variety in inflection, voice, and rhythm” [p. 107]), (c) were surrounded by family members who read widely, (d) were

frequent users of the library, (e) valued education and reading (despite varied educational levels of parents), (f) valued the aural experience of poetry (via “the music of language and the potential for free play and possibility existent in words” [p. 129]; this feature was often associated with religious litany), (g) had involvement with music, art, and theatre, and (h) often wrote poetry as a “private need to express emotions difficult to share openly with others” (p. 126).

Of particular note to this current investigation, is the information garnered by Spinner (1990) regarding *when* enthusiasm for poetry among participants began. Among patrons ($n=10$), responses across the clusters of questions regarding the genesis of their poetry enthusiasm fell across these categories, as follows: in adulthood, 30%; in college, 0%; in high school, 20%; in middle school, 20%; and in elementary school, 30%. In contrast, the responses of amateur poets ($n=10$) revealed that enthusiasm for poetry was reported as beginning: in adulthood, 10%; in college, 10%; in high school, 10%; in middle school, 0%; and in elementary school, 70%.

While responses among patrons ($n=10$) were distributed fairly evenly among the categories, among amateur poets, nearly three-quarters of the respondents (70%) reported enthusiasm for poetry beginning in their elementary school years. Thirty years ago, Terry (1974) noted, “It seems that sharing poetry with children during their elementary school years is an essential step toward developing permanent interest in this literary form of expression” (p. 55). This proved especially true for the amateur poets in Spinner’s (1990) study. However, it is worthwhile to note that among patrons, the spread of their responses might also suggest that enthusiasm for poetry may be won at any educational level.

Spinner's (1990) second purpose of this study was to derive possible classroom strategies in English/language arts instruction (proposed here primarily for the secondary level) that might nurture poetic expression. These strategies, based on the academic and nonacademic experiences reported by Poetry Enthusiasts and substantiated by Poetry Professionals included: (a) greater emphasis on the oral presentation of poetry (multiple oral readings/choral readings, exclusive time devoted to the listening of poetry read orally, formal poetry readings by students), (b) memorization and recitation of poetry (via choral readings, multiple readings, poetry performance), (c) writing poetry (via collaborative and individual means, with both attention to and away from formal poetic forms), and (d) association with other art forms (poetry in combination with music, dance, drama, painting, photography, etc.).

Educators, urges Spinner (1990), must "remove barriers that impede student and, subsequently, adult appreciation of poetry" (p. ii), by recasting poetry from "the province of the academician" (p. 1) to less forbidding terrain. If, indeed, language is recognized as a "means of knowing" and the poet represents the "exemplar of language competence" (p. ii), then experience with poetry becomes not merely elective, but essential. It is, after all, "frequent, meaningful experiences with language in all its forms" (Spinner, 1990, p. 2), claims Spinner, which allows language to serve ultimately "as both nurse and tutor of thought" (Spinner, 1990, p. 2; cf. Bruner, 1986).

The pedagogical implications of poetry enthusiast experiences, which include a "strong emphasis upon the aural nature of poetry, upon writing and sharing it in a noncritical setting, and upon affective response before cognitive analysis" (p. iii) are worthy of attention.

Schema Theory and the Teaching of Poetry

“Schema theory postulates that knowledge is stored in memory within abstract structures called schemata (the singular is schema)” asserts Palmer (1981, p. 63). An influential and popular theory for explaining both learning and comprehension, schema theory took root in reading instruction in the 1970s and flourished in the 1980s. Vacca (2002) clarifies, “Researchers working for the most part within their own disciplines of cognitive and instructional psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and reading education took aim on the reading process, with comprehension the bull’s eye” (p. 191).

Typically drawing on the metaphor that knowledge is housed within the brain in compartmentalized “boxes,” schema theory posits that “schemata are like little containers into which we deposit particular experiences that we have” (Pearson & Stephens, 1994, p. 31). Indeed, we hold schemata for a variety of things—from birthday parties to poetic text structures. Taken as a whole, “Schemata reflect the experiences, conceptual understanding, attitudes, values, and skills a reader brings to a text situation” (Vacca, (2002, p. 191).

Why has schema theory been so attractive a model to reading educators and theorists? Schema theory accounts for some important features of text comprehension. It provides explanations for readers’ mapping new information to known information; it accounts for individual and varied interpretations of text; and it enables us to understand why readers have difficulty comprehending experiences or texts for which they lack sufficient background knowledge (Pearson & Stephens, 1994).

In the wake of schema research, educators began to ask: What is it the student knows—instead of, what is it the student *doesn’t* know. This important shift from deficit-

model thinking acknowledged and tapped the learner's strengths rather than needs. In addition, while schema theory brought to the fore how prior knowledge impacted comprehension, it also highlighted the influence that cultural backgrounds have in the filtering of human experience. Such expansive thinking endorsed comprehension of text as a constructive process.

How might schema theory help educators understand what happens when students encounter poetry? Consider Jennifer Clement's "Lemon Tree" (translated by Consuelo de Aerenlund) from Naomi Shihab Nye's (1995) young adult collection *The Tree is Older Than You Are*:

Lemon Tree

If you climb a lemon tree
feel the bark
under your knees and feet,
smell the white flowers,
rub the leaves
in your hands,
Remember,
the tree is older than you are,
and you might find stories
in its branches.

(Clement, 1995, p. 11)

Vacca (2002) writes:

Schema activation is the mechanism by which readers access what they know and match it to the information in a text. For comprehension to occur, the reader must activate or build a schema that fits with information encountered in a text. When a good match occurs, a schema allows the reader to organize text information more efficiently, make inferences and fill in knowledge gaps in a text, and elaborate on the material. (p. 191)

Based on Vacca's assertion, what, then, might a reader or listener need to know to make sense of Clement's poem? What schemata need to be activated or built to understand the literal and figurative connotations associated with this piece? How might an English-Spanish bilingual speaker approach the translated text (both versions are rendered in Nye's collection)? What might be lost—or gained—by the translation from the original Spanish? And, why the poet's choice of a lemon tree? What schemata can be tapped to think about the images lemons conjure? What to make of the lines "Remember,/the tree is older than you are,/and you might find stories/in its branches."?

Donna Ogle's (1986) KWL charts (What do you KNOW; what do you WANT to know; what have you LEARNED?) provide a concrete example of the instructional use of schema theory. The KWL framework illustrates well the importance of tapping and activating schemata as students encounters new learning. Students might begin by listing—individually or collaboratively—what they KNOW about the literal and figurative images Clement presents. Such schema activation puts students in a better position to understand and clarify what they already bring to the poem—their prior knowledge.

In the International Reading Association's (IRA) 2002 position statement "Making a Difference Means Making It Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction," the authors contend that "Children have a right to reading instruction that builds both the skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials" (p. 4). How might that "right" be honored as educators draw upon schema theory? In activating students' prior knowledge and tying it to the text at hand, educators take an important

first step toward demystifying comprehension—and, in the case of poetry, demystifying poetry’s often impenetrable and “esoteric” (Spinner, 1990) nature.

Consider that just as readers bring prior knowledge and experiences to poetry as a reading (or listening) event, they also bring prior knowledge and experiences to poetic text as a *language* event. Schema, those “bundles of related concepts” (Samuels, 1994), map not only to the concepts a reader brings to an individual poem’s subject matter, but to a poem’s text structure, its linguistic features, its tone, and even, perhaps, its cultural relevance (cf., Moon, 2001, for his discussion of haiku as situated within Japanese culture and not merely the syllable-counting exercise it often becomes in some Western cultures). A reader’s language experiences—both implicitly and explicitly—support the process of “making sense.”

Anderson (1994) contends, “...comprehension is a matter of activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a discourse” (p. 473); yet, “the meanings of words cannot be ‘added up’ to give the meaning of the whole. The click of comprehension occurs only when the reader evolves a schema that explains the whole message” (p. 473). How, then, might educators focus on the “whole message”? Reader-response theories may provide some insights.

Reader Response Theories and the Teaching of Poetry

Anderson (1994) writes:

Schema theory highlights the fact that often more than one interpretation of a text is possible. The schema that will be brought to bear on a text depends upon the reader’s age, sex, race, religion, nationality, occupation—in short, it depends upon the reader’s culture. (p. 470).

The reader's prior knowledge, experiences, and culture, then, impact his or her "organized knowledge of the world" (Anderson, 1994, p. 469). As such, readers will, necessarily, bring different experiences and knowledge (including knowledge of text structures) to text. Reader-response theories offer some explanations for what happens when individual readers encounter text.

Owing largely to Rosenblatt's seminal work in transactional theory (see especially, *Literature as Exploration*, 1938; *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, 1978), a reader-response model has proved a powerful force in literary criticism. While the work of some (e.g., Downey; Richards; cf. Squire, 1994) predated Rosenblatt's 1938 work, and the work of others (e.g., Squire; Probst; cf. Squire, 1994) postdated it, among educators, Rosenblatt is generally credited with proposing the central tenets of the reader-response paradigm.

Transactional theory posits that reading is a transaction--a give and take, a "dynamic interfusion of both reader and text" (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. viii). In sharp contrast to earlier models that attempted to explain the reading process (e.g., perceptual accounts of reading, psycholinguistic paradigms), Rosenblatt's model recognized the reader as an essential component in the reader/text transaction. To simplify the idea of reading as transaction, Rosenblatt begins *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978/1994) invoking a scene.

Imagine, Rosenblatt urges, a darkened stage and the figures of author and reader, with a book between them. Now imagine a spotlight focusing "on one of them so brightly that the others fade into practical invisibility" (p. 1). In the spotlight's limited concentration, it is important to note, only one of the three figures receives that light.

But, *which* of the figures is privileged to stand in the spotlight and receive the light? Rosenblatt (1978/1994) expounds, "Throughout the centuries, it becomes apparent, usually either the book or the author has received major illumination. The reader has tended to remain in shadow, taken for granted, to all intents and purposes invisible" (p. 1).

The metaphor that Rosenblatt employs powerfully illustrates the historic swings of the literary pendulum--now in favor of the author, now in favor of the text. "Thus," she writes, "the reader was left to play the role of invisible eavesdropper" (p. 2). But, if the reader is an active rather than "passive recipient" (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. 4) of either the author's intention or the text, the spotlight must draw back and "admit into the limelight the whole scene--author, text, and reader" (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. 5).

Temple, Martinex, Yokota, and Naylor (2002) write, "When readers read literature, their personal memories, feelings, and thought associations may be evoked by the text--whether or not the author anticipated those reactions" (p. 59). This notion of drawing upon associations, consistent with that advanced by schema theory, allows readers to assume a central and active role in the reader/text transaction.

Rosenblatt's notion of response includes the stance that the reader takes in approaching and/or moving through a text. The reader who adopts an *efferent* stance takes information from text (from the Latin, "efferere," to take away), while an *aesthetic* stance allows the reader to "draw on [the] reservoir of past experience with people, and the world" (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 9). The continuum of response is not static, however, with readers moving along the continuum even within the same reading event.

Richard Beach (1993) parses out five different perspectives on reader response: experiential, psychological, social, cultural, and textual. Beach proposes these perspectives to represent “a different window onto the same response process” (Temple et al., 2002, p. 60) and like different windows of the same house, each perspective offers a slightly different view into the reader’s response processes.

Response is a multifaceted and interrelated phenomenon. Beach’s divisions should not be viewed as a simplification of response process, but rather as a way to honor the complexity of individual response. The primary purpose of distinguishing among each perspective is one of emphasis. In reality, these windows of response are teased out here as a means of highlighting the complexity of response and demonstrating its kaleidoscopic nature.

In the *experiential* view Beach contends that the reader’s role--his/her experiences and feelings--is emphasized. It is the “reader’s engagement or experience” (Beach, 1993, p. 8) that provides the focal point of the experiential view. A *psychological* perspective recognizes that “children in different stages of cognitive, moral, and social development respond to literature differently” (Temple et al., 2002, p. 61), with the “reader’s cognitive or subconscious processes” (Beach, 1993, p. 8) as central.

A *social* perspective acknowledges that a “reader’s social role and perceptions of the social context” (Beach, 1993, p. 8) may shape the literary transaction, while a *cultural* perspective recognizes that the “reader’s cultural role, attitudes, contexts” shape transactions with text.

Finally, a *textual* perspective brings to the fore the “reader’s knowledge of conventions” (Beach, 1993, p. 8)—that is, the reader’s “knowledge of narrative conventions, literary elements, genre conventions, and other aspects of text” (Temple et al., 2002, p. 61).

Consider, this unpublished poem by Janet Wong:

Shoes On My Feet

Today
I am the ill-mannered one.

I should know better,
being Asian,
having been raised in a shoeless house,
but I was the first
to arrive at the party
and there were no shoes
inside the door.

I felt so proud to be invited,
so bold, I strode inside the house
with my shoes on
and noticed
only ten shoeless feet later
the pile that had appeared
from nowhere.

Being Asian, I slip my shoes off
without a word.

(Wong, 2005)

Each reader, of course, will respond differently to Wong’s poem. But, how might response be tapped and strengthened as students think through this poem? How might educators scaffold their students’ sense-making endeavors, by drawing on each response perspective? Consider these questions for each perspective:

Experiential: How does this poem make you feel? Why? What thoughts and images does it evoke from your own personal experience(s)?

Psychological: Who is this poem for? Who is the intended audience? How might preference study research influence the selection and use of this poem in the classroom?

Social: How might discussion formats (e.g., Book Club; literature circles) impact understandings? How might the experiences of others influence and contribute to students' shared understandings (i.e., intersubjectivity)?

Cultural: How might "insider" knowledge affect interpretations? How might Asian-American students respond? How might responses differ among members of other cultures? How do the poem's cultural markers (e.g., "having been raised in a shoeless house") reinforce and heighten the violation of a cultural convention (e.g. removal of shoes upon entry)?

Textual: Consider the title ("Shoes On My Feet") and the final stanza ("Being Asian,/I slip my shoes off/without a word."). How do these "pieces" of the poem work to emphasize the speaker's cultural faux pas?

How do stanza-formation and line-breaks add to the meaning of the poem? Does the format enhance the poem's meaning? How?

Readers might compare and contrast this [unpublished] poem with Wong's "Hospitality" in *A Suitcase of Seaweed* (Wong, 1996, p. 12). "Hospitality" also explores the broader meaning of shoes in (or not in) an Asian household.

If, indeed, "reading is a fusion of text and reader" (Rosenblatt, 1938; p. 9), the individual processes by which students' actively construct meaning must be honored. Responding to poetry helps students make sense of text in light of their own experiences, facilitates comprehension, and affords opportunities for self-exploration within broader classroom contexts. It is to such broader contexts of learning and making-sense that I now turn.

Sociocultural Perspectives and the Teaching of Poetry

Shell

When it was time
for Show and Tell,
Adam brought a big pink shell.

He told about
the ocean roar
and walking on the sandy shore.

And then he passed
the shell around.
We listened to the water sound.

And that's the first time
I could hear
the wild waves calling to my ear.

(Livingston, 1996, p. 30)

The scenario is a familiar one to many American schoolchildren. One child, Adam, brings a shell for “Show and Tell,” and the other children listen as he demonstrates its use and explains its significance to him. It is a social experience whereby Adam’s fellow classmates engage in the shared experience of listening, imagining, and touching. But, in the final stanza the action becomes uniquely individual. “And that’s the first time/I could hear/the wild waves calling to my ear,” announces the speaker at the conclusion of Livingston’s poem. The speaker’s experience moves from one that is collaborative and group-oriented to one that is personal and private. “Shell” illustrates how our shared experiences often yield individual outcomes.

Those subscribing to a sociocultural perspective on learning posit that the learner constructs knowledge within the context of historical, cultural, and social aspects of

learning (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Wood, 1998). As such, knowledge is constructed, not in isolation, but in the context of its social situatedness. Knowledge is *socially* constructed and, what's more, it is socially dependent.

An individual's mental action, sociocultural theorists would claim, is highly dependent upon—in fact, mediated by—the social interactions of those who nudge, support, and scaffold it (Bruner, 1986). But, how is this accomplished? Interindividual functioning gives way to intraindividual mental functioning, claims Vygotsky (1978), as learners engage in dialogue with more knowledgeable others and ascend individual zones of proximal development. In essence, and in contrast to Piagetian notions of “readiness,” where thought *precedes* learning, sociocultural theorists postulate that thought is *dependent* upon language. That is, language pushes thought. It is through social interaction with others that individuals are able to hear “the wild waves calling” for themselves.

What, then, are the instructional tools that might mediate students' mental action as regards poetry teaching and learning? Consider Beach's (1993) five perspectives of reader response. How might classroom educators scaffold higher levels of response in each of those five areas? How might sociocultural perspectives on thinking and learning impact students' and teachers' negotiation of meaning of poetry?

Discussion formats such as Book Club (McMahon & Rapheal, 1997) or Literature Circles, (Short & Klassen, 1993), formats in which students are able to participate as speakers and listeners are especially important here. Engaging regularly in and responding to poetry affords students opportunities not only for self-exploration but

opportunities to achieve intersubjectivity (Vygotsky, 1978) as shared understandings become part of the group's collective negotiation of meaning.

Literature circles (Short & Klassen, 1993) provide a forum where students in small groups can read and discuss a common literature selection. In this forum students are invited to make sense of literature as they relate it to their own lives and experiences. While students may bring "tentative understandings" initially, "as they talk, they examine their differing interpretations of the books they have read and come to new and deeper understanding of them" (Short & Klassen, 1993, p. 67). The authors further assert, "In literature circles, readers become critical thinkers as they engage in ongoing dialogue about their reading" (Short & Klassen, 1993, pp. 67-68). In short, "Literature circles offer readers the opportunity to become literate," (Short & Klassen, 1993, p. 67).

The level and depth of students' responses not only provides guidance for teachers' instructional decisions but also allows for teacher-modeling of discussion dynamics (e.g., turn-taking, vying for a turn, respectful behavior when positions are in conflict) and think-aloud strategies to manage unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts. The negotiation of meaning and the derivation of shared understandings are inherent to the notion that meaning, essentially, is a socially constructed phenomenon.

David Moon (2001) asks us to consider this notion:

It is helpful, therefore, to think about poetry as being, in part, a way of reading—one that involves responding to words, sounds, typefaces, and other features in particular ways, as well as adopting particular approaches' to the text, such as using the poem to reflect on your experiences and beliefs. (p. 28)

A singular definition of poetry is difficult to ascertain; there exists, observes Moon (2001), a wide range of language structures in the “individual texts called poems” with “very few features that are shared by all poems” (p. 28). To consider the act of reading a poem, to consider the evocation of the “poem” from written text (Rosenblatt, 1978), is to consider not only the complexity of poetry’s textual features but also to consider its capacity for both public and private response.

Summary

Chapter II includes poetry research that has focused on children’s preferences, concepts of and attitudes toward poetry, performance of poetry, and the use of poetry, as tied to positive gains in cognition and behavior. The importance of environments that cultivate aesthetic responses to and the writing of poetry are also discussed. Poetry research involving instructional practices in the teaching of children’s poetry ranges here from those practices recommended in basal readers to those practices recommended by experts. An examination the types of experiences that promote and uphold adult interest in the reading and writing of poetry was also reviewed.

In general, these individual pieces served as the backdrop for the specific research questions addressed in this study (see chapter I). By reviewing the poetry preferences of children and the instructional practices to which children have responded (and flourished!), university professors and instructors might create, develop, and implement the conditions, in-class procedures, and assignments that promote and further such findings.

Additionally, the discussion of the schema theory, reader-response theories, and sociocultural perspectives grounds instructional practices in a sound theoretical basis. Survey items related to the building of students' background knowledge, or those related to students' response to poetry, or those which tap use of discussion-type formats to broaden understandings, directly relate to the theoretical background explored in this review of the literature.

Chapter III discusses the methodology employed in this current study.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This descriptive study involved the creation, implementation, and analysis of data from a researcher-created survey, the Poetry Use Survey. This survey sought to ascertain the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at colleges and universities across the United States and was limited to the practices of university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) at the time of this study. Via a mixed-methods design (cf. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), this study sought to provide a snapshot of the instructional practices employed solely by CLA members as they taught or included children's poetry in their university-level courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. The six-page Poetry Use Survey yielded both quantitative and qualitative data (see Appendix A).

The primary purpose of this study was to ascertain the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level and was expressed by the following component purposes: (a) to determine general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their courses, (b) to report the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught, (c) to describe the types of poetry assignments included in a given course, (d) to uncover the poets typically highlighted

and why, and (e) to reveal the overall goals professors and instructors held for their students in the teaching of children's poetry.

This study was conducted in three phases: (a) the process of survey development, (b) administration of the mail-out survey, (c) collection, analysis, and synthesis of data. This chapter will discuss the process undertaken to develop a researcher-created survey, expressly designed for use in this study. Additionally, this chapter will discuss the selection of potential survey participants, the methods for data collection, and the statistical and qualitative analysis of that data. The analysis and synthesis of data will be discussed in chapter IV.

Research Questions

The primary question addressed in this study was: What are the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level? Five sub-questions comprised that general question.

Question 1.1: What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and/or instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and/or reading education courses?

Question 1.2: What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Question 1.4: Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why?

Question 1.5: What are the goals professors hold for their students in the teaching of children's poetry?

Survey Development

To initiate the study, a focus group (Edmunds, 1999; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996), comprised of five experts in the fields of children's literature and language arts/reading, was convened. Because no previous instruments existed which would describe the instructional techniques employed in the university-level teaching of children's poetry, the recommendations of university professors were sought for the generation of survey items.

Rationale for the Focus Group

The focus group format provided the ideal entry point into this survey's development, because it allowed me to assemble more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978), solicit their specialized knowledge, and draw upon their professional experience. The exploratory nature of this process, "with its intent being to provide an understanding of perceptions, feelings, attitude, and motivations," allowed me "to capture subjective comments and evaluate them" (Edmunds, 1999. p. 3). Such exploratory talk, it should be noted is not without purpose. Indeed, Krueger & Casey (2000) make clear that while "the purpose of a focus group is to listen and gather information," they insist that it is not "just getting a bunch of people together to talk" (p. 4).

While the use of an expert group provided the final survey instrument face validity (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996), the use of this focus group also provided the initial step in conducting the quantitative investigation to follow. Krueger and Casey (2000) argue that expert groups help point researchers to questions such as, "What words do

people use to talk about the issue?” and “What do they see as the range of options for answering a question (p. 24). Such insights proved invaluable as information was synthesized and the survey was created.

An especially beneficial feature of this qualitative process involved the spiraling of responses from one to another participant. Krueger and Casey (2000) note that in contrast to individual interviews, in group-interviews, “As participants answer questions, their responses spark ideas from other participants. Comments provide mental cues that trigger memories or thoughts of other participants—cues that help explore the range of perceptions” (p. 40). This proved especially true as each participant both initiated discussion topics and responded to other members. Several participants later commented that the opportunity to discuss a topic with other colleagues at this level of detail was both enjoyable and, unfortunately, almost wholly lacking in their professional lives due to time constraints, professional commitments, and the like.

Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) advise, “For most focus group interviews, we recommend homogeneous subject selection with respect to the background, demographic, and sociocultural characteristics of the participants” (p. 62). All five participants in this focus group were female professors, drawn from universities in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Among the participants, the average of university teaching experience was 14 years, with 6 as the minimum and 21 as the maximum number of years taught. While the homogeneity of this expert group allowed for ease in discussion, it was the range of the participants’ experiences, the differences in their years of teaching, and the differences in field affiliation that allowed for interesting discussion and brought richness and depth to the topic of children’s poetry.

It should be clarified that true focus group research involves “a carefully planned *series* [italics added] of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive and nonthreatening environment” (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 5). While the environment was undeniably “permissive” and “nonthreatening,” this forum was convened as a single event, whose expressed purpose was to generate potential survey questions for this study. In contrast to true focus group methodology, this focus group was not designed as one session in a series of focus group meetings involving different participants but was primarily used as a “Brainstorming” session (Krueger & Casey, 2000) whereby the recommendations of experts were solicited for some future use in the study. In this case, that future use was the development of the actual survey.

The Focus Group Participants

Five university professors from three major universities in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex agreed to participate in the focus group. The focus group was comprised of: (a) an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education, (b) a Professor Emerita of Children’s and Young Adult Literature, (c) a Professor of Reading, Curriculum & Instruction, (d) a Professor of Reading/Language Arts, and (e) a Professor of Literature for Children and Young Adults. All focus group participants were female university professors who were currently teaching, or had taught, courses where children’s poetry was either included or exclusively taught. Members represented the fields of education (children’s literature courses, reading/language arts courses) and library science (children’s literature courses). There were no focus group participants who represented the field of English.

Among the participants, the average years of university teaching experience was 14 years, with 6 as the minimum and 21 as the maximum number of years taught.

The Focus Group

The primary aim of the focus group was to generate potential questions to be included in the survey instrument for this study (see Appendix A). Each participant was given an agenda, in advance, which highlighted the three questions that would drive our session: (a) What questions might we ask literacy professors about the treatment of children's poetry in their teacher-training courses?; (b) How can we get at the actual practices employed, in reading or children's literature courses, as literacy professors teach children's poetry to preservice and inservice teachers?; and, (c) What types of questions will help us gather this information, without appearing threatening or condescending? Early in the session, the terminology "literacy professors" was identified as problematic. To more accurately reflect the potential survey participants, the use of "Professors of reading/language arts, English, and library science" was deemed preferable.

The approximately 75-minute focus group session was audiotaped and subsequently transcribed. A digital voice recorder was used to record the session. (A backup conventional tape recorder was running also.) Computer software, specific to the digital recording device, was used in the transcription of the session.

Although the central purpose of the focus group was to generate survey questions, participants spent considerable time asking for clarification on several issues pertinent to survey research, in general, and this survey, in particular. In transcribing,

reviewing, and cataloging the discourse, six relevant categories emerged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These categories become apparent to me, not only because they consumed a great deal of discussion time during the focus group session, but, because each category represented some practical considerations attendant to the survey's design (e.g., the survey's purpose, demographic information of the respondents, logistics of administration).

The categories reflected essential component parts of the developing survey and included: (a) Issues Related to the Purpose of the Survey, (b) Issues Related to Sample, (c) Suggestions for Demographics, (d) Potential Survey Questions, (e) Issues Related to Framing Responses, and (f) Issues Related to Survey Logistics (e.g., time of year best to administer the survey). Like Hilda Taba's process of List-Group-Label (cf. Joyce & Weil, 1996), I derived these categories through the listing of specific comments (literally culled from the transcription), grouping them, and naming the category (e.g., Suggestions for Demographics, Potential Survey Questions, etc.).

The participants graciously agreed to provide additional assistance via email, telephone, and personal contact. However, in keeping with Krueger and Casey's (2000) recommendation, the next phase of question development was restricted to discussion between my advisor and me. Krueger and Casey (2000) note, "A group is great for generating ideas for questions, but a group isn't efficient for refining the questions" (p. 56). My advisor and I reviewed the categories and discussed how to convert the experts' comments and suggestions into actual questions and survey items for the initial draft.

Using Arlene Fink's (2003) *How to Ask Survey Questions* (2nd ed.) as an invaluable tool for drafting and formatting potential survey questions, I created an initial draft of the survey, separating the expert recommendations into three broad categories: (a) general perceptions of poetry, (b) in-class instructional practices, and (c) types of poetry assignments included in a given course. All members agreed to review, provide comments on, and offer any comments/criticism necessary to make the instrument user-friendly and clear. The initial draft was sent back to focus group participants. Participants were asked to take the survey, just as a future respondent would, making comments where items were unclear, redundant, or biased. Additionally, participants were asked to note the time it took to respond to the survey. All members provided constructive feedback. As clarification or elaboration warranted, I contacted each focus group participant. Multiple revisions ensued. The final survey is given in Appendix A.

Rationale for the Study's Mixed-Methods Design

Expert input served as the focal point for the creation of the Poetry Use Survey. Based on the recommendations of Focus Group members, survey questions were drafted and revised. Some survey questions lent themselves to quantitative measures while others lent themselves to qualitative measures. Of course, it could be argued that one or the other paradigm may have suited this study. However, for my purposes, a combined approach seemed best.

Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson (2003) define a mixed-methods design in the following way:

A mixed methods study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research. (p. 212)

In order to richly describe current practices in the teaching of children's poetry, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were drawn upon. The resulting data offers, I think, a thick and very rich description of instructional practices in the teaching of children's poetry among CLA members.

Administration of the Survey

Arlene Fink (2003) defines a survey as "a system for collecting information from or about people to describe, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, and behavior" (p. 1). This study sought to ascertain the instructional practices employed by professors and instructors of children's literature, English, language arts, library science and reading, in courses where children's poetry is included or taught. A researcher-created survey, in which the general practices of university professors and instructors were tapped, attempted to describe such practices.

Fink (2003) cautions that it is important for researchers to "remember that questions are asked in a social, cultural, and economic context" (p. 19). With this in mind, an expert group (discussed in preceding section) of university professors was convened to draw upon the potential range of contexts in which respondents might be found.

Selection of Survey Participants

The participants in this study were university professors and instructors of children's literature, English, language arts, library science and reading who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) at the time of this study. A professional assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the CLA "provides a forum for interested people with all points of view and levels of experience in the field of children's literature" (NCTE, n.d.). As of January 2004, the total domestic (U.S.) membership of the CLA was 407 members.

In selecting the CLA as this study's population, I acknowledge the following assumptions. It was assumed that the majority of members in this organization would: (a) be university professors and instructors, (b) be likely to support the inclusion and promotion of children's poetry in their teaching, (c) be willing and motivated participants, (d) represent a range of disciplines (English, library science, reading/language arts education), and (e) provide rich written responses to open-ended items.

Procedures for Mailing the Survey

A total of 407 surveys were sent to the domestic (U.S.) membership of the CLA. Because no mechanism was in place at the time of this study to parse out the affiliation of individual members (e.g., classroom teacher, university professor, etc.) from the CLA membership database, surveys were sent to all U.S. members of this organization. Those members of the CLA who received Poetry Use Survey included, but were not limited to, university professors, adjunct instructors, classroom teachers, children's authors, and others interested in the promotion and use of children's literature in the

classroom. For the purposes of this study, international and institutional members were excluded from participation ($N = 407$).

Surveys were mailed at the Presorted Automated Standard Rate (i.e., bulk mailing rate) from a mailing service in North-central Texas, in mid-February 2004. It was requested that surveys be returned by March 1, 2004 (see Appendix B for approved survey cover letter.) As planned, and with the promise of capturing additional responses, two postcard reminders were sent. Mailed on March 1, 2004, the first postcard reminder offered an extended return date of March 11, 2004. The second postcard reminder, sent March 24, 2004, provided the final return date of May 1, 2004. Data collection was officially concluded on May 5, 2004.

Collection, Analysis, and Synthesis of Data

The quantitative and qualitative data for this descriptive, exploratory study was collected via the Poetry Use Survey, a six-page survey. This investigation, limited to the practices of members of the CLA, specifically sought to ascertain the general perceptions of poetry held by the university professors and instructors of that organization, their in-class instructional practices, and the types of poetry assignments given in their courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. Additionally, this study sought to reveal both the poets typically highlighted and the goals held by the respondents in such courses.

Data analyses for the quantitative portions of the survey were rendered through SPSS 10.0 for Macintosh (Release 10.0.7a; 2000), a statistical software program for the social sciences. Data analysis for the qualitative portions of the survey was rendered through

both manual (index cards, color-coding) and computer-assisted techniques (NUD*IST®[†] N4 qualitative analysis software).

Data Collection

Of the 407 surveys sent, 98 were returned to the mailing service (overall return rate = 24.08%). Of these 98 surveys, 75 were eligible for inclusion in the data analysis for this study ($N = 75$). Of the returned surveys, 75 of 407 were eligible for inclusion in the data analysis of this study ($N = 75$; usable return rate = 18.43%). Surveys of classroom teachers were not included in this current study, but have been retained for a future investigation.

As surveys were returned to the mailing service, they were retrieved and sent for processing. For the purposes of confidentiality, surveys were processed by a computer consultant, a third-party who had no connection to this current study. The consultant checked off names of respondents, and removed and secured any identifying information (i.e., specific participant's name) from the surveys proper (the final page of the survey was an optional Follow-Up form and did contain names, addresses, and the like). All papers and envelopes from the surveys were kept in her possession, in a locked file cabinet; the database was maintained electronically and was password-protected.

[†] QSR International Pty Ltd, www.qsrinternational.com

Data Analysis

The primary question addressed in this study was: What are the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level? Five sub-questions comprised that general question. The types of data collected to explore each question, the scales used to measure responses, and the methods of data analysis are discussed in this section.

Question 1.1: What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and/or reading education courses?

Research Question 1.1 was addressed by the survey's second section, "Perceptions of Poetry" (see Appendix A). In this section, respondents indicated their level of agreement on a 7-point scale, anchored from *strongly agree* (7) to *strongly disagree* (1). Representative items in this section include: "I believe the teaching of children's poetry is important" and "I support multiple interpretations of poetry."

Quantitative data in this section was treated as continuous data and descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, ranges and percentages) for each item was reported. Written comments, which served to elucidate the numerical responses in this section, are included in chapter IV. Patterns and themes among the comments were noted, where appropriate.

Question 1.2: What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Research Question 1.2 was addressed by the survey's third section, "In-Class Activities" (see Appendix A). From a prespecified list of in-class activities, respondents indicated the frequency with which they conducted such activities. A 7-point scale, anchored from *always* (7) to *never* (1), was used to ascertain numeric information

relevant to this research question. Representative items in this section include: “I read children’s poetry out loud” and “I discussed awards that recognize children’s poetry, such as ...”

Quantitative data in this section was treated as continuous data and descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, ranges and percentages) for each item was reported. Written comments, which served to elucidate the numerical responses in this section, are included in chapter IV. Patterns and themes among the comments were noted, where appropriate.

Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children’s poetry is included or taught?

Research Question 1.3 was addressed by the survey’s fourth section, “Course Assignments.” In a forced-choice (yes/no) format, where 1 equaled yes, and 2 equaled no, respondents indicated whether they included prespecified assignments in their course. For each item, percentages of yes responses and no responses were reported. Written comments, which served to elucidate the numerical responses in this section, are included in chapter IV. Patterns and themes among the comments were noted, where appropriate.

Question 1.4: Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why?

Research Question 1.4 was addressed by the survey’s final section, “Open-ended Questions” (see Appendix A). Question 1.4 allowed respondents to self-generate a list of poets typically included in their university-level courses of children’s literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. Additionally, an opportunity to discuss the rationale for including such poets is afforded by this question.

The frequencies with which specific poets' names were given were reported. Computer software (NUD*IST N4) was used to categorize and code the general reasons cited for respondents' selection of poets. The general reasons cited for the selection of poets are given in text (see Table 25); representative comments are also given.

Question 1.5: What are the goals professors and instructors hold for their students in the teaching of children's poetry?

This open-ended question sought to ascertain the general goals held by professors and instructors as they taught or included children's poetry. The goals cited by respondents were categorized and coded using NUD*IST computer software. General categories and representative comments from respondents are given in text. Table 1 provides a summary of the analysis procedures discussed here.

Table 1

Summary of Analysis Procedures

Research Question	Data Type	Scale	Method Analysis
Question 1.1: What are the general perceptions of poetry held...?	Quantitative: Continuous	7-point scale (Agreement) 7 = <i>Strongly Agree</i> 1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i>	Descriptive Statistics: Means Standard Deviations Ranges Percentages
Question 1.2: What are the in-class instructional practices employed...?	Quantitative: Continuous	7-point scale (Frequency) 7 = <i>Always</i> 1 = <i>Never</i>	Descriptive Statistics: Means Standard Deviations Ranges Percentages
Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments...?	Quantitative: Categorical	Forced Choice 1 = Yes 2 = No	Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies Percentages
Question 1.4: Which poets are typically highlighted; why?	Qualitative: Written	Open-ended Question	Frequencies of Poets Named Reasons Poets Selected: Data Coded/Categorized
Question 1.5: What are the goals held...?	Qualitative: Written	Open-ended Question	Frequencies of Goals Held: Data Coded/Categorized

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This project aimed to describe, via a researcher-developed survey (see Appendix A.), the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at colleges and universities across the United States. Limited to the practices of university professors and instructors who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) at the time of this study, the Poetry Use Survey sought to provide a snapshot of the instructional practices employed solely by those members as they taught or included children's poetry in their university-level courses. The survey was administered by mail between the months of February and May 2004, and yielded a usable return-rate of 18.43%.

This investigation specifically sought to ascertain the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and instructors of the CLA, their in-class instructional practices, and the types of poetry assignments given in courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. Additionally, this study sought to reveal both the poets typically highlighted and the goals held by the professors and instructors of such courses.

This chapter presents the results and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, as rendered by the Poetry Use Survey. Some important notes on the qualitative data should be addressed before proceeding. Any indications of emphasis (exclamation points, underlining, double-underlining, parenthetical inclusions) from written comments and responses are accurately represented and remain as faithful as

possible to the respondent's original words and formatting. In this document, no additional markings (for purposes of emphasis and the like) were added; comments are given here, just as they appeared in the respondents' original responses. To aid in readability, however, omitted words (or parts of words) were inserted via brackets, only when their *exclusion* rendered the text difficult to understand. Misspellings were corrected. Exclusions and misspellings were rare and appeared to be unintentional--the results of quickly executed writing.

General Demographic Information

A total of 407 surveys were sent to the domestic (U.S.) membership of the CLA. Because no mechanism was in place at the time of this study to parse out the affiliation of individual members (e.g., classroom teacher, university professor, etc.) from the CLA membership database, surveys were sent to all U.S. members of this organization. Those members of the CLA who received the Poetry Use Survey included, but were not limited to, university professors, adjunct instructors, classroom teachers, children's authors, and others interested in the promotion and use of children's literature. For the purposes of this study, international and institutional members were excluded from participation ($N = 407$).

Surveys were mailed at the Presorted Automated Standard Rate (i.e., bulk-mailing rate) from a mailing service in North-central Texas, in mid-February 2004. It was requested that surveys be returned by March 1, 2004 (see Appendix B for approved Survey Cover Letter). As planned, and with the promise of capturing additional responses, two postcard reminders were sent. Mailed on March 1, 2004, the

first postcard reminder offered an extended return date of March 11, 2004. The second postcard reminder, sent March 24, 2004, provided the final return date of May 1, 2004. Data collection was officially concluded on May 5, 2004.

It should be noted here that the initial return date of March 1, 2004 (chosen to avoid various university spring breaks), may have proved a limitation in this study's return-rate. Of the eligible 75 surveys analyzed for this study, it was indicated by slightly over one-quarter of the respondents ($n = 20$; 26.67%) that surveys arrived either on or *after* the initial return request. (Some respondents noted that the survey arrived as many as three weeks after the March 1 deadline.) When asked about this, the owner of the mailing service pointed out that election year mail-outs, indeed, tended to run slower than normal; this may have been one factor contributing to the slower than usual mailing time. It is possible that a more generous initial return-date may have yielded a more robust return-rate.

Of the 407 surveys sent, 98 were returned to the mailing service (overall return-rate = 24.08%). Of these surveys, 75 were eligible for inclusion in the data analysis of this study ($N = 75$). Ineligible returns included surveys completed by classroom teachers ($n = 13$), surveys returned blank ($n = 9$), and one survey that was unusable because the respondent did not meet the inclusion criteria ($n = 1$).

Survey Section I: Demographic Information

The survey's first section "Demographic Information" was designed to provide a broad snapshot of demographic information of respondents. The survey's initial five questions and the information they yielded are presented here.

Survey Question 1: Which best describes your current position?

For the 98 returned surveys, given the three options University Professor, Classroom Teacher, or Other, 75 respondents identified themselves by the categories University Professor or Other. Thirteen respondents identified themselves as classroom teachers (eleven were elementary classroom teachers; one was a preservice teacher, and one was a reading teacher K-3). While the participation of classroom teachers was welcomed, it is important to note that, as qualified by the survey cover letter (see Appendix B), the data provided by classroom teachers did not become part of this current study, but has been retained for a future investigation. (Classroom teachers were appropriately directed, via "skip instructions" [Fink, 2003] to Question 5 on this page; see Appendix A.)

Nine CLA members returned the surveys blank. These blank surveys included professors who were retired or semi-retired ($n = 4$); members who were no longer teaching ($n = 3$) or were no longer teaching a course relevant to the survey ($n = 1$); and a children's poet ($n = 1$). One survey that was filled out, however, it was not included in the final data analysis, because the respondent did not meet the inclusion criteria (i.e., the respondent was not a professor or instructor of university courses).

Table 2 outlines the breakdown of all surveys returned ($N = 98$).

Table 2

Total Surveys Returned

Description	<i>n</i>	%
University Professor or Adjunct Instructor	75	76.53
Classroom Teacher	13	13.27
Returned Blank	9	9.18
Unusable	1	1.02

Note. *N* = 98

Of the returned surveys, 75 of 407 were eligible for inclusion in the data analysis of this study (*N* = 75; usable return-rate = 18.43%). It should be noted here that this return-rate of slightly less than 20.00% is, for this study, a potential strength, rather than a weakness. Because the pool of eligible respondents was unknown (the CLA database was not, at this time, organized by profession), it is also unknown from how many total respondents these 75 had actually derived.

Sixty-two of the 75 eligible respondents (82.67%) were identified as University Professors; 13 of 75 eligible respondents (17.33%) were identified as Other. Table 3 outlines the breakdown of respondents included in the final data analysis.

Because it was not specified whether retired professors were, in fact, eligible to participate, the overall composition of the 75 eligible surveys did include four retired professors. One respondent wrote, “Sorry this is late—felt as a retired prof[essor]—did not apply to your research. Then decided to respond with...notations.” It is important to

note that while some retired professors *did* participate, some *did not* consider themselves eligible. And, while the responses of retired personnel were welcomed and added to the richness of data, the unintentional confusion over retired personnel's eligibility to participate should be considered a limitation of this study.

Table 3

Eligible Surveys

Description	<i>n</i>	%
University Professor	62	82.67
Other	13	17.33

Note. *N* = 75

The Other category included seven adjunct instructors, five graduate teaching assistants, and an assistant professor who recently returned to the elementary classroom. Table 4 outlines the breakdown of respondents in the Other category.

Table 4

Breakdown of Other Category for Eligible Surveys

Description	<i>n</i>	%
Adjunct Instructors	7	53.85
Graduate Assistants	5	38.46
Former Professor	1	7.69

Note. *n* = 13

Survey Question 2: As a university professor, which best describes your primary teaching field?

Seventy-two participants responded to Question 2 in the survey’s “Demographic Information” section (*N* = 72; Missing Data: *n* = 3). Given the four options Education, English, Library Science, or Other, 57 respondents (valid percent = 79.2; *n* = 72) selected Education as their primary teaching field, 9 (valid percent = 12.5; *n* = 72), respondents selected English, two respondents (valid percent = 2.8; *n* = 72) selected Library Science, and four respondents (valid percent = 5.6; *n* = 72) selected Other.

The Other category included three participants who identified their primary teaching fields as Communications, Reading/Language Arts, and Reading. One respondent circled Education and Library Science, clarifying that he/she teaches in both departments. Table 5 outlines the breakdown of respondents’ primary teaching fields.

Table 5

Primary Teaching Fields of Respondents

Description	<i>n</i>	%
Education	57	79.20
English	9	12.50
Library Science	2	2.80
Other	4	5.60

Note. *n* = 72; Missing Data: *n* = 3; % = valid percent based on *n* = 72.

Survey Question 3: As a university professor which one of the following best describes most of the courses you teach in your current position?

Seventy-two participants responded to Question 3 in the survey’s “Demographic Information” section (*n* = 72; Missing Data: *n* = 3). Given the five options: (a) Courses of Children’s Literature, (b) Courses of English Literature, (c) Courses of Language Arts, (d) Courses of Reading, and (e) Other, half of the respondents (*n* = 36; valid percent = 50.00; *n* = 72) identified Courses of Children’s Literature as the best descriptor of courses they taught in their current position. Seven respondents (valid percent = 9.70; *n* = 72); identified Courses of Language Arts; 19 respondents (valid percent = 26.40; *n* = 72) identified Courses of Reading and ten respondents (valid percent = 13.9; *n* = 72) identified Other as the best descriptor. Examples of courses included in the Other category were Effective Speech, Integrated Reading/Children’s Literature, and Composition. No respondents selected Courses of English Literature (*n* = 0). Table 6 outlines the breakdown of participants’ responses to Survey Question 3.

Table 6

Primary Courses Taught by Respondents

Description	<i>n</i>	%
Courses of Children’s Literature	36	50.00
Courses of English Literature	0	0.00
Courses of Language Arts	7	9.70
Courses of Reading	19	26.40
Other	10	13.90

Note. *n* = 72; Missing Data: *n* = 3; % = valid percent based on *n* = 72.

Survey Question 4: As a university professor, how many total years teaching experience, including this academic year (2003 – 2004), do you have at the university level?

Seventy-two participants responded to Question 4 in the survey’s “Demographic Information” section (*n* = 72; Missing Data: *n* = 3). The range of total years teaching experience at the university level, including the 2003 – 2004 academic year, identified by respondents was a minimum of one and a maximum of 35.50 years (*M* = 12.77, *SD* = 9.02).

Survey Question 5: Is there any additional information, specific to your position, which would be helpful to the researcher in understanding your responses?

Slightly over one-half of the 75 respondents (*n* = 39; 52.00%) added additional information here. Thirty-six respondents (48.00%) left this item blank. Among those who provided information here, the majority of responses were clarifications or more

detailed explanations of current or former positions. The following responses are illustrative of the types of comments found here:

I am a former special education teacher, who taught special education at the K - 6, and 6 - 8 grade levels. I have taught English at the high school level (gr. 9 - 12) for the past four years in a program for students at-risk. I am pursuing a doctorate in Literacy Education and teaching undergraduates, courses in Children's Literature and Teaching Language Arts in the Elementary School.

I teach at a community college (two-year) and encounter students of both freshman and sophomore levels.

I am retired but still teach one class as an adjunct.

I taught Middle School for 13 years previous to my university career.

I have been an academic librarian for 22 years. During those years, I have taught numerous courses in children's literature as needed by the Dept. of Elementary + Early Childhood Ed[ucation].

Findings Related to Research Questions

The primary question addressed in this study was: What are the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level? Five sub-questions comprise that general question. Each sub-question is given and discussed here.

Question 1.1: What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and/or instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and/or reading education courses?

Question 1.2: What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Question 1.4: Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why?

Question 1.5: What are the goals professors hold for their students in the teaching of children's poetry?

Survey Section II: "Perceptions of Poetry"

Research Question 1.1 (What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and reading education courses?) was addressed by the survey's second section, "Perceptions of Poetry." In that section, respondents were asked to consider their general feelings about poetry and their general uses of poetry in their teaching. Using a seven-point scale (7 = *strongly agree*; 1 = *strongly disagree*), participants indicated their level of agreement with fifteen general statements.

During the Focus Group's creation, refinement, and ultimate culling of these items, I noted that these statements were grouped across four major categories: (a) General Perceptions of Poetry, (b) Interpretation and Analysis of Poetry, (c) Background Knowledge, and (d) Instructional Practices.

Categorized by these four (above-mentioned) divisions, Tables 7-10 provide the quantitative findings, via the means, standard deviations, and ranges, for each of the fifteen items in the section "Perceptions of Poetry." A discussion precedes and/or follows each table. (Note: For each table, *ns* may vary slightly due to missing data.)

Items Related to General Perceptions of Poetry

The first two survey items sought to ascertain the respondents' general perceptions of poetry and its importance in their courses. Given the profile of the CLA, an organization dedicated to the promotion and inclusion of children's literature, it is perhaps not surprising that respondents' high mean scores on these first two items (M =

6.72 and 6.28, respectively) indicated that, essentially, members of the CLA who took part in this study indicated that they (a) believed the teaching of children's poetry was important and (b) viewed children's poetry as an essential part of their courses.

Given the statement "I believe the teaching of children's poetry is important" and using a seven-point scale ($M = 6.72$, $SD = 0.56$), 77.30% of respondents ($N = 75$) chose "strongly agree"; 17.30% chose "agree"; and 5.30% selected "somewhat agree." (There were no selections below the anchor *somewhat agree*.) For the second statement, "I view children's poetry as an essential part of my courses" ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 1.10$), 54.70% of respondents ($N = 75$), chose "strongly agree"; 32.00% chose "agree"; and 6.70% selected "somewhat agree." (Less than 7.00% of responses spanned the anchors *disagree* to *neither agree nor disagree*.)

The means, standard deviations, and ranges for these first two items related to participants' general perceptions of poetry are given in Table 7 below.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to General Perceptions of Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I believe the teaching of children’s poetry is important.	75	6.72	0.56	2.00
I view children’s poetry as an essential part of my courses.	75	6.28	1.10	5.00

Note: *N* = 75

It is worthwhile to note that with a mean of 6.72 and a standard deviation of 0.56, the initial item, “I believe the teaching of children’s poetry is important,” which capitalizes on the “importance” of teaching poetry, presents very little variability about the mean. This finding indicates a strong level of agreement shared among members of this sample; it firmly situates the notion of the “importance” of teaching children’s poetry among respondents.

Two respondents, however, offered comments attendant to this item, indicating some question with the word “teaching” as perhaps inappropriate in reference to poetry. One participant wrote, “Teaching poetry? I see it more as an exposure to.” And, another offered, “Experiencing it is important; teaching it may be impossible.”

Items Related to Interpretation and Analysis of Poetry

Three of the fifteen items in this section pertained to respondents' beliefs regarding the interpretation and analysis of poetry. Table 8 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for those three items.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Interpretation and Analysis of Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I believe there is a correct interpretation of any given poem.	75	1.89	1.27	5.00
I believe the analysis of children's poetry is an essential skill for preservice and inservice teachers.	74	3.99	1.76	6.00
I support multiple interpretations of poetry.	75	6.49	0.76	3.00

Note: $N = 75$; *n*s vary due to missing data.

Two items served as polar opposites, regarding “correct” and “multiple” interpretations of poetry. The statement, “I believe there is a correct interpretation of any given poem” revealed respondents' generally strong sense of disagreement ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.27$), with over one-half of the participants (53.30%) selecting strongly disagree, over one-quarter (25.30%) selecting disagree, and slightly less than 10.00% (9.3%) selecting somewhat disagree in response to that item. This item also proved provocative in its written responses. One respondent qualified, “There are wiser,

deeper, broader interpretations--but, “correct” -----?” Another added, “--although some interpretations are better than others.”

The statement “I support multiple interpretations of poetry.” ($M = 6.49$, $SD = 0.76$) indicated the respondents’ high level of agreement with poetry’s capacity for various possible interpretations, with 64.00% of the participants selecting strongly agree, 22.70% selecting agree, and 12.00% selecting somewhat agree in response to that item. In response to these two polar items involving “correct” and “multiple” interpretations of poetry, one respondent strongly asserted:

Language is slippery, but interpretation needs to be based in the poem--some poetry has “multiple interpretations,” but not all--and it never means “whatever I think it means.” I think that refusing to learn and analyze from a technical point of view is an insult to the writer.

Another respondent indicated a high level of agreement with the notion of multiple interpretations of poetry, but noted parenthetically: “as long as there is [a] reasonable connection.”

While the above items captured the polarity of interpretation, it was the item “I believe the analysis of children’s poetry is an essential skill for preservice and inservice teachers” ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.76$) that provoked the most numerous written responses. The distribution of this item was fairly even among response choices, with 48.70% (valid percent, $n = 74$) of the respondents selecting among the upper three agree choices: (strongly agree, agree, and somewhat agree) and 41.90% (valid percent, $n = 74$) selecting among the lower three “disagree” choices (strongly disagree, disagree, and somewhat disagree).

Among the 29 respondents who contributed additional comments to this section “Perceptions of Poetry,” seven respondents (24.14%) further qualified their numerical responses to this specific item with written comments. The word “analysis” tended to be the focus of response; it was circled, underlined, or boxed in the written statement, with the addition of the word “No” or a question mark placed near it. One respondent left the item blank, boxed the word “analysis,” and wrote, “Need definition.”

One respondent wrote, “Analysis? No, just enjoy the language, imagery, word play, etc...primary purpose is not analysis.” Another added, “I am a bit wary of the word analysis--I don’t want to diminish the emotional/aesthetic responses to this art form.”

One respondent tied the notion of analysis to students’ prior negative experiences with poetry:

I’ve discovered that many preservice teachers have had negative experiences with learning poetry. Hence, it is my goal to dispel the myth that poetry has to be difficult. In fact, once they listen to a few new contributions they soon begin to enjoy reading the collections that I bring into the classroom.

Still another respondent wrote, “I don’t think it is critical for student teachers to analyze poetry but they should be able to evaluate poetry in regard to factors such as the use of imagery, conciseness of language, etc.”

Items Related to Background Knowledge of Poetry

Three of the fifteen items in the section “Perceptions of Poetry” related to the respondents’ perceptions of his/her background knowledge of poetry. The items “I have a strong knowledge of children’s poetry” and “My personal experiences (e.g., family, church, etc.) with poetry have fostered a love of poetry” reflected that respondents’

generally somewhat agreed with those statements ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.12$ and $M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.59$, respectively).

Two respondents called attention to the narrow example list given for the item “My personal experiences (e.g., family, church, etc.) with poetry have fostered a love of poetry.” One respondent crossed out the words “family” and “church” in the written statement and wrote above the existing list, “wrong e.g. list.” Another qualified, “Personal experience for me is based more in friendships/community.” In response to the item, “I have a strong knowledge of children’s poetry,” one modest participant noted, “?. A hard one to judge--there are many knowledgeable ‘experts’ out there.”

The frequency distribution for the item “My own college coursework prepared me to teach others about children’s poetry” ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.94$) revealed a fairly even distribution, with respondents tending toward the neutral category on that item. In response to this item, one participant offered, “I don’t think there is a difference in teaching ‘poetry’ and ‘children’s poetry.’”

Table 9 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the three items related to respondents’ background knowledge of poetry.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Background Knowledge of Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I have a strong knowledge of children's poetry.	75	5.47	1.12	5.00
My personal experiences (e.g., family, church, etc.) with poetry have fostered a love of poetry.	75	5.33	1.59	6.00
My own college coursework prepared me to teach others about children's poetry.	75	3.81	1.94	6.00

Note. *N* = 75.

Items Related to Instructional Practices

Consistent with the overall purpose of this study, to ascertain the instructional practices in the teaching of children's poetry, the majority of items in this section were related to the respondents' general impressions of their instructional practices. On a 7-point scale, respondents indicated their level of agreement with these items. Table 10 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the seven items in this section "Perceptions of Poetry," related to respondents' instructional practices.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Instructional Practices

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
My courses provide opportunities for the sharing of children's poetry.	75	6.33	0.78	3.00
Children's poetry is interwoven throughout my courses.	75	5.45	1.45	5.00
Current curricular demands prevent me from teaching poetry in the way that I'd like.	75	2.89	1.90	6.00
I try to include more children's poetry in my courses now than I have in previous semesters.	72	4.24	1.80	6.00
I hope that my students will provide the kinds of poetry activities and assignments in their own classrooms that I have provided in my courses.	74	5.97	1.42	5.00
I encourage students' personal connections to children's poetry across various texts.	72	6.25	0.90	4.00
I include a range of poets in my courses.	75	6.11	1.17	5.00

Note. Note: $N = 75$; *ns* vary due to missing data.

For the majority of items in this section, respondents' mean scores fell between 5.45 and 6.33, indicating that, in general, respondents somewhat agreed and agreed with the following five items: (a) "My courses provide opportunities for the sharing of children's poetry" ($M = 6.33$, $SD = .78$); (b) "Children's poetry is interwoven throughout my courses" ($M = 5.45$, $SD = 1.45$); (c) "I hope that my students will provide the kinds of

poetry activities and assignments in their own classrooms that I have provided in my courses” (M = 5.97, SD = 1.42); (d) “I encourage students’ personal connections to children’s poetry across various texts” (M = 6.25, SD = .90); and (e) “I include a range of poets in my courses” (M = 6.11, SD = 1.17).

Written elaboration on these items related to instructional practices included comments on the item, “I hope that my students will provide the kinds of poetry activities and assignments in their own classrooms that I have provided in my courses.” One respondent explained:

I’ve been fortunate to have been immersed in many exciting opportunities to read and to listen to children’s poetry during my doctoral preparation. Now I invite future teachers to create poetry anthologies, poetry suitcases and to write their own poems. Moreover, I provide the invitation to tap into the language and rhythm that poetry provides, essentially, I try to model that poetry can evoke the human spirit.

And, another wrote:

Students in my classes create posters or booklets around themes. I do ask that they include a variety of types of poems and poets. Students also perform their poems and tell why they chose the poem. We could do more--e.g., readers theatre, poem of the day, and poet studies (I do this in grad class) but for lack of time.

And, another offered, “I actually hope they will include more than I do.”

The item, “I encourage students’ personal connections to children’s poetry across various texts” while obtaining a relatively high mean score and low standard deviation (M = 6.25, SD = .90), did bring about some unnecessary confusion among some participants. Three participants did not respond to this statement at all ($n = 72$). The idea of this statement, to get at the notion of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1986), was perhaps not evident by the statement’s wording. Or, perhaps the notion of intertextual

connections—those “links between current and past texts” (Beach, 1993, p. 38) did not “translate” well across disciplines. With the edition of multiple indications of confusion (a question mark was placed to the left of the statement; the word “texts” was underlined with a question mark above it; the words “unclear statement” were added to the right of the statement), one participant wrote, “I do not understand the second-to-last item.”

For the item, “I include a range of poets in my courses,” one respondent clarified, “I am seeking to strengthen a wide cultural/ethnic representation of children’s poets in my courses.” This spirit was well-shared by other members of the CLA, as evidenced by responses to Open-ended Question 1.

A neutral position was taken to the item “I try to include more children’s poetry in my courses now than I have in previous semesters.” With a mean score of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 1.80, numerical responses to this item reflected a neutral position among respondents, who, on average, neither agreed nor disagreed with that statement. One participant, who strongly disagreed with this item, qualified, “I always have.”

It was the item, “Current curricular demands prevent me from teaching poetry in the way that I’d like” that offered a (surprisingly) low mean of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 1.90. Despite general concerns about the encroachment of mandates upon curriculum, members of the CLA who took part in this investigation generally tended to disagree or somewhat disagree with the notion that curricular demands prohibited them from teaching poetry in the way that they would like. One respondent, who strongly disagreed with this statement, asserted, “In teaching poetry we explore curricular

demands in public schools that can discourage inclusion of poetry and detail strategies for contending with curricular demands and state mandated testing”

Additional Comments

In an open-ended section at the conclusion of this section “Perceptions of Poetry,” respondents were asked if they wished to comment on any of the items in this section. Of the 75 total participants in this study, 29 participants (38.67%) responded with some written elaboration. Forty-six surveys (61.33%) were left blank in this section.

For the sake of clarity and accuracy, participants were asked to specify the item or items in this section on which they were commenting. The comments provided by respondents have been interwoven throughout the discussion here. Seven respondents, however, offered more general observations in this section; their comments are provided here. It is possible that these respondents intended to tie these comments to a particular item. However, if such a connection was not evident, their comments were retained for this section in which no specific item was tagged. I include these comments here, because they continue to add to the richness and complexity of members’ responses. They are too valuable to dismiss.

I usually begin class with a poem of the day (exposure) but rarely go beyond that.

Poetry is largely ignored in elementary classrooms. I try to help pre-service teachers see how they can integrate it throughout the curriculum.

Students bring a book of poetry to class--one they like and choose. They share the book in small groups--reading parts and explaining choice. I feel this offers a wider range of poets and tastes than I can offer them. The students seem to enjoy this assignment.

The major emphasis is on the enjoyment and to downplay over-analysis of poetry.

I focus on children's novels. There are so many good ones I want my students exposed to that they squeeze out time for poetry.

I do not teach the students in Children's Lit. how to teach poetry because it is taught as a literature course, but we can't spend enough time on poetry to work with analysis of meaning or of metric structure in poetry either. I simply have them read some, introduce them to other poets and move on.

Use poetry when appropriate.

Key Findings for Survey Section II: "Perceptions of Poetry"

Key findings are summarized here in bulleted form for Research Question 1.1:

What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and reading education courses?

In general, respondents indicated that for their courses:

- the teaching of poetry was important.
- multiple interpretations of poetry were supported.
- current curricular demands have not impeded their use of poetry.

Survey Section III: "Framing Specific Responses"

In the survey's third section, "Framing Specific Responses," respondents were asked to consider the one course in which they taught or included children's poetry most often. A space was provided for participants to write a specific course title. This cognitive frame, essentially a continuation of the demographic information was intended to focus the respondents' attention to a specific course in order to provide the most

consistent responses possible. Below the line provided for the course title, the statement, “You will refer back to this particular course for the remaining pages of this survey” was offered.

Table 11

Frequencies for Items in Survey Section II: “Framing Specific Responses”

Item	Frequency	%
For Teacher Education, Course Is:		
Required	56	77.80
Elective	8	10.70
Other	8	10.70
Students in Course Are:		
Undergraduate	50	69.40
Graduate	16	22.20
Other	6	8.30

Note. $n = 72$; ns vary slightly due to missing data; % = valid percent, based on $n = 72$.

As with the preceding section, at the conclusion of this section, “Framing Specific Responses,” respondents were given an opportunity to clarify or elaborate on any of the items above. Given the question, “Do you wish to share anything about this course that would be helpful to the researcher?” some participants contributed comments here, generally offered clarifications or elaborations on the course [title] they provided. These three comments are representative of the types of course titles and the types of responses given here:

Introduction to Children's Literature:

General survey of children's literature—intro[duction] to various genres, learn to respond to literature, etc.

Teaching of Literacy:

Focus: How to teach reading in the upper grades.

Children's Literature:

We spend 2 class meetings a quarter on poetry.

Survey Section IV: "In-Class Activities"

Research Question 1.2 (What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?) was addressed by the survey's fourth section, "In-Class Activities." In this section, respondents were asked to consider the last time they taught the course identified in the previous section, "Framing Specific Responses." Given a 7-point scale, anchored from *always* (7) to *never* (1), participants indicated the frequency with which they engaged in eleven activities during actual course meetings throughout the semester. These items were rendered in the past tense to continually cue the respondent to frame his/her responses within a specific framework (i.e., a particular course at a particular time).

Just as categories for the items in the section "Perceptions of Poetry" naturally emerged, it became evident to me that these eleven items "fell" into three categories: (a) Methods of Sharing Poetry, (b) Opportunities for Response to Poetry, and (c) Building Students' Background Knowledge about Children's Poetry.

Categorized by these three (above-mentioned) divisions, Tables 12-15 provide the quantitative findings, via the means, standard deviations, and ranges, for the eleven

items in this section, “In-Class Activities.” A discussion precedes and/or follows each table. (Note: For each table, *ns* may vary slightly due to missing data.)

Items Related to Methods of Sharing Poetry

Items in this category involved ways in which poetry was shared, during class sessions, both orally and silently. All three items in this category (“I read children’s poetry out loud”; “I invited students to participate in the oral reading of children’s poetry”; and “I provided opportunities for students to read children’s poetry silently”), fell between the response categories usually and almost always. There were only two comments specifically related to these first three items. One respondent emphasized his/her commitment to the item “I read children’s poetry out loud” by adding to the right of the statement: “every day.”

Of the 72 responses to the item, “I provided opportunities for students to read children’s poetry silently” ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.56$), one-third (33.3%, valid percent, $n = 72$) of the participants selected always. One respondent questioned: “in [the] classroom?”

This item was specifically included to tap Kutiper’s (1985) often-overlooked (and underexploited) finding regarding adolescents’ preference for reading poetry silently. While Kutiper found that mode of presentation did not seem to influence students’ responses to the “most liked” poems in her sample, she did note that students in grades 7, 8, and 9 tended to prefer reading survey poems that were more serious in tone by themselves rather than listening to them, or listening to and reading them simultaneously. Commenting on these results, Kutiper & Abrahamson (1990) noted,

“time to read a poem silently seems to be a most important instructional consideration when working with this type poetry” (p. 125).

Table 12 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the three items in the section “In-Class Activities” related to respondents’ methods of sharing of poetry during class sessions.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Methods of Sharing Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I read children’s poetry out loud.	72	5.88	1.19	4.00
I invited students to participate in the oral reading of children’s poetry.	72	5.61	1.48	5.00
I provided opportunities for students to read children’s poetry silently.	72	5.28	1.56	6.00

Note. *n* = 72; *ns* vary slightly due to missing data

Items Related to Opportunities for Response to Poetry

The category, Items Related to Opportunities for Response to Poetry, involved the types of opportunities available to students as they responded to poetry during actual course meetings. These two items “I invited students to respond to children’s poetry in written formats (narrative, memoir, poetry)” and “I invited students to respond to children’s poetry in discussion formats” generally fell between the response categories sometimes and usually. It is interesting to note that, at least in terms of in-

class practices, participants indicated that their students responded to poetry more frequently via discussion, rather than written formats.

Again, only two comments were specifically provided for these items. Both comments were offered in response to the item “I invited students to respond to children’s poetry in written formats (narrative, memoir, poetry).” One respondent who selected almost never added, “But it’s a good idea!” Another respondent offered, “Essay questions” as a type of written format utilized in his/her course.

Table 13 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the two items in the section “In-Class Activities” related to opportunities for students’ response to poetry.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Opportunities for Response to Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I invited students to respond to children’s poetry in written formats (narrative, memoir, poetry).	72	4.56	1.75	6.00
I invited students to respond to children’s poetry in discussion formats.	72	5.24	1.46	5.00

Note. *N* = 75; *ns* vary due to missing data.

Items Related to Building Students’ Background Knowledge

Items involving the types of in-class opportunities used for building students’ background knowledge surrounding the topic of children’s poetry are given below in

Table 14. Two of the three items in this category, “I discussed awards that recognize children’s poetry, such as _____.” and “I discussed poetry research...” revealed the lowest mean scores in this section (M = 3.94, SD = 1.97 and M = 3.36, SD = 2.06, respectively), with responses generally falling between seldom and sometimes. Written elaboration on these two items is offered below Table 14.

The item “I discussed biographical information about children’s poets” fell in the scale’s usually range (M = 4.75, SD = 1.47). There were no written comments offered for this item.

Table 14 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the three items in the section “In-Class Activities” related to building students’ background knowledge about children’s poetry.

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Building Students’ Background Knowledge about Children’s Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I discussed biographical information about children’s poets.	72	4.75	1.47	6.00
I discussed awards that recognize children’s poetry, such as _____.	71	3.94	1.97	6.00
I discussed poetry research (e.g., Kutiper & Wilson, 1990; McClure, 1985; Terry, 1974; etc.).	72	3.36	2.06	6.00

Note. *N* = 75; *ns* vary due to missing data.

For the item “I discussed awards that recognize children’s poetry, such as...,” frequency counts for the awards cited in response to this item were conducted. Thirty-five respondents (46.67%, $n = 75$) gave both a numerical choice and a specific award name; 36 respondents (48.00%) offered a numerical choice, but did provide a specific award name. One respondent (1.33%), who completed all other items in this section, neither responded to this item nor provided a specific award in the blank. Three respondents (4.00%) did not complete any of the items in this section. One respondent, who did not participate in this section, wrote of these items, “Do not apply as I am not a classroom teacher.” Any confusion regarding who was eligible to participate in this section was completely unintentional and should be considered a possible limitation of the study.

Among the respondents who elaborated on their numerical choice, three awards were identified. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Award of Excellence in Poetry was identified 29 times; Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award was given ten times, and the Newbery Award was offered twice (both for the 1989 winner *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* [Fleischman, 1988]).

The item “I discussed poetry research (e.g., Kutiper & Wilson, 1990; McClure, 1985; Terry, 1974; etc.)” did bring about some written comments and response. One participant qualified the item with, “in every class-but once a semester,” and one respondent inserted the word “briefly” between “discussed” and “poetry” in the statement. Another respondent offered, “Poetry Research is usually handled in conjunction with reading assignments. Most of the discussion aspects are really focused on the poetry and the poets--not on research.”

Several respondents circled particular researchers named in the example list or wrote in other researchers (e.g., Fisher & Natarella, 1982). “Kutiper & Wilson” was circled once; Terry was circled three times; McClure was circled once (165). “Fisher & Natarella” was added one time.

Items Related to Opportunities for Evaluation and Analysis of Poetry

The final three items in this section involved students’ opportunities for the evaluation and analysis of poetry. Items “I discussed poetic elements...”; “I discussed poetic forms...”; and “I discussed guidelines for the evaluation of children’s poetry” generally fell between sometimes and usually, with means of 5.24 (SD = 1.58), 5.31 (SD = 1.73), and 4.79 (SD = 1.98), respectively. One respondent bracketed these three statements (together with the item “I discussed poetry research...”) and wrote, “In my writing courses we do this.”

Table 15 provides the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the two items in this section related to opportunities for the evaluation and analysis of poetry, during class sessions.

Table 15

Descriptive Statistics for Items Related to Opportunities for Evaluation and Analysis of Poetry

Item	<i>n</i>	M	SD	Range
I discussed poetic elements (e.g., metaphor, simile, meter, rhyme).	72	5.24	1.58	6.00
I discussed poetic forms (e.g., haiku, cinquain, free verse, etc.).	72	5.31	1.73	6.00
I discussed guidelines for the evaluation of children’s poetry.	72	4.79	1.98	6.00

Note. *N* = 75; *ns* vary due to missing data.

For the item “I discussed guidelines for the evaluation of children’s poetry,” two respondents offered these comments:

The guidelines for evaluation are given for choosing quality literature (poetry), not for meaning or metric structure as mentioned before.

I find poetry a very personal form of expression--to quantify it with “guidelines” other than structural elements like the 5-7-5 syllable pattern takes away from the aesthetic response and valuing. People like or dislike poetry for various personal reasons. It is usually the topic, theme, or point of view that produces positive or negative feelings---Yes, I do warn about “sing-songy” delivery--that relates more to oral interpretation and presentation skills, however. I guess I give some guidelines on “how to read a poem...”

Additional Comments

In order to gather the most complete responses possible, respondents were asked if they wished to describe additional in-class activities or provide comments on any of the eleven items. Just as in the section “Perceptions of Poetry,” respondents were asked to specify the item or items on which they were commenting. Every effort was made to provide an accurate representation of respondents’ comments, as mapped to specific items. Those quotations are interspersed throughout this section, in order to elucidate in their own words the numerical data provided by respondents.

As was the case in the section “Perceptions of Poetry,” however, some participants did provide general comments in response to the items in this section, “In-Class Activities.” Additional comments in this section were much more numerous than the previous section, and because of their number, were organized into three general categories. These comments, structured within the categories (a) Creative Activities, (b) Poetry Writing, Reading, and Sharing, and (c) Time Considerations, are given here:

Creative activities.

I always include poetry within our text sets and require they include poetry in the one they create. I also encourage poets to be explored for their author presentations. We also use poetry as a basis for extension strategies and connections to other sign systems, i.e., art, music, drama.

I have a classroom “game” involving alliteration that we do and I encourage students to use in their future classrooms.

Acting out poems, choral reading.

We respond to poems in a variety of ways--art, movement, writing, rap/music, etc.

Encourage listening to poets read their own work.

I generally ask students to read an entire collection by a single author--an experience that students often don't have in the college curriculum except in poetry classes.

Students (in collaborative groups) demonstrate how to integrate technology in teaching a poetic element.

Students read poetry, write poetry, develop activities for sharing poetry with children and/or develop lesson plans.

Shared narrative poetry in novel format. Have often had group read *Out of the Dust* or *Witness* as part of poetry for class. Use inquiry and discussion as class engagement. Have shared parts of George Wash[ington] Carver bio[graphy] in narrative poetry...

Used *Love That Dog* to introduce attitudes and use of free verse.

Browse poetry. Find a fun poem. Jump up--"Hey, listen to this!" and read it aloud.

Poetry Breaks (student led); Choral Reading; Poetic Dialogs.

I require students to collect poems for a reading file.

Poetry writing, reading, and sharing.

We spend time writing poetry in class too.

The students read and discuss the chapter about reading and writing poetry. Then, after I present several books of poetry, they are to write 10 poems of various forms and illustrate them in their own book of poetry.

Students are required to bring poetry to class to share and read aloud. Examples of actual poetry written by my students and young children are shared. It is entirely intrinsic motivation on the part of my students--when they share their original pieces, they are celebrated in class.

Students read poetry on their own as well. Self-selection.

They write poems throughout the quarter. For instance they create an acrostic poem using their first name the first night. Then--they do the same activity when they meet their elementary age partner for the course clinicals.

Poetry writing--graduate students wrote poetry and discussed how to facilitate writing in K-8 classes.

Activities to have students write so they will have personal experiences they can share with their students.

Time considerations.

I focus on poetry about 2-3 3-hour class periods.

Overall, time is a factor--poetry is part of the course content so we devote 2 class periods and parts of others to it. They (my college students) do a poetry share with students in the field experience classroom and collect poems that they would enjoy using in the future (which involves reading many poetry books). I also like to use Gay Fawcett's *Language Arts* article from a few years ago about "Poetry and the Princess." It's great discussion.

Of the 10 sessions included in the course, one session is devoted to poetry. Other genres are highlighted during the other sessions.

The course also must cover reading, writing, drama in 3 credits--not a lot of time for any one aspect. So much is integrated. Drama + poetry, writing + poetry.

One week of classtime is devoted totally to poetry--exposing students to a wide variety of poets and sharing poetry activities they could use in their classrooms. They choose favorite poetry to share with the class

I do these things [the activities listed in this section] during the weeks we devote to poetry and verse, but less do during the remainder of the semester. NOTE: I do Mother Goose and nursery rhymes in Folklore rather than with the poetry genre.

This course covers all [all is double underscored] genres, so poetry gets its due share. There are 2 class meetings focused on poetry, but it often "shows up" during other genre evenings as well.

Key Findings for Survey Section IV: "In-Class Activities"

Key findings are summarized here in bulleted form for Research Question 1.2:

What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?:

In general, respondents indicated that for in-class instructional practices, there was:

- a high frequency of reading poetry out loud.
- slightly more response via discussion than writing.
- *sometimes* discussion of awards, but *seldom* discussion of poetry research.

Survey Section V: "Course Assignments"

Research Question 1.3 (What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?) was addressed by the survey's fifth section, "Course Assignments." In this section, respondents were again asked to consider the last time they taught the course identified in "Framing Specific Responses."

Via a forced-choice table, participants were asked to indicate whether they included any or all of eight listed assignments, by circling the word "Yes" or "No" for each item. In the written directions for this section, participants were advised: "Keep in mind that although you may include children's poetry in your course, you may not assign some (or all) of these choices. Choose "NO" if a particular assignment does not apply to your course."

The eight items in this section collapsed into three categories: (a) Opportunities for Personal Response to Poetry, (b) Opportunities for the Selection and Compilation of Poetry, and (c) Building Students' Background Knowledge about Poetry. Categorized by these divisions, Tables 16-24 provide the quantitative findings, via the frequencies of "Yes" and "No" responses, for each of the eight items in this section. A discussion precedes and/or follows each table.

It should be noted for each table in this section that $n = 73$. Of the 75 respondents, 73 (97.33%) respondents completed this section; two respondents (2.67%) left this entire section blank. Valid percentages, based on $n = 73$, are given in text. It may be interesting to note that of the 73 respondents who completed this section, four respondents (5.33%) answered “Yes” to all eight items; three (4.00%) answered “No” to all eight.

Items Related to Opportunities for Personal Response to Poetry

Table 16 provides the “Yes” and “No” frequencies for items related to opportunities for students’ personal response to poetry in the category, Course Assignments.

Table 16

Frequencies for Items Related to Opportunities for Personal Response to Poetry

Assignment	n	Yes	No
Students responded to poetry in written formats.	73	50	23
Students responded to poetry in formats other than writing (e.g., illustration, photography, music, etc.).	73	37	36

Note. $N = 75$; n s vary due to missing data.

For the item “Students responded to poetry in written formats,” one respondent offered, “but only in regard to how the poetry could be utilized in a classroom setting.”

Another remarked, “One small group assignment is writing a *Hailstones and Halibut Bones*-type color poem.” For the item “Students responded to poetry in formats other than writing,” respondents offered general comments related to their use of choral reading, reader’s theatre, and discussion formats.

There were very few written comments for the two items in this section related to the selection and compilation of poetry. For the item “Students created personal poetry collections,” one respondent remarked, “Creating a personal poetry collection was one option for a project, so not all students did it” and, for the item “Students created thematic collections of poetry,” one respondent jotted, “Poetry anthology.”

Two respondents connected these two items by lines or brackets, or both, indicating the similarity of these items. One respondent bracketed these two items, in addition to the item “Students researched biographical information on poets’ lives and work,” and offered: “combined in poetry anthology assignment.”

Opportunities for the Selection and Compilation of Poetry

Table 17 provides the frequencies of “Yes” and “No” responses for items in the section “Course Assignments” related to opportunities for the selection and compilation of poetry.

Table 17

Frequencies for Items Related to Opportunities for Selection and Compilation of Poetry

Assignment	<i>n</i>	Yes	No
Students created personal poetry collections.	73	30	43
Students created thematic collections of poetry.	73	22	51

Note. $N = 75$; *ns* vary due to missing data.

Items Related to Building Students' Background Knowledge about Poetry

Four of the eight items in this section related to ways in which students' background knowledge about poetry might be built. The greatest number of "Yes" responses came in reference to the item "Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as" Of the 73 participants who responded to this item, 66 (90.41%) answered "Yes," while 7 (9.59%) answered "No." The item with the least number of "Yes" responses was "Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as...." Of the 73 participants who responded to this item, only 14 (19.18%) offered a "Yes" response, while 59 (80.82%) offered a "No." (Further discussion of these two items is forthcoming.) The four items related to building students' background knowledge about poetry and the frequencies of "Yes" and "No" responses are given in Table 18 below.

Table 18

Frequencies for Items Related to Building Students' Background Knowledge of Poetry

Assignment	<i>n</i>	Yes	No
Students researched biographical information on poets' lives and work.	73	23	50
Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as	73	66	7
Students read specific books of poetry, such as ...	73	47	26
Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as	73	14	59

Note. *N* = 75; *ns* vary due to missing data.

For the item “Students researched biographical information on poets’ lives and work,” one participant who responded “No” to this item underlined “researched” in the written statement and noted, “Our text has some bio[graphical] info[rmat]ion on NCTE award winners.” Another (who also responded “No”) added, “although it often happened incidentally.”

For the item “Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as...,” frequency counts for the poets cited in response to this item were conducted. Of the 75 respondents, 44 (58.67%) circled yes and also filled in the blank provided. The majority of these 44 respondents offered a specific poet’s name (or names); some, however, provided a more general comment (e.g., “of their choosing”). Eighteen respondents (24.00%) circled yes, but did not provide additional information in the blank.

Seven respondents (9.33%) circled no. Three respondents (4.00%) circled neither response choice, but did provide names of poets in the blank. These three surveys were counted with “Yes” responses to this item. One respondent circled both choices, adding the comment, “Not because they’re award-winning.” This response was also coded as a “Yes” response. Two respondents (2.67%) did not complete this entire section.

It should be noted that two respondents offered “Bennett” and two offered “Cohn” (spelled also as “Cohen”). It seemed reasonable and likely that “Bennett” referred to Lee Bennett Hopkins and “Cohn” to Myra Cohn Livingston. Therefore, I credited those responses to those two poets. Additionally, the names “Ehlichman” and “Greene” were given one time each by respondents. These two names could not be identified with any degree of certainty. It is *possible* that “Ehlichman” refers to author Amy Ehrlichman, and “Greene” to Eloise “Greenfield.” However, in the absence of additional information (e.g., first names), I did not include either of those names in this listing.

Table 19 provides the descending frequencies for poets named multiple times (two or more times) for item “Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as...” A full listing of the 45 poets named for this item is given in Appendix C.

Table 19

Poets Named Multiple Times for Item: “Students read the work of award-winning poets”

Poet Named	Frequency
Adoff, Arnold	9
Greenfield, Eloise	8
Silverstein, Shel	8
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	7
Livingston, Myra Cohn	7
Merriam, Eve	7
Giovanni, Nikki	6
Nye, Naomi Shihab	6
Hoberman, Mary Ann	5
Kuskin, Karla	5
Bryan, Ashley	4
Fleischman, Paul	4
Grimes, Nikki	4
Hughes, Langston	3
Prelutsky, Jack	3
Ciardi, John	2
cummings, e.e.	2
Dakos, Kali	2
Esbensen, Barbara	2
Florian, Douglas	2
George, Kristine O’Connell	2
Mora, Pat	2
Sandburg, Carl	2
Wong, Janet	2

Note. The full listing of poets named for this item is given in Appendix C.

In addition to the specific names given for this item, some general comments were provided. “NCTE Award Winners” was given five times; comments related to “Students’ Choice” (e.g., “of their choosing”; “choice”) were given twice, and the specific book title, *A Visit to William Blake’s Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers* (Willard, 1981), was offered once.

For the item “Students read specific books of poetry, such as....,” frequency counts were conducted for the titles, poets, and general comments given in response to this statement. It should be qualified (as noted earlier) that of the 75 participants, 73 (97.33%) respondents completed this section and two respondents (2.67%) left this entire section blank. Valid percentages, based on $n = 73$, are given here in text.

Of the 73 respondents for this section, 37 (50.68%) circled yes and also filled in the blank provided. The majority of these 37 respondents offered a specific book title in response to this item (e.g., *Knock at a Star*, *The Random House Book Of Poetry For Children*); some respondents, however, provided a specific poet’s name (e.g., Esbensen, Nye, etc.). Six respondents (8.22%) circled yes, but did not provide additional information in the blank. Four respondents (5.48%) circled neither response choice, but *did* provide names of poets in the blank. (These four surveys were counted as “Yes” responses to this item.)

Twenty-four respondents (32.88%) circled no. These participants did not elaborate on their response. One respondent neither circled a response choice, nor filled in the blank. (Because the directions asked respondents to choose “No” if the item was not applicable, this response was counted as “No.”) One respondent who circled “No” qualified, “I would have responded ‘yes’ to the last two questions if the word ‘specific’ had been omitted.”

Twenty specific titles were offered in response to the item “Students read specific books of poetry, such as....” Table 20 provides the frequencies for book titles given multiple times in response to this item. The full listing of titles given for this item is provided in Appendix D.

Table 20

Titles Named Multiple Times for Item: “Students read specific books of poetry”

Specific Title Named	Frequency
<i>Knock at a Star: A Child’s Introduction to Poetry</i> (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1982)	4
<i>A Jar of Tiny Stars: Poems by NCTE Award-Winning Poets</i> (Cullinan [Ed.], 1996)	3
<i>Out of the Dust</i> (Hesse, 1997)	3
<i>The Random House Book Of Poetry For Children</i> (Prelutsky, [Ed.], 1983)	3
<i>You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You</i> (Ciardi, 1962)	2
<i>Joyful Noise: Poems For Two Voices</i> (Fleischman, 1988)	2
<i>Where the Sidewalk Ends</i> (Silverstein, 1974)	2

Note. *Because many versions of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *A Child’s Garden of Verses* are available, and because a particular version was not specified, no copyright date is given for this title. **The full listing of titles named for this item is given in Appendix D.

Examples of additional titles (offered one time each) for this item include *The 20th Century Children’s Poetry Treasury* (Prelutsky, 1999), *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (Stevenson, Robert Louis), *Carver: A Life in Poems* (Nelson, 2001), and *A Poke In the I: A Collection Of Concrete Poems* (Janeczko [Ed.], 2001). (For a full listing of 20 titles, see Appendix D.)

Rather than specific book titles, some respondents offered the names of specific poets in response to the item “Students read specific books of poetry, such as....”. Of

the 20 poets named, four were named multiple times; 16 poets were named one time each. The full listing of poets named for the item “Students read specific books of poetry, such as...” is provided in Table 21.

Table 21

Poets Named for Item: “Students read specific books of poetry”

Poet Named	Frequency
Esbensen, Barbara	3
Ciardi, John	2
Grimes, Nikki	2
Nye, Naomi Shihab	2
Fisher, Aileen	1
Fleischman, Paul	1
Frost, Robert	1
Giovanni, Nikki	1
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	1
Kennedy*	1
Kuskin, Karla	1
Livingston, Myra Cohn	1
Longfellow, Henry	1
McCord, David	1
Merriam, Eve	1
Moore, Lilian	1
Mora, Pat	1
Myers, Walter Dean	1
Stevenson*	1
Worth, Valerie	1

Note. *The first name of poet is not specified. (It is likely that here “Stevenson” refers to Robert Louis Stevenson, rather than James Stevenson, because it is included in a list with Longfellow and Frost.)

In addition to offering specific titles (see Table 20) or specific poets (see Table 21), some respondents offered general comments. These comments fell into three

categories, relating to (a) Students' Choice, (b) Variety, or (c) From Class Text/Library (2 comments).

Six comments related to Students' Choice included three respondents who wrote, "Their choice," one who wrote, "Student's choice," and another who wrote, "Personal choice." One respondent implied students' choice with the comment, "I did not specify, but they chose from my vast collection of poetry books."

Four comments related to Variety included "Titles from my 1300-book collection of children's literature and from libraries" and "Students read poems from many collections." Related to the category Class Text/Library one respondent, who bracketed this and the final item ("Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as..."), wrote, "Largely the reading was from the chosen text for the class. Poetry was one of the genre areas covered (cross-disciplinary)."

For the item "Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as...," frequency counts were conducted for the titles, authors, and general comments given in response to this statement. It should be qualified (as noted earlier) that of the 75 participants, 73 (97.33%) respondents completed this section and two respondents (2.67%) left this entire section blank. Valid percentages, based on $n = 73$, are given here in text.

Of the 73 respondents for this section, 13 (17.81%) circled yes and also filled in the blank provided. The majority of these 13 respondents offered a specific title of a book related to the craft of poetry (e.g., *For the Good of Earth and Sun* [Heard, 1989]); some respondents provided a specific author's name (e.g., Sloan, Hopkins, etc.); and, some respondents offered some combination of title and author. Two respondents

(2.74%) circled yes, but did not provide additional information. The specific titles offered in response to this item (alphabetized by title) are given in Table 22 below. Each title was given one time each.

Table 22

Titles Named for Item: "Students read specific books about the craft of poetry"

Specific Title Named	Frequency
<i>Awakening the Heart: Exploring Poetry In Elementary and Middle School</i> (Heard, 1998)	1
<i>Children and Books</i> (Sutherland)*	1
<i>For the Good of Earth and Sun: Teaching Poetry</i> (Heard, 1989)	1
<i>Give Them Poetry!: A Guide for Sharing Poetry with Children K-8</i> (Sloan, 2003)	1
<i>Poetspeak</i> (Janeczko, 1983)	1
<i>Pass the Poetry, Please!</i> (Hopkins, 1998)	1
<i>Poemcrazy: Freeing Your Life with Words</i> (Wooldridge, 1996)	1
<i>Poetry Goes to School: From Mother Goose to Shel Silverstein</i> (Barton & Booth, 2004)	1
<i>Poetry Matters: Writing a Poem from the Inside Out</i> (Fletcher, 2002)	1
<i>Three Voices: An Invitation to Poetry Across the Curriculum</i> (Cullinan, et al., 1995)	1
<i>Units of Study for Primary Writing: A Yearlong Curriculum</i> (Calkins, 2003)	1

Note. There are many editions of *Children and Books* (9th edition, 1997), because no edition was specified, no copyright date is given here.

Some respondents, instead of providing specific book titles, provided the names of authors and poets who write about the craft of poetry. Nine names were given (Heard and Sloan were given two times each). The poets/authors named for the item “Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as...” are given alphabetically in Table 23 below.

Table 23

Authors/Poets Named for Item: “Students read specific books about the craft of poetry”

Specific Author Named	Frequency
Arbuthnot, May Hill	1
Heard, Georgia	2
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	1
Huck, Charlotte	1
Janeczko, Paul	1
Livingston, Myra Cohn	1
McClure, Amy	1
Sloan, Glenna	2
Terry, [Ann]*	1

Note. *The first name not given.

Fifty-eight of 73 respondents (79.45%) circled no in response to the item, “Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as...” Of those 58 respondents, 53 respondents did not elaborate on their choice of “No.” Five

respondents did qualify their “No” response with such comments as, “I introduce them to such books—none are required reading, however” and “If I did, *Poetry Matters* (Fletcher) or Georgia Heard.” One respondent stated, “Reading specific books about poetic crafting—just no time for this in a survey course.” Additional comments offered for this item included one comment related to students’ choice and one comment related to use of the class text.

At the conclusion of this section, respondents were again invited to describe additional course assignments or provide comments on any of the eight items given. In this section, most comments served to describe additional assignments. A selected sampling of those comments includes these eight:

Students present a Poetry Genre Festival—including presenting the qualifications of quality poetry, poetry books, various authors, websites of interest and activities to use in their classroom to introduce poetry to students and incorporate it into their curriculum.

I use choral reading in all my classes.

In an integrated Literacy Study on an author (children’s) of choice, poetry was to be included.

Finding a common, good, collection of poetry is difficult because they go out of print quickly. Whatever poetry collection I choose must also meet other curricular goals.

Some of my favorite books of poems, which I present to the students are *Hailstones and Halibut Bones*, *A Jar of Tiny Stars*, and *Sing a Song of Popcorn*.

Much focus on nursery rhymes and [rhythmic] verse.

Each student brings a favorite poem as an opening class engagement—Put all in a packet. Reproduce. Distribute.

Poetry shared by me and other students was largely more current and contemporary, rather than poems from a classical canon.

Key Findings for Survey Section V: “Course Assignments”

Key findings are summarized here in bulleted form for Research Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children’s poetry is included or taught? In general, respondents indicated that for course assignments:

- inclusion of award-winning poets was emphasized.
- most* response was via writing; *some* was in other formats (illustration, photography, music, etc.).
- specific books about the craft of poetry were rarely included.

Survey Section VI: “Open-ended Questions”

Two open-ended questions sought to uncover: (a) the specific poets highlighted in courses of Children’s Literature, English, Language Arts, and Reading Education, and why those particular poets were selected by respondents, and (b) overall, the goals professors and instructors held as their students learned about poetry for children.

Open-ended Question 1

Research Question 1.4 (Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why?) was addressed by the survey’s final section, “Open-ended Questions.”

Of the 75 participants, 68 (90.67)% provided responses for Open-ended Question 1. Six respondents (8.00%) left this item blank; one respondent’s reply was unusable. Among the 68 participants who provided responses, 105 specific poets were named in response to this question; 55 poets were named multiple times (two or more times).

Every effort was made to count and analyze all responses provided by respondents. Unfortunately, some limitations are worth noting. Handwriting issues, inconsistent responses (e.g., a title was given, but the poet credited was not a correct match for that title) became prohibitive factors in making sense of some respondents' replies. As a result, despite great efforts to understand the respondent's intentions (or handwriting!), there were some pieces of unusable data. Even when reasonable decisions could be confidently made, I took minimal liberty in drawing conclusions. (For example, as noted earlier, the name "Cohen," was given here one time [spelled elsewhere as "Cohn"]; it was determined to be "Myra Cohn Livingston," and was counted as such.

Table 24 provides the poets who were named multiple times for Open-ended Question 1. (Fifty-five poets are named here; for the full listing of 105 poets, see Appendix E.)

Table 24

Poets Named Multiple Times for Open-ended Question 1

Poet Named	Frequency
Silverstein, Shel	23
Prelutsky, Jack	19
Greenfield, Eloise	18
Adoff, Arnold	15
Florian, Douglas	14
Grimes, Nikki	12
Livingston, Myra Cohn	12
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	11
Wong, Janet	11
Fleischman, Paul	10
Merriam, Eve	10
Nye, Naomi Shihab	10
George, Kristine O'Connell	9
Hughes, Langston	9
Lewis, J. Patrick	9
Kuskin, Karla	8
McCord, David	8
Janeczko, Paul	6
Stevenson, Robert Louis	6
Yolen, Jane	6
Bryan, Ashley	5
Carroll, Lewis	5
Ciardi, John	5
Giovanni, Nikki	5
Kennedy, X. J.	5
Mora, Pat	5
Fisher, Aileen	4
Frost, Robert	4
Hesse, Karen	4
Hoberman, Mary Ann	4
O'Neill, Mary	4
Bagert, Brod	3
Blake, William	3
Dakos, Kalli	3
Dotlitch, Rebecca	3
Graham, Joan Bransfield	3
Holbrook, Sara	3
Lear, Edward	3

(table continues)

Table 24 (cont.)

Poet Named	Frequency
Myers, Walter Dean	3
Schertle, Alice	3
Soto, Gary	3
Viorst, Judith	3
Asch, Frank	2
Esbensen, Barbara	2
Little, Jean	2
Milne, A. A.	2
Moore, Lilian	2
Mother Goose	2
Rosetti, Christina	2
Sandburg, Carl	2
Seuss, Dr.	2
Thayer, Ernest L	2
Thomas, Joyce Carol	2
Williard, Nancy	2
Worth, Valerie	2

Note. Total poets listed here = 55. The full listing of poets named for this item is given in Appendix E.

Respondents indicated their reasons for selecting particular poets in different ways. Some respondents simply listed poets by name with no elaboration as to why those poets were selected. Some respondents provided specific poets' names and specific reasons for each choice. Some respondents listed several poets, offering a general reason their entire list. Some respondents utilized a combination of these methods.

The reasons individual poets were selected were highly idiosyncratic. The general--or even most prevalent--reasons for respondents' selection of individual poets sometimes seemed to defy categorization. However, the general, overall reasons that poets were selected did follow some general patterns. The process by which I

categorized the general reasons respondents gave for including particular poets is discussed here.

The initial process was conducted manually via index cards. For each poet named, a separate card was created. Under each poet's name, the respondent's survey number was recorded (Note: Survey numbers were not tied to individual respondent's names; see discussion of confidentiality of responses in chapter III). The totals from each card were summed; this yielded 385 total occurrences of poets named. (Keep in mind, that while a total of 105 poets were listed, 50 were listed one time only. The remaining 55 poets were listed multiple times.)

The second phase of analysis involved the mapping of specific reasons individual respondents gave for selecting particular poets. Again, initially this phase was conducted manually via index cards. Each *occurrence* of a poet's name was now listed on separate card, with the respondent's specific reason for selecting that poet written on the back of that card (for a total of 385 individual index cards).

In instances where a respondent provided a list of poets only, without elaborating on that choice, the words "LIST ONLY" were written on the back of that index card. In instances where a respondent provided a specific poet with a specific reason for selecting that poet, that reason was cited on the back of the individual poet's card. In instances where a respondent listed several poets, with one general reasons for their entire list, that general reason was mapped to each and every poet on the list. When respondents utilized a combination of methods, each occurrence of a poet's name was processed individually, with the appropriate action taken for each choice (e.g., one respondent offered a specific reason for selecting Mary O'Neill, by offering the title

Hailstones and Halibut Bones, but the respondent simply listed Hughes, Fleischman, and Ciardi [and others] without elaboration).

In the initial categorization process each response was viewed in comparison to other responses in a particular category. The backs of the file cards were now read, without regard to the particular poet's name; these reasons were initially categorized into 22 broad categories. From these initial broad categories, 11 final categories emerged.

These 11 categories, once loaded into NUD*IST®[†] N4 qualitative analysis software were used to code respondents' individual reasons. The advantage of the computer-assisted analysis was immediately clear. Some comments, which manually were limited to one file card per stack, were now able to be coded in multiple categories, where appropriate. This flexibility allowed for researcher-judgment and better represented the overall complexity of response.

The general reasons respondents selected poets for use in their courses are given by descending frequencies in Table 25 below. It is important to note that although a total of 385 specific reasons were given by respondents for their inclusion of the 105 poets named, because some statements were coded across multiple categories (20 statements were categorized in two places; one statement was categorized in three places). "Frequency" column totals, therefore, do not sum to 385, but rather 407.

[†] QSR International Pty Ltd, www.qsrinternational.com

Table 25

General Reasons Poets Were Named for Open-ended Question 1

Category	Defining Features of Category	Frequency
Variety/Breadth	To provide broad exposure, especially to poets beyond Silverstein and/or Prelutsky	81
List Only	Poets listed without elaboration	74
Excellence of Craft	Employs specific features of poetry (i.e., rhyme, rhythm, literary devices); exemplar of particular type (i.e., narrative, concrete, free verse); represents quality (i.e., innovation, simplicity, excellence); allows focus on language and/or word play	50
Pedagogical Considerations	Suitable for survey course; students are familiar and/or comfortable with poet's work; provides a "good place to start"; affords rich student response and/or discussion; allows thematic and/or content-area connections; provides opportunities for poetry performance and/or choral reading; provides models for writing; provides opportunities for students to focus on words and/or meaning	40
Appeals to Children	Offers "Kid Appeal"; captures adolescent experience	36
Multicultural Focus	Focus on diverse populations/poets of color	33
Humor/Fun/Enjoyment	Provides diversion/delight	27
Particular Resource Cited	Particular title or collection specified*	25

(table continues)

Table 25 (cont.)

Category	Defining Features of Category	Frequency
Award-Winning Poets	NCTE Award of Excellence in Poetry for Children; Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award	18
Appeals to Instructor	Represents instructor's personal preference; represents instructor's appreciation of poet's perspective and/or poet's advocacy of poetry	13
Temporal Considerations	Poetry selected for historical perspective; inclusion of classic poetry; inclusion of new poets	10

Note. *Titles included in category "Particular Resource Cited" given in Table 26.

Variety/breadth.

In the category “Variety/Breadth” 81 statements capitalized on broad exposure to poets and poetry. It is interesting to note in that light, that 43 of those 81 comments--slightly over half (53.09%)--specifically indicated that a broad exposure was a crucial means for going beyond the poetry of Shel Silverstein and/or Jack Prelutsky. A sampling of comments calling for such variety, included these three:

I introduce and read from a variety of poets.

To expose them to a breadth of children’s poets and poetry.

A broad range [of] times and types of poetry to enrich teachers’ backgrounds, consequently (hopefully) children’s appreciation and enjoyment from Dorothy Aldis and William Blake to Christina Rossetti and Laura E. Richards, and newer ones.

Such statements, *in favor* of variety, balanced some strict pronouncements *against* Silverstein and Prelutsky. Comments, such as these, were not uncommon:

I try to stay away and encourage students to choose poets other than Silverstein and Prelutsky, mainly because these poets are overused in the daily classroom. I use a variety of poets.

I try to introduce my students to as many poets as possible. It seems as if the only work they are familiar with is that of Shel Silverstein. I bring in books by many different poets, including... [lists ten poets].

One respondent singled out Shel Silverstein (rather than combining Silverstein and Prelutsky as most did) and commented, “I want the students to know some poets other than Shel Silverstein.”

Other respondents’ merged the two notions of “pro-variety” and “anti-Silverstein/Prelutsky,” illustrated by comments like this one:

I introduce a variety of new poets as well as established and renowned poets. I try to move the students' awareness of poets to others beside Jack Prelutsky and Shel Silverstein. Students grew up with these collections and while the poetry is playful, I want the future teachers to consider other poets such as J Patrick Lewis, Nikki Grimes, Nikki Giovanni, Eloise Greenfield, Paul Janeczko, Naomi Shihab Nye, Myra Cohn Livingston, Karla Kuskin, etc.

Finally, one respondent, perhaps assuming that other CLA members might be hesitant to divulge their own classroom use of Silverstein, wrote: "I am probably the sole member of CLA who will admit to reading him, but I can't resist doing a couple as reader's theater and all having a good laugh."

Excellence of craft.

For the category "Excellence of Craft," some respondents focused on poets who employed specific features of poetry (i.e., rhyme, rhythm, literary devices). Comments regarding this aspect of "excellence" included (but were not limited to):

For Blake: "form"

For George: "interesting use of metaphor"

For Greenfield: "rhythm"

For Nash: "intellect and sound"

For Yolen: "technique and literary devices"

Some respondents explained their selection of poets by citing a poet's exemplary use of a particular type of poetry (i.e., narrative, concrete, free verse). Comments such as these illustrate this notion:

For Smith: "I also like Charles R. Smith's free verse poetry about basketball, since I see this as a way to help children learn to enjoy free verse."

For Graham: "for concrete poetry"

For Longfellow, Thayer, Service: “narrative poets like Longfellow, Thayer, Service, etc.”

Some respondents pointed to poets whose work was characterized by high quality in poetry (i.e., innovation, simplicity, excellence).

For Dotlitch: “elemental style”

For McCord: “He’s extremely clever and has a remarkable background”

For Viorst: “She understands childhood”

For Grimes: “Love her evocation of character”

For Florian: “Because of the humor, simplicity, and illustrations”

For Fleischman: “innovation”

One respondent listed ten poets (Fleischman, Frost, George, Greenfield, Grimes, Johnston, Little, Livingston, McCord, and Wong) and simply wrote, “all excellent examples.”

Other responses classified within the category “Excellence of Craft,” revealed respondents’ inclusion of a poet, based on that poet’s focus on language and/or use of word play. The following comments demonstrate this aspect of “excellence”:

For Florian: “I also include poets like DF [Douglas Florian] because of [his] ability to push the boundaries of language.”

For Grimes: “excellence in characterization, form, language”

For Janeczko: “carefully selected language”

For Florian, Hoberman, Lewis, Schertle, Singer, and James Stevenson: “wonderful imagery, clever word play, wonderful language”

Pedagogical considerations.

For the category “Pedagogical Considerations,” some respondents indicated their reasons for including poets based on the poets’ suitability for use in a survey course. Other reasons represented by this category included students’ familiarity and/or comfort with a particular poet’s work. Comments indicative of this reason typically included reference to the poets Shel Silverstein and/or Jack Prelutsky, such as:

For Prelutsky and Silverstein:

(They usually know Prelutsky and Silverstein, but we include them)

Everyone knows them [Silverstein and Prelutsky]

For Silverstein:

Because that is who the students select, the poet they remember from childhood

Students are familiar with him and his poetry is fun and relates to their experience.

For comfort with poetry and humor

Some respondents identified poets whose work provided a “good place to start” with students.

For Hopkins, Kennedy, O’Neill, Silverstein: “Many undergrads are not familiar with any children’s poets. I find these are a good place to start.”

For Silverstein: “Reading his humorous poems is a good way to interest children in poetry.”

Comments regarding poets whose work affords rich student response and/or discussion included these two:

For Adoff: “I like to see students’ reactions.”

For Hesse: “Because students are unfamiliar with her style; her work is multidimensional and leads to great discussion.”

Some poets were utilized for the thematic and/or content-area connections their work afforded. Among the respondents in this study, the work of Douglas Florian and Jay Patrick Lewis was exclusively represented for these reasons:

For Florian: “content area connection”

For Florian: “natural sciences”

For Florian: “thematic connections”

For Lewis: “for poetry that connects so well with social studies, geography, math, etc.”

Some poets’ work was explored for poetry performance and/or choral reading techniques. Comments regarding these pedagogical tools included:

For Fleischman: “Poems for two voices. Have classroom set. Read in pairs and volunteers perform.”

For Greenfield: “I have a classroom set of *Honey, I Love*—lots of fun to read. Jump rope with a pretend rope while chanting, child vision of everyday activities that touch the spirit.”

For Silverstein: “... I can’t resist doing a couple as reader’s theater and all having a good laugh.”

For Thayer: “Sometimes do a narrative poem, ‘Casey at the Bat’—choral reading; I even pantomime baseball.”

The notion that poetry could serve as a model for writing is demonstrated by the following comments:

For George: “*Toasting Marshmallows*—Great lead into memoir writing. Students love sharing their own camping/family trip stories...”

For Myers: “I share WDM [Walter Dean Myers] (*Brown Angels*, etc.) to encourage similar kinds of poetry writing and, of course, for the diversity factor.”

For Wordsworth: “I also use an excerpt from Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grassmere Journals* to show the close relationship to her brother’s ‘Ode to a Daffodil’—sometimes, if a poet has a writer’s block, writing in prose first can lead them to poetry.”

Finally, poets whose work provided opportunities for students to focus on words and/or meaning are illustrated by these comments:

For Carroll: “‘Jabberwocky’—although a nonsense poem, I demonstrate how to ‘grapple’ with a poem, to understand it, to act it out.”

For Esbensen: “strategies for teaching focus on words.”

Appeals to children.

For the category “Appeals to Children,” respondents focused on poets whose work offered “Kid Appeal” and poets who capture well adolescent experience.

Comments illustrative of this category include:

For Adoff: “Adoff’s collections do a good job of portraying all sorts of adolescent experience.”

For Adoff: Kids like him.”

For Dakos: “Elementary kids love her.”

For Holbrook: “Good for middle school students.”

Several respondents provided somewhat extensive lists of poets and offered such general comments as:

Because children like their poems! (Note: Respondent listed eighteen poets, including Ciardi, Larrick, and Willard)

Because they're wonderful poets who appeal to children (Note: Respondent listed seven poets, including Hughes, Merriam, and Silverstein)

I try to introduce my students to poets that the elementary children I taught in the past have loved... (Note: Respondent listed nine poets including Dakos, Greenfield, Prelutsky)

Multicultural focus.

The inclusion of multicultural poets/poets of color was another prominent theme in responses; comments which exemplify these reasons included:

For Ada, Carlson, Mora, Nye, Swann: "My focus is on multicultural children's literature and critical literary, so I focus on poets who address those issues like..."

For Adoff, Bryan, Giovanni, Greenfield, Grimes, Mora, Myers, Nye: "because the course is concentrated on how we teach children of diverse population. I share a lot of poetry from diverse authors."

For Alarcon, Grimes, Wong: "I highlight poets such as Janet Wong, Nikki Grimes, and Francisco Alarcon, because I think it is important to include literature by people of color."

For Adoff, Greenfield, Grimes, Soto, Wong: "Multicultural poets are emphasized because the issues of diversity and equity are central to my teaching."

For Mora: "She's from this area, and her poetry reflects Southwest border culture and incorporates Spanish words."

For Myers: "I share WDM [Walter Dean Myers] (*Brown Angels*, etc.) to encourage similar kinds of poetry writing and, of course, for the diversity factor."

For Mora and Wong: “to have a multicultural focus”

For Wong: “When I’m discussing stereotypes (her poems about this capture issues of stereotyping).”

Humor/fun/enjoyment.

Fourteen of the 27 comments in the category “Humor/Fun/Enjoyment” were attributed to poets Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky.

For Prelutsky:
“fun/enjoyment”

“fun to read”

For Silverstein:
“for comfort with poetry and humor”

“fun!”

“and, of course, Silverstein: fun”

“reading his humorous poems is a good way to interest children in poetry”

“Students are familiar with him, and his poetry is fun and relates to their experience”

“humor”

For Prelutsky and Silverstein:
“humor and rhythm”

“fun to read”

In addition to Silverstein and Prelutsky, other poets mentioned in reference to their “humor” included Douglas Florian and Jeffrey Moss. “Fun” poets included Brod Bagert, Douglas Florian, and Karla Kuskin. Poets mentioned in the context of “enjoyment” included Aileen Fisher, Langston Hughes, Eve Merriam, and Mary O’Neill.

Particular resource cited.

Twenty-five specific poets were named in reference to a particular resource. Those titles or resources, alphabetized by poet, are provided in Table 26 below. Note: “Casey at the Bat” is specified here as a poem; “course anthology” named for poets Carroll, Hopkins, Milne, and (R. L.) Stevenson.

Table 26

Resources Cited In Connection with Particular Poets for Open-ended Question 1

Title	Frequency
<i>Rainbows, Head Lice, and Pea Green Tile*</i> (Bagert, 1999)	1
<i>Love That Dog</i> (Creech, 2001)	1
<i>Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices</i> (Fleischman, 1988)	2
Dr. Seuss books (Geisel)	1
<i>Toasting Marshmallows: Camping Poems</i> (George, 2001)	1
<i>Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems</i> (George, 2002)	1
<i>Flicker Flash</i> (Graham, 1999)	1
<i>Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems</i> (Greenfield, 1978)	1
<i>Out of the Dust</i> (Hesse, 1997)	3

(table continues)

Table 26 (cont.)

Title	Frequency
<i>A Bad Case of the Giggles</i> (Lansky, 1994)	1
<i>Doodle Dandies</i> (Lewis, 2002)	1
Mother Goose variants	1
<i>Brown Angels: An Album of Pictures and Verse</i> (Myers, 1993)	1
<i>Hailstones and Halibut Bones</i> (reprint ed.) (O'Neil, 1990)	2
"Casey at the Bat" ^{***} (Thayer)	1
<i>Brown Honey in Broomwheat Tea</i> (Thomas, 1993)	1
<i>A Visit to William Blake's Inn</i> [*] (Willard, 1981)	1
<i>Bird Watch: A Book of Poetry</i> (Yolen, 1990)	1
<i>How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight?</i> (Yolen, 2000)	1
Course anthology ^{***} (Unnamed)	4

Award-winning poets.

Use of award-winning poets centered on the NCTE Excellence in Poetry for Children Award and the Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award. One respondent, who listed all NCTE winners by name (with the exception of most-recent winner Mary

Ann Hoberman), commented: "I think it is important for students to be aware of the NCTE Poetry Award and of the poetry that has been recognized by that organization as being outstanding." Kristine O'Connell George was simply listed (1998 recipient of Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award).

Appeals to instructor.

Poets selected because of their appeal to the instructor included those poets who represent instructor's personal preference, the instructor's appreciation of poet's perspective and/or poet's advocacy of poetry. Comments here included:

For Appelt, Dakos, Heard: "I like them all."

For Grimes, Harrison, Hopkins: "I love Nikki Grimes, David Harrison, and Lee Bennett Hopkins, so I also feature them!"

For Hopkins:

"He has done so much to promote poetry for children"

"We always mention LBH [Lee Bennett Hopkins], because of his long-standing commitment too."

For Kuskin: "She views the world on a slant."

For Nye: "...new perspectives"

Temporal considerations.

Some poets were selected for the historical perspective they provided or for their association with new (or “newer”) poets. Poets included because they represented “classic” poetry were also reasons offered here. Comments from respondents for this category, included:

For Carroll and Hoffman: “for historical perspective”

For Sandburg: “historical”

For George, Schertle, Wong: “‘newer’ poets”

For Wong: “A bright new voice”

For Blake: “classics; poems about children”

For Livingston: “classic!”

For Merriam: “classic children’s poetry”

Other category for Open-ended Question 1.

Broad comments in response to Question 1, not tied to a specific poet’s name, were organized in a separate table, labeled Other. These comments were general and broad statements (e.g., “Too many to list” or “Emphasize cultural/ethnic diversity.”) that were not connected to a specific poet. The governing organizing statement I used in my primary pass through the data became, “I’m looking for a specific name—if no poet’s name is specified, then this response belongs in the ‘Other’ category.” The final analysis of these comments yielded eight categories, organized in Table 27 by descending frequencies, defining features, and representative comments from respondents.

Table 27

Other Category for Open-ended Question 1

Category	Frequency	Features of Category	Representative Comment
Wide Variety	12	May vary by semester and/or used to complement selections in other genres	"Too many to list"
NCTE Winners	8	Specifically named as NCTE winners, without elaboration	"all NCTE Winners"
Particular Resource	7	Resource named may be general or specific	"...a haiku poetry book..." <i>Teen Ink</i>
Self-Selected by Students	5	Emphasis on personal choice	"It's a matter of personal exploration and choice—rather than my dictating specific poets to explore"
Pedagogical Considerations	5	Enhances curriculum; to teach poetic elements; explore humorous poetry first; time factor prohibitive	"Any poetry that complements or enhances the curriculum"
Highlighted in Textbook/ Available in Library	3	In course textbook/available in library	"All of those highlighted in the text"
Multicultural Focus	2	Emphasis: diversity	"emphasize cultural/ethnic diversity"
Contemporary Poets	2	Emphasis on current writers	"I tend to focus on current modern writers who write for the K-12 <u>audience</u> "
Picture Books w/ Poetic Text/ Novels in Verse	2	Picture book/novel formats	"So many picture books have texts that are poetry: Brown's <i>Goodnight Moon</i> , for example. We study them too—(Poetry is everywhere. We don't 'ghettoize' it in one week of the course)"

Summary: Open-ended Question 1

Key findings are summarized here in bulleted form for Research Question 1.4:

Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why? In general:

- 105 specific poets were named.
- by frequency, the top three poets named were Silverstein, Prelutsky, and Greenfield.
- by frequency, the top reason for including various poets was “Variety and Breadth” of exposure.

Open-ended Question 2

Research Question 1.5 (What are the goals professors and instructors hold for their students in the teaching of children’s poetry?) was addressed by the survey’s final section, “Open-ended Questions.”

Of the 75 participants, 71 (94.67)% provided responses for Open-ended Question 2. Four respondents left this question blank. Table 28 provides the descending frequencies for the categories determined for this question.

Table 28

Categories for Open-ended Question 2

Category	Features of Category	Frequency
Pedagogical Considerations*	Appreciation of Craft; Sharing/Reading Thematic/Content Area Connections; Writing Model; Aesthetic Stance; Frequent Use; Language Arts; Response/Discussion	63
Enjoyment	Diversion/Delight	38
Variety-Range	Other than Silverstein and Prelutsky; Various Poetry/Poets, Formats/Types	
New Insights	See the world “anew”	19
Appeal to Children	Images/Sound; Like/Respond	14
Overcome Fear and/or Negative Experiences	Reframe earlier unpleasant experiences	10
Interpretation	Avoid Over-analysis; Focus on Meaning	10

Note. Sub-categories for “Pedagogical Considerations” are given in Table 29.

Pedagogical considerations.

Comments regarding “Pedagogical Considerations” dominated responses to Open-ended Question 2. Sub-divisions and representative comments for this category are given below:

The notion of “appreciation” of the craft of poetry is represented by the following comments:

I hope that my students learn to appreciate poetry and experiment with words.

An appreciation of poetry as a valuable genre in children's/young adult literature.

To appreciate its diversity.

That seeing oneself as a reader and writer includes an appreciation of and ability to experiment with poetry, and that this should be attainable for all students.

The appreciation of specific features of poetry (e.g., spare text, figurative language, sound features) was another important theme in respondents' writing.

Several participants expressed appreciation for poetry's ability to communicate much in few words in comments such as:

The love of words and language and how gorgeous it is to distill an idea down to its essence.

The depth of meaning that can be communicated with spare text.

That it is a way to experience deep thoughts and feelings with a minimum of words.

Other participants expressed their hope that students would "experience language that transcends literal and obvious meaning" or "experience the guessing element that figurative language offers." And, while one respondent hoped poetry would allow students to "hear words as sounds in alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia," another cautioned, "That it doesn't always have to rhyme!" (312).

The focus on language and word play was another aspect of appreciation that was addressed. Consider these comments regarding the power of poetry's "manipulated word order":

It enriches vocabulary growth and word choice becomes more discerning.

To use it to promote love of language.

I think poetry provides us with a wonderful way to explore the subtleties of language and life.

I hope also that they offer it as a manner of expression for writing and as a way to introduce language and word play to young children.

The notion of evaluation of poetry was expressed by two respondents. One hoped students would “understand how to evaluate poetry for children,” and another hoped students would be “discerning readers and know how to critique,” poetry, understanding that “there is a difference between verse and poetry.”

The poles of appreciation were well represented by these two respondents. One respondent parenthetically added that in terms of what students might learn about poetry, “(I think they also learn that I love poetry!).” Another remarked, “It’s not enough, I need to do more.”

The sharing of poetry—reading it, listening to it, performing it—was another prominent sub-theme among respondents. These comments represent a broader notion of the importance of sharing poetry with students:

That is should be read aloud, enthusiastically and frequently.

Poems must be heard, savored, shared, celebrated.

Choral read with kids, option for silent reading.

That poetry needs to be heard—not just assigned for silent reading.

The genre supports the reading process.

To read it out loud—every day and to love it

I believe poetry should be read aloud and enjoyed for its sound and sensibility and humor.” I do emphasize light verse because many of my students will teach early elementary students and will need to foster a joy of language.

Poetry’s special appeal to English Language Learners (ELL) and/or struggling readers was emphasized by these respondents’ comments:

That poetry has special potential for ESL kids and struggling readers.

That, because of smaller number of words than much text, it can seem less overwhelming to many children who are not yet good readers.

The ease of use for struggling readers.

The notion that poetry should be interspersed throughout the curriculum—and *not* relegated to specialized units was another important sub-theme. Overlapping with the category of “Frequent Use,” a call to include poetry “in every theme throughout the year—not just in a poetry unit,” became something of a mantra among respondents. These responses exemplify the ideal of using poetry to make thematic and/or content area connections:

That it can be fun and should be used in the classroom all of the time—not just specific unit—but meshed into all subject areas during the entire day, week, month, semester, etc.

I hope they will obtain an understanding of how they can integrate poetry in other content areas. I also want them to understand how poetry can be used as a motivator for young children.

Integrate poetry throughout the day/many contexts—these ideas [apply] to all ages.

The joy of reading to share with children; the ability to integrate language arts in other curriculum areas.

To integrate it into the curriculum and as part of multi genre work.

Utilizing poetry as a model for exemplary writing, and especially, as “a springboard for their own poetry writing,” appeared in several respondents’ answers to Question 2: Overall, what do you hope your students will learn about poetry for children?:

Great models for writing poetry.

We use poetry as an example of the craft of writing and the ways words are put together.

I hope that my students learn to appreciate poetry and experiment with words. In writing poetry, they create images, evoke feelings, and play with words. Most of all, I want them to know that reading poetry can be fun.

Overall I want them to see poetry as a pathway that makes reading and writing (really literacy) more complete for many people. It opens new ways of making meaning.

Writing and reading poetry can give students confidence in their facility with language.

Restraint with poetry writing, however, was expressed by several respondents.

One respondent cautioned, "Writing poetry should always be a choice and not a required assignment." Another respondent shared this perspective:

...I teach that we can't ask children to write poetry if they haven't heard poetry. One of my big pet peeves is that teachers specifically have students write haikus but never read them to children or discuss the tradition of Japanese writers. Haikus are poems of precision of word and wisdom not just counting syllables...

Another respondent echoes this sentiment by saying, "That you can kill the joy of poetry by picking it apart, by making children write specific forms, etc." But, nowhere was the message more clearly stated than this one, rendered in all capital letters:

READ LOTS OF POETRY PRIOR TO EXPECTING KIDS TO WRITE POETRY.

Exploring the aesthetic possibilities poetry affords was well documented by respondents. One participant noted that poetry "presents a needed aesthetic stance/perspective on what is often considered concrete or scientific." In its unique way, wrote another, poetry "has the ability to speak to our emotions and senses."

Consider these further examples of the aesthetic benefits of poetry:

It can speak to the heart.

It can make kids laugh and cry—and think.

It communicates information and feelings in a unique, highly personal way.

It enables us to express feelings in ways no other literary form can.

Response is personal.

The plea “not to do a poetry unit” emphasized respondents’ strong feelings that poetry be utilized with frequency. Daily exploration of poetry was promoted by respondents and is exemplified by comments such as:

That they must offer children poetry daily.

That poetry must be heard on a daily basis.

To use it every day.

The power of multiple readings of poetry was emphasized by these respondent’s comment, “revisiting poems over time has many benefits” and this one, “I encourage them to read a poem more than one time throughout the day.

Beyond its characteristics of appreciation of language, its ability to tap into the affective, as well as cognitive domains, some respondents stated poetry’s ability specifically to impact the language arts. These comments promote the use of poetry for reasons specific to language arts learning:

That poetry helps with phonics, spelling, fluency and imagination...

Useful tool for teaching language, vocabulary, reading, strong musical connections with rhythm and beat.

It enriches vocabulary growth and word choice becomes more discerning.

To harness its potential to improve fluency, vocabulary, expression.

Two respondents discussed their goals that students “become familiar with a variety of poetic formats, response ideas, techniques for performing and writing poetry” and “to use poetry in discussion groups.” Table 29 summarizes the sub-categories found in the broader category “Pedagogical Considerations.”

Table 29

Sub-Categories for Open-ended Question 2: Pedagogical Considerations

Category	Frequency
General Appreciation of Craft	6
Features of Poetry	23
Language/Word Play	32
Evaluation	2
Sharing/Reading	28
With Special Populations:	
ELL	1
Struggling	3
Thematic/Content Area Connections	16
Writing Model	16
Aesthetic Stance	14
Frequent Use	9
Language Arts	4
Response/Discussion	2

Note. Table 28 gives the category “Pedagogical Considerations” as summing to 63. In this table, some sub-categories were coded multiple times, therefore, the total frequency count exceeds 63.

Enjoyment.

The second major category of responses to Open-ended Question #2 was “Enjoyment.” Respondents’ comments included such statements as:

It is to be enjoyable first.

I hope they will learn to love it and spread that love to others.

To like it! Maybe even love it.

To love it, read it, not be afraid of it.

The fun and challenge of rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.

At one end of the “enjoyment spectrum,” one respondent offered: “Have fun with it. All I can is give a ‘taste’ and hope it encourages them to give poetry a try,” while another recognized educators’ sense of responsibility in promoting a love of poetry “Teachers in the elementary schools have a responsibility to nurture a love of poetry.”

One respondent concluded:

If they are just infused with a love for it like any fine art, they will always have that joy in celebrating poetry (like the boy in Sharon Creech’s recent book Love That Dog who writes such wonderful poetry at the end of the book without even realizing it.)

Variety and range of poets and poetry.

Just as responses to Open-ended Question 1 revealed respondents’ desire to include a variety and range of poets and poetry, responses to Open-ended Question 2, revealed similar categorization. While not as dominant a category in Open-ended Question 2 as Open-ended Question 1, Variety and Range was an important goal that professors and instructors held for their students. Similarly (although not nearly to the degree represented in Open-ended Question 1) some respondents commented “That there is more to children’s poetry than Shel Silverstein!”. One respondent, however, stated well, “I hope they’ll go beyond the Shel Silverstein and Jack Preleutsky kinds of poems--although I taught children for 20 years and know those poets are favorites.”

In accessing a range of formats and types of poetry, respondents offered several reasons for promoting the use of what one respondent identified as a “wide variety of forms.” Illustrative comments included:

Become familiar with a variety of poetic formats...

Various forms fascinate many young people.

I do emphasize light verse because many of my students will teach early elementary students and will need to foster a joy of language.

That it is an alternative format that can engage young readers, or set their writing free, given the opportunity to explore or engage poetry.

Additionally, several participants hoped their students would “become familiar with a variety of current poets for children’s/YA poetry” recognizing “the range available and the enormous variety of options for the use of poetry when sharing literature with a child at home, with family, or in the classroom.” Other respondents offered reasons ranging from pure enjoyment of poetry to learning biographical information about poets:

To discover the enjoyment of poetry and to savor it by immersing themselves in many different poets.

I [want] them to have a knowledge of poetic elements, have an introduction to many poems, and an introduction to the life stories of a number of poets. I also require the oral reading of poetry.

Poetry’s ability to provide new insights.

Poetry’s ability to “help children see ordinary things in new ways” was emphasized by a number of respondents, who noted poetry’s unique capacity to “evoke imagination and an insightful spirit.” The notion that, “Poetry is part of our lives—all around us.” calls to the broader, less tangible goals professors and instructors gave for accessing poetry in their courses. Such broad, often nebulous goals in response to the question, “Overall, what do you hope your students will learn about poetry for children?” are well represented by these comments:

Overall I want them to see poetry as a pathway that makes reading and writing (really literacy) more complete for many people. It opens new ways of making meaning.

Poetry touches lives.

To see its links to the world.

I think poetry provides us with a wonderful way to explore the subtleties of language and life.

Help children gain insight about themselves and others.

Deal with truth.

Feel and experience what others have felt and experience.

Generally speaking, I want them to know and understand what Frost meant when he said, "Poetry is a momentary stay against confusion."

Appeal to children.

One goal that professors and instructors had for their students was a clear understanding "That children love rhyme and rhythm of language." Another participant wrote, "The beauty of language, the way children are drawn to rhythm and rhyme when learning to read—grows as they do." However, while the appeal of rhyme and rhythm is evident, one participant qualified that such characteristics, while appealing to children need not be a given. Writes one respondent, "It doesn't have to rhyme or be 'sing-songy.' Children can like serious poetry too."

While one respondent acknowledges, "That poetry appeals to many kids," another notes "That it has a very special appeal to them (children) and that, somewhere along the way, that appeal is lost or subdued—and it shouldn't be!" To remedy such loss, one respondent concludes, "That it can be loved by and important in the lives of children...if [double-underscored] teachers love it and present it to their students!"

Overcome fear/negative experiences.

In considering what they hoped their students would learn about poetry for children, several participants emphasized their wish that students might “overcome any negative perceptions of poetry from previous educational experiences. ”In order “To not be afraid to share it with children,” several respondents offered their observations regarding university students’ negative experiences with and/or fear of poetry. Their observations are reflected in these comments:

Many of my students seem to have a negative view of poetry in general. My goal is to help them see that poetry is enjoyable and has value in the elementary classroom. I try to assure them that poems don’t necessarily have a hidden agenda and rhyming isn’t a must. I want them to be enthusiastic about poetry.

I want my students to be able to pass on to their students a pure love and enjoyment of poetry. Not—oh no, we have to do a poetry unit now. Most children dread having to read poetry unless it is funny like Silverstein or Prelutsky. If they are just infused with a love for it like any fine art, they will always have that joy in celebrating poetry (like the boy in Sharon Creech’s recent book Love That Dog who writes such wonderful poetry at the end of the book without even realizing it.)

I hope that they move beyond their negative feeling about poetry usually developed in high school, in order to introduce their students to joy of poetry.

Many of them learn that poetry is not what their High School English teachers lead them to believe...

That it isn’t as daunting as they might believe.

I hope students will not be afraid of teaching poetry if they’ve had experiences in [high school] or college [literature] classes that turns them off to poetry.

To love it, read it, not be afraid of it.

To start to enjoy poetry again.

Interpretation.

Often contributing to negative views of poetry are students' underlying beliefs that poetry is a mysterious, threatening genre, where only one interpretation is possible.

Respondents offered their hopes for students, as reflected by the following comments:

I hope students learn that poetry can be an enjoyable rather than an intimidating genre. Much of what I try to do is to take the mystique out of analysis and interpretation.

Present it for the children's enjoyment and don't dwell on analysis.

To focus on enjoyment rather than analysis.

To enjoy it and to promote children's enjoyment of it—To be confident in their ability to interpret poetry.

That it is "accessible" and enjoyable.

Not to analyze, to enjoy it, to listen to it; to read it out loud—every day and to love it.

One respondent, however, qualified that a deeper look at a poem need not impair or destroy the process of interpretation, rather, "That understanding poetic techniques need not ruin, poetry—it can open up its meaning." Indeed, writes another, it is worthy to note "That children like poetry if it is carefully selected and not analyzed too much...." Another respondent offers this, "As someone once said, teachers need to know how to analyze a poem to life, not to Death."

Other comments regarding over-analysis and concentration on a single, correct interpretation, included:

Don't kill it with too much interpretation.

I hope they learn that it is non-threatening—that it is not like high school where there is only one right interpretation...

I try to assure them that poems don't necessarily have a hidden agenda...and rhyming isn't a must. I want them to be enthusiastic about poetry...

No single “meaning” to be quizzed.”

General Conclusions

The general conclusions drawn from responses to Open-ended Question 2: “Overall, what do you hope your students will learn about poetry for children?” include these seven: (a) poetry holds great potential as a pedagogical tool: in the language arts (appreciation of craft; sharing; writing; response/discussion formats; affording an aesthetic stance); across content areas and themes, (b) poetry should be accessed frequently (preferably daily)—not reserved for specialized units; (c) poetry is enjoyable and should be enjoyed; (d) there exists a wide variety and range of poets and poetry for children (other than Silverstein and Prelutsky) in many formats and types; (e) poetry offers new insights (f) poetry naturally appeals to children: Children like and respond to poetry; children relish the qualities of rhythm, sound, and imagery; (g) children’s poetry affords opportunities and to overcome previous negative experiences with poetry and demystify the process of interpretation.

Summary: Open-ended Question 2

Key findings are summarized here in bulleted form for Research Question 1.5: What are the goals professors and instructors held for their students in the teaching of children’s poetry? In general, respondents emphasized:

- use of poetry.
- enjoyment of poetry.
- variety and range of poets, formats, and types.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This project sought to provide a snapshot of instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level. The Poetry Use Survey, expressly designed for this study, was created based on the input of a five-member expert panel of university professors. The subsequent researcher-developed survey attempted to uncover current instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at colleges and universities across the United States. This exploration was limited to the practices of the university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) at the time of this study.

This investigation attempted to ascertain the general perceptions of poetry held by these university professors and adjunct instructors, their in-class instructional practices relevant to the teaching of children's poetry, and the types of poetry assignments given, primarily in courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. Additionally, this study revealed both the poets typically highlighted and the goals held by these professors and instructors for the students in such courses.

To accomplish the goals of this study, a mixed-methods design methods design (cf. Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) was employed. Quantitative data analysis, using SPSS 10.0 for Macintosh (Release 10.0.7a; 2000), was conducted for Research Questions 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, and yielded descriptive statistical data (means, standard

deviations, ranges, percentages). Qualitative data analysis for all five Research Questions included manual (index cards, color-coding) and computer assisted (NUD*IST N4) techniques. Qualitative data was gathered via respondents': (a) written elaborations on prespecified survey items, and (b) self-generated responses for two open-ended question.

The primary research question in this study was: What are the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level? Five sub-questions comprised that general question. A summary of findings, related to these five sub-questions, is given here.

Summary of Findings

Question 1.1: What are the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors and instructors who teach or include children's poetry in their children's literature, English, language arts, and/or reading education courses?

Research Question 1.1 was addressed by the survey's second section, "Perceptions of Poetry." In that section, respondents were asked to consider their general feelings about poetry and their general uses of poetry in their teaching. Using a seven-point scale (7 = *strongly agree*; 1 = *strongly disagree*), participants indicated their level of agreement with fifteen general statements.

Grouped across four major categories (General Perceptions of Poetry, Interpretation and Analysis of Poetry, Background Knowledge, and Instructional Practices), these fifteen statements, revealed respondents' generally high mean scores (average of mean scores = 5.15; ranging from 1.89 to 6.72) indicated that members of the CLA who took part in this study generally indicated that: (a) they believed the teaching of children's poetry was important, (b) children's poetry was an essential part

of their courses, and (c) multiple interpretations of poetry were supported in their courses.

The first item in this section, “I believe the teaching of children’s poetry is important,” with a mean of 6.72, and a standard deviation of 0.56, exemplifies well the general tone of participants’ feelings about poetry. This initial item (categorized under General Perceptions of Poetry) capitalizes on the “importance” of teaching poetry and indicates the strong levels of agreement shared among members of this sample.

It was the three items related to the category Interpretation and Analysis of Poetry that brought forth the section’s most interesting findings. Two items “I believe there is a correct interpretation of any given poem” ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.27$) and “I support multiple interpretations of poetry.” ($M = 6.49$, $SD = 0.76$) indicated the respondents’ strong support for various possible interpretations of poetry. But, while these items captured the polarity of interpretation, it was the item “I believe the analysis of children’s poetry is an essential skill for preservice and inservice teachers” ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.76$) that provoked the most numerous written responses. In the written elaboration to this item, the word “analysis” tended to be the focus of response and discussion.

Another item of note, “Current curricular demands prevent me from teaching poetry in the way that I’d like” offered a surprisingly low mean (at least to me!) of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 1.45. Despite general concerns about the encroachment of mandates upon curriculum (cf. Tiedt, Tiedt, & Tiedt, 2001; McClure, 1985), members of the CLA who took part in this investigation generally tended to disagree or somewhat disagree with the notion that curricular demands prohibited them from teaching poetry in the way that they would like. One respondent, who strongly disagreed with this

statement, asserted, “In teaching poetry we explore curricular demands in public schools that can discourage inclusion of poetry and detail strategies for contending with curricular demands and state mandated testing.”

In an open-ended section at the conclusion of this section regarding general perceptions of poetry, respondents were asked if they wished to comment on any of the items in this section. Of the 75 total participants in this study, 29 participants (38.67%) responded with some written elaboration. Seven respondents offered general observations in this section—comments that were not tied to the specific items in the section “Perceptions of Poetry.” Two such general comments exemplify well the range of responses offered in this section:

Students bring a book of poetry to class--one they like and choose. They share the book in small groups--reading parts and explaining choice. I feel this offers a wider range of poets and tastes than I can offer them. The students seem to enjoy this assignment.

I do not teach the students in Children’s Lit[erature] how to teach poetry because it is taught as a literature course, but we can’t spend enough time on poetry to work with analysis of meaning or of metric structure in poetry either. I simply have them read some, introduce them to other poets and move on.

Question 1.2: What are the in-class instructional practices employed in a given course where children’s poetry is included or taught?

Research Question 1.2 was addressed by the section “In-Class Activities.” In that section, respondents were asked to consider the last time they taught the course identified on the survey’s preceding page (“Framing Specific Responses”). Given a seven-point scale (7 = *always*; 1 = *never*), participants indicated the frequency with which they engaged in eleven activities during actual course meetings throughout the semester.

Grouped across three categories (Methods of Sharing Poetry; Opportunities for Response to Poetry; Building Students' Background Knowledge about Children's Poetry), these eleven statements revealed frequencies with which respondents engaged in the named activities as ranging from seldom to almost always. The highest mean score, 5.88 (SD = 1.19) was given for the item "I read children's poetry out loud," (within the category "Methods of Sharing Poetry"). The lowest mean score, 3.36 (SD = 2.06) was given for item "I discussed poetry research..." (within the category, Building Students' Background Knowledge about Children's Poetry). Means and standard deviations for items related to the category, Evaluation and Analysis of Poetry revealed that, in general, respondents usually discussed poetic elements, forms, and guidelines for the evaluation of children's poetry.

The additional examples of in-class activities brought forward by respondents were engaging and delightful, illustrated by this comment:

Browse poetry. Find a fun poem. Jump up--"Hey, listen to this!" and read it aloud.

Question 1.3: What are the poetry assignments included in a given course where children's poetry is included or taught?

Research Question 1.3 was addressed by the section "Course Assignments." In this section, survey respondents were again asked to consider the last time they taught the course identified in section two, Framing Specific Responses. Via a forced-choice table, participants indicated whether they included the eight prespecified assignments by circling the word "Yes" or "No" in response to each item. An open-ended section at the conclusion of this section allowed for additional comments and elaboration.

Items in this section collapsed across three categories: (a) Opportunities for Personal Response to Poetry, (b) Opportunities for the Selection and Compilation of Poetry, and (c) Building Students' Background Knowledge about Poetry.

Of note, 66 participants, over 90% ($n = 73$, valid percent: 90.40), responded, "Yes" to the item "Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as..." Among the 45 award-winning poets named in response to this item, Arnold Adoff was named most frequently. Poets Eloise Greenfield, Shel Silverstein, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Myra Cohn Livingston, Eve Merriam, Nikki Giovanni, Naomi Shihab Nye, Mary Ann Hoberman, and Karla Kuskin were named five or more times in response to this item.

In contrast to the overwhelming inclusion of award-winning poets, however, for the item "Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as...", only 19.20% ($n = 73$; valid percent) of participants responded "Yes." For this item, eleven specific book titles were named once, including *For the Good of Earth and Sun* and *From the Heart* (Georgia Heard), *Pass the Poetry, Please!* (Lee Bennett Hopkins), and *Three Voices* (Cullinan, et al.). Over three-quarters of the participants responded "No" to this item ($n = 73$; valid percent = 80.80%). In response to this item, one respondent stated, "Reading specific books about poetic crafting—just no time for this in a survey course."

Question 1.4: Which poets are typically highlighted in a given course, and why?

Research Question 1.4 was addressed by Open-ended Question 1. In the final section of the survey, participants were given an opportunity to respond to two open-ended questions. Using both manual and computer-assisted techniques, frequency

counts were conducted of specific poets named, and the general and specific reasons such poets were selected were systematically coded and catalogued.

Of the 75 participants, 68 (90.67)% provided responses for Open-ended Question 1: “Which poets do you highlight in your course, and why?” Six respondents (8.00%) left this item blank; one respondent’s reply was unusable. Among the 68 participants who provided responses, 105 specific poets were named in response to this question; 55 poets were named multiple times (two or more times).

In response to this question, 105 specific names of poets were provided. Poets Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky, Eloise Greenfield, Arnold Adoff, Douglas Florian, Nikki Grimes, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Myra Cohn Livingston, Janet Wong, Paul Fleischman, Eve Merriam, Naomi Shihab Nye were given ten or more times in response to this question.

The reasons individual poets were selected were highly idiosyncratic. The general--or even most prevalent--reason that professors and instructors selected individual poets seemed to defy categorization. However, the general reasons that poets were selected, overall, tended to follow certain patterns.

The general reasons professors and instructors selected poets for use in their courses included, by descending frequency, these ten categories: (a) for variety and breadth, (b) as exemplars of excellence of craft, (c) to provide a multicultural focus, (d) to highlight award-winning poets, (e) for their appeal to children, (f) for their ability to provide humor, fun, and enjoyment, (g) for pedagogical considerations (e.g., as models for writing, for poetry performance and/or choral reading, etc.), (h) for use of a particular resource, (i) for their personal appeal to the instructor, (j) temporal considerations (i.e.,

poetry selected for historical perspective, inclusion of classic and/or “newer” poetry and poets). Slightly less than 20.00% of the poets given (19.29%) were listed without elaboration.

In further analyzing the written responses to Question 1, any broad comments, not tied to a specific poet’s name, were organized in a separate table, labeled Other. These comments were general and broad statements (e.g., “Too many to list” or “Emphasize cultural/ethnic diversity.”) that were not connected to a specific poet.

The eight Other categories, given here by descending frequency, included: (a) Poets selected to represent a “Wide Variety,” (b) use of a particular resource (which may have more than one author (e.g., *Teen Ink*, *Knock at a Star*), (c) Poetry that is self-selected by students, (d) for general pedagogical considerations (e.g., poetry that “enhances curriculum,” poetry “available in library,” (e) poetry highlighted in course textbook, (f) multicultural poetry, (g) poetry by contemporary poets, (h) picture books w/ poetic text and novels in verse.

The notion of broad exposure to poetry may seem somewhat contradictory, given the fact that Silverstein and Prelutsky *topped* the frequencies of poets named, with 23 and 19 citations respectively. While respondents proposed and endeavored to expand their students’ poetic repertoire beyond these two contemporary poets, a great many comments justified the inclusion and use of their humorous, light verse within their course.

Multiple “anti-Silverstein/Prelutsky” comments, such as:

I try to stay away and encourage students to choose poets other than Silverstein and Prelutsky, mainly because these poets are overused in the daily classroom. I use a variety of poets... (Note: Respondent listed 20 poets).

I don't highlight a specific poet. I try to get teachers to move away from Silverstein and Prelutsky to find new poets and other kinds of poetry.

were, I think, well balanced by one respondent's (reluctant?) observation that:

I am probably the sole member of CLA who will admit to reading him, but I can't resist doing a couple as reader's theater and all having a good laugh.

Question 1.5: What are the goals professors and instructors hold for their students in the teaching of children's poetry?

Research Question 1.5 was addressed by Open-ended Question 2. Using both manual and computer-assisted techniques, the general goals professors and instructors held for their students in the teaching of children's poetry were systematically coded and catalogued.

Of the 75 participants, 71 (94.67)% provided responses for Open-ended Question 2: "What are the goals professors and instructors hold for their students in the teaching of children's poetry?" Four respondents (5.33%) left this item blank.

The representative comments below illustrate the range and complexity of responses to the survey's Open-ended Question 2: "Overall, what do you hope your students will learn about poetry for children?"

I want them to know that poetry 'speaks' to all children. I want them to know how enjoyable poetry can be. I want them to be enthusiastic in using poetry.

Poetry can evoke imagination and an insightful spirit. I want my students to understand how to evaluate poetry for children, be familiar with various poets, become more cognizant about integrating poetry in everyday teaching to promote a love of language, models for writing and inspiration for living.

That poetry can help children see ordinary things in new ways; that poetry exposes children to powerful, carefully chosen language; that poetry enables us to express feelings in ways no other literary form can; that they must offer children poetry daily.

I hope they'll go beyond the Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky kinds of poems—although I taught children for 20 years and know those poets are favorites.

I believe poetry should be read aloud and enjoyed for its sound and sensibility and humor. I do emphasize light verse because many of my students will teach early elementary students and will need to foster a joy of language.

The love of words and language and how gorgeous it is to distill an idea down to its essence.

Have fun with it. All I can do is give a “taste” and hope it encourages them to give poetry a try.

The general conclusions drawn from responses to Open-ended Question 2:

“Overall, what do you hope your students will learn about poetry for children?” include these seven: (a) poetry holds great potential as a pedagogical tool: in the language arts (appreciation of craft; sharing; writing; response/discussion formats; affording an aesthetic stance); across content areas and themes, (b) poetry should be accessed frequently (preferably daily)—not reserved for specialized units; (c) poetry is enjoyable and should be enjoyed; (d) there exists a wide variety and range of poets and poetry for children (other than Silverstein and Prelutsky) in many formats and types; (e) poetry offers new insights (f) poetry naturally appeals to children: Children like and respond to poetry; children relish the qualities of rhythm, sound, and imagery; (g) children's poetry affords opportunities and to overcome previous negative experiences with poetry and demystify the process of interpretation.

Summary of Major Findings

Based on the data accumulated in this study, the following major findings are offered here:

1. Given the statement “I believe the teaching of children’s poetry is important,” 100% of respondents ($N = 75$) selected across the upper three agree categories (strongly agree, agree, and somewhat agree).
2. Respondents generally disagreed with the statement, “I believe there is a correct interpretation of any given poem” and generally agreed with the statement “I support multiple interpretations of poetry.”
3. While respondents tended to neither agree nor disagree with the item, “I believe the analysis of children’s poetry is an essential skill for preservice and inservice teachers,” this statement garnered attention, with the word “analysis” tending to be the focus of response.
4. Despite a general sense of concern among educators regarding the encroachment of local and state mandates upon curriculum, members of the CLA who took part in this investigation generally tended to somewhat disagree with the item, “Current curricular demands prevent me from teaching poetry in the way that I’d like.”
5. Among the items listed in the section “In-Class Activities,” respondents indicated that they almost always read (or invited students to read) children’s poetry out loud. They usually: (a) provided opportunities for students to read children’s poetry silently, (b) to respond to children’s poetry in written and discussion formats, (c) discussed biographical information about children’s

- poets, (d) discussed guidelines for the evaluation of children's poetry, (e) discussed poetic elements and forms. However, while respondents sometimes discussed awards that recognize children's poetry, they seldom discussed poetry research.
6. Among the items listed in the section "Course Assignments," approximately 90.00% of respondents indicated that students read the work of award-winning poets. Poets Arnold Adoff, Eloise Greenfield, Shel Silverstein, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Myra Cohn Livingston, Eve Merriam, Nikki Giovanni, Naomi Shihab Nye, Mary Ann Hoberman, Karla Kuskin were named five or more times in response to this item.
 7. While nearly 65.00% of respondents indicated that their students read specific books of poetry (*Knock at a Star* was named most frequently), 81.00% of respondents indicated that their students did not read specific books about the craft of poetry.
 8. Seventy-five respondents highlighted a total of 105 specific poets in their courses. Poets Shel Silverstein, Jack Prelutsky, Eloise Greenfield, Arnold Adoff, Douglas Florian, Nikki Grimes, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Myra Cohn Livingston, Janet Wong, Paul Fleischman, Eve Merriam, Naomi Shihab Nye were given ten or more times in response to this question. Variety/Breadth was cited most often as the general reason particular poets were selected for a given course.
 9. The goals respondents held for their students in the teaching of children's poetry cited most often surrounded pedagogical issues. In general,

respondents noted that given frequent use, poetry holds great potential as a pedagogical tool: in the language arts (appreciation of craft; sharing; writing; response/discussion formats; affording an aesthetic stance) and across content areas and themes.

Implications for Poetry Research

One

From one gray cloud
came a single drop
and it fell
in the pond
with one wet

Plop!

“Deep! Deep! Deep!”
sang one small peeper
when he saw
that the pond
was one drop

deeper.

(Schertle, 1999)

Positioned within the field of literacy education, this study utilized a mixed-methods approach to explore the instructional practices currently employed in the teaching of children’s poetry at the university level. This study has drawn upon both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to ascertain information regarding (a) the general perceptions of poetry held by university professors who teach or include children’s poetry in their children’s literature, English, language arts, and reading

education courses, (b) their in-class instructional practices, (c) the types of poetry assignments included in their courses, (d) the poets typically highlighted and why, (e) and the goals professors held for their students in the teaching of children's poetry.

While no other studies of this nature exist, this exploration has drawn upon previous, tangential work in the area of poetry research, schema theory, and reader response theories. Perhaps the pond of poetry research is one drop deeper as a result of this investigation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Karen Kutiper cites Bernice Cullinan in the final lines of her 1985 dissertation, (*A Survey of the Adolescent Poetry Preferences of Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Graders*). Kutiper asserts, "As Bernice Cullinan so aptly writes, '...poetry offers education of the imagination (1981).' We simply cannot afford to ignore it" (p. 136). We may wonder, nearly twenty years later, have we embraced poetry as a viable, vibrant component of literacy instruction, or does it remain somewhat ignored--relegated by "our curricular side step" to "an optional status" (Denman, 1988, p. 57)? How will students—at any level—come to view with appreciation Denman's (1998) observation: "The poet serves as a caretaker of the human experience" (p. 7), if poetry is ignored in our elementary, middle, high school, and university classrooms?

While there are no studies that focus on the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level, this descriptive study aimed to describe, via a researcher-developed survey (see Appendix A), the instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at colleges and universities

across the United States. This exploration was limited to the practices of university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) at the time data for this study were collected (February – May 2004).

This investigation specifically sought to provide a snapshot of the instructional practices, employed solely by members of the CLA, as they taught or included children's poetry in their university-level courses of children's literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education. More information is needed to more fully explore this and related topics. Specific recommendations for future investigations include these five:

- (1) A more complete portrait of the ways in which children's poetry is treated across the disciplines of English, library science, and reading/language arts education is needed to provide a better understanding of the assumptions held by each field, the practices engaged in, and the expected outcomes hoped for by professors in each of these disciplines. Focus-group methodology may well serve this type of investigation.
- (2) This current study is merely the first step in investigating larger gaps in our knowledge about the teaching of children's poetry. It has provided the broadest of brushstrokes in an attempt to illuminate current instructional practices at the university level. While this investigation focused on the *instructors* of children's poetry, it is worth considering how those instructional practices affect the future practices of preservice and inservice teachers. Specific focus on *which* instructional practices at the

university level enhance appreciation and future classroom use of poetry. Investigations, specifically focused on the preservice and inservice teachers might utilize quantitative (perhaps survey) or qualitative (interviews, classroom observations) methodologies--or some combination of the two. This proposition presupposes something of a domino effect—i.e., what occurs in the university classroom may impact the types of practices pre- and inservice teachers explore in their own classrooms. The data from classroom teachers (collected, but not yet used from this investigation) as compared with the data from university-level personnel (presented here) may offer some preliminary information.

- (3) Via a purely qualitative approach, it would behoove future researchers to gather information regarding instructional practices through instructor and student interviews, course descriptions, course syllabi, and videotaped sessions. Systematic cataloging of patterns throughout transcriptions, observations, artifacts, and interviews, may provide more complete portraits of what is “really” going on within courses where children’s poetry is taught or included. The impact of on-line instruction in courses of children’s literature, English, library science and/or language arts/reading education, upon preservice and inservice teachers’ understanding and appreciation of children’s poetry may be worth exploring.
- (4) The development of a quantitative instrument to measure instructional practices is worth exploration. Further qualitative study to evaluate appropriate constructs of measurement for poetry instruction (e.g.,

opportunities for reading, writing, responding to poetry), development of items to tap these constructs, and use of psychometric analyses to evaluate both the ability of the items to assess the constructs and quality of items. These analyses may include reliability and validity analyses. Factor analysis would likely also be warranted to evaluate the structure of the data relative to the intended constructs of measurement.

- (5) Investigations which update our knowledge of students' poetry preferences are needed. Future studies might emphasize the effects of mode of presentation on poetry preferences (cf. Kutiper, 1985); the impact of memorization (cf. Muske-Dukes, 2003) and/or poetry performance (cf. Bianchi, 1999) on poetry preferences; or the impact of various "form of representation" (Eisner, 1998) on poetry preferences.

Recommendations for Instructional Practices

If You Catch a Firefly

If you catch a firefly
 and keep it in a jar
You may find that
 you have lost
A tiny star.

If you let it go then,
 back into the night,
You may see it
 once again
Star bright.

(Moore, 1996, p. 48)

Gleaned from the review of relevant literature and supported by the survey responses of university professor and adjunct instructors who participated in this study, these expert recommendations capture the essence of effective poetry instruction. These instructional strategies represent the best of what is--and what could be--in the teaching of children's poetry. They include, using children's poetry to: (a) develop an appreciation for the genre of poetry; (b) tap into the power of words; (c) begin where the learners are... and then, move on!; and (d) overcome prior negative experiences with poetry.

Develop an Appreciation for the Genre of Poetry

By offering a variety and breadth of poets, formats, and types, learners have the opportunity to broaden and deepen their poetry-appreciation reservoir. Given as the number one reason among survey respondents why they selected particular poets for their courses, variety and breadth allows learners to pick and choose among the poets, formats, and types they enjoy—and that challenge them. From the playful verse of Shel Silverstein to the deliberately crafted poetry of Myra Cohn Livingston to the clever word pictures of Joan Bransfield Graham, poetry's range offers tremendous opportunities for appreciation of the genre. One respondent offered, "Teachers in the elementary schools have a responsibility to nurture a love of poetry." I contend that educators, at any level, involved in the teaching of language and literacy share that responsibility.

Tap into the Power of Words

Focusing on poetry's "sparse, gritty diction" (Michaels, 2001, p. 73) enables learners to tap into the power of words. Consider the goals of one respondent who discussed the teaching of children's poetry: "[Poetry] enriches vocabulary growth and word choice becomes more discerning," or another, who hoped that, in poetry, students would "experience language that transcends literal and obvious meaning." Such goals naturally attend the teaching of poetry, given its "compressed power and nuances of words" (McVeigh-Schultz & Ellis, 1997).

Begin Where the Learners Are... and Then, Moving On!

Denman (1988) writes:

I don't think that knowledgeable and caring teachers should be confined to shifting curricular patterns or the immediate likes and dislikes of children. The situation should challenge our creative energies. We should be inspired by the knowledge that we can pass on to our students something universally beautiful...Their lives will be a bit richer as a result of our efforts. (p. 58)

While playful, rhyming verse may provide an adequate starting place (Tomlinson & Lynch-Brown, 2002), richer experiences with poetry are possible. Beginning with children's stated preferences (Fisher & Natarella, 1982; Kutiper, 1985; Kutiper & Wilson, 1993; Terry, 1974), offers an instructional genesis—not a conclusion. Such reliance on research should not confine our pedagogy, but enhance it. In support of the use of Shel Silverstein, for example, one respondent wrote, "Reading his humorous poems is a good way to interest children in poetry." Another respondent summarized well the notion of where and how to begin with poetry by succinctly stating, "It is to be enjoyable first."

Overcome Prior Negative Experiences with Poetry

Embracing poetry as a medium for “offering distinctive ways of thinking” (Walter, 1996, p. 78; cf., Eisner, 1998) expands the many possibilities of this genre. Eisner (1998) contends that various “forms of representation” (e.g., poetry, music, painting, photography) impact cognition--each form having no direct counterpart in another.

One survey respondent in this study offered, “Overall, I want [my students] to see poetry as a pathway that makes reading and writing (really literacy) more complete for many people. It opens new ways of making meaning.”

But, such opportunities to make literacy “more complete” are wholly lacking if the expectation for poetry is one of “Correct Interpretation.” Johnson (1990) emphasizes:

Students are occasionally led to believe that there is only *one correct paraphrase* [emphasis, the author’s], a single meaning which the teacher guards like a golden treasure and shares with only the most worthy students. Some poems can be paraphrased, some cannot; given the ambiguous nature of language, all poems—of whatever length—have multiple meanings. (p. 47)

In this current investigation, participants generally disagreed with the statement, “I believe there is a correct interpretation of any given poem” and generally agreed with the statement “I support multiple interpretations of poetry.” The expectation that multiple, reasonable interpretations of poetry (Dias, 1996; Johnson, 1990; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, 1978) are plausible is of pedagogical significance as particular instructional practices are selected—or excluded.

Consider Duke & Jacobsen's observation:

For too long, far too many students have considered poetry as some kind of mysterious artifact, meant to be observed at a distance always, under the eye of a critical curator. But, this distancing is contrary to all we now know about how readers develop a liking for various types of literature. Growth comes from direct engagement, not from the distancing of reader and text...the teaching of poetry needs an expanded view which emphasizes student interaction with the text, as well as creation of new texts. (Duke & Jacobsen, 1992, p. ix)

As preservice and inservice teachers interact with children's poetry, a powerful, often unexpected by-product occurs. For some students, a reawakening (and for some, an awakening) of the genre's power and pleasure (Mathis, 2002) transpires. Because *children's* poetry is typically approached from a position of enjoyment, university-level students (who may have had previous negative experiences with poetry) can relax and take pleasure in the genre, rather than approach it as a "mysterious artifact, meant to be observed at a distance..." (Duke & Jacobsen, 1992, p. ix).

Conclusion

This present study explored instructional practices employed in the teaching of children's poetry at the university level. A researcher-developed survey expressly designed for this study, was administered to university professors and adjunct instructors who were members of the CLA at the time of this study. This exploration was limited to the practices of those members.

The purposes of this investigation were to ascertain: (a) the general perceptions of poetry held by these university professors and adjunct instructors, (b) their in-class instructional practices relevant to the teaching of children's poetry, (c) the types of poetry assignments given, (d) the poets typically highlighted, and (e) the goals held by

these professors and instructors, primarily in courses of children’s literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education.

To fulfill the purposes of this study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were drawn upon. Quantitative data framed prespecified items that related to respondents’ perceptions of poetry and the activities and assignments they included in their courses. Qualitative data included the candid and rich comments of CLA members, whose generous words afforded a glimpse into the instructional practices of experts in the fields of children’s literature, English, language arts, library science, and reading education.

Undaunted by current curricular demands, members of this organization found creative ways to promote the inclusion of children’s poetry in their courses, because they: (a) believed the teaching of children’s poetry was important, (b) approached children’s poetry as an essential part of their courses, and (c) supported multiple interpretations of poetry, (d) explored the work of a variety of poets, including award-winning, multicultural, and “verse” poets, and (e) held high goals, in concert with these beliefs, for their students.

One respondent emphasized, “Integrate poetry throughout the day/many contexts—these ideas [apply] to all ages.” And, so it is. Educators at any level may recognize from this study’s findings, the general (although not generalizable) precepts of poetry instruction that encourage and promote poetry’s “outrageous joy” (Janeczko, 1994, p. 1).

There was, for me, “outrageous joy” at several turns in the process of conducting this investigation. There was a generosity of spirit among respondents that far

exceeded any conceivable expectations. There was an enthusiasm among participants—a willingness to share ideas, an eagerness to reveal the inner-workings of classroom procedures and experiences. All these intangible features were made tangible by ample and clear responses. In addition, there were multiple offers of further assistance, of good wishes, of support—marginal notes of written kindnesses that meant so much to me as I culled through the data.

Members of the CLA who participated in this study provided not only fodder for my dissertation--but substance for our collective reflection and examination. The willingness of this study's participants to share their perceptions and practices, to provide lists of the poets they highlight, to reveal their goals for students, offers us a starting point, a place for further examination. I am beholden to, and remain endlessly grateful for, the passion, the joy, and the generosity of spirit among respondents--so obviously engendered by a love of poetry.

In 1996, in my own Master's coursework in children's literature, I undertook a project to uncover multicultural poets. It was, at the time, a fringe project—there was far more digging than uncovering (especially for me, a novice). How wonderful to see that the tides have turned! How gratifying to see the work of poets Arnold Adoff, Eloise Greenfield, Nikki Giovanni, Naomi Shihab Nye and Janet Wong mentioned and prized among respondents. It is equally gratifying to see that while respondents offered the contemporary works of Silverstein and Prelutsky to their students for reasons of comfort and humor, their overall use of such poets was tempered by the larger goal of variety and breadth. Indeed, the range of poets highlighted among respondents reflects well an inclusion and valuing of contemporary, multicultural, and traditional poets.

Finally, as we reflect on the inclusion of children's poetry--at any level of instruction--we might consider Kennedy and Kennedy's (1982) assertion:

Poetry cannot redeem the world, but it has undisputed rewards for those willing to receive them. It can, at least for a moment, heighten the experience of being alive. It can sharpen the wits, awaken the imagination, perhaps even leave a grain of wisdom behind. This seems enough to ask of it. (p. 131)

Perhaps poetry "cannot redeem the world"—but, then, I wonder. Maybe, just maybe, it can offer a starting place, a place of hope, a place of brilliance--a place where fireflies illuminate the night.

APPENDIX A
THE POETRY USE SURVEY

POETRY USE SURVEY
Demographic Information

Please circle **one** number for each question, unless otherwise instructed.

1. Which best describes your current position?

- 1 UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR
- 2 CLASSROOM TEACHER Grade/Subject _____
- 3 OTHER (Please specify.) _____

IF CLASSROOM TEACHER, GO TO QUESTION 5.

2. As a university professor, which best describes your primary teaching field?

- 1 EDUCATION
- 2 ENGLISH
- 3 LIBRARY SCIENCE
- 4 OTHER (Please specify.) _____

3. As a university professor which **one** of the following best describes most of the courses you teach in your current position?

- 1 COURSES OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
- 2 COURSES OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
- 3 COURSES OF LANGUAGE ARTS
- 4 COURSES OF READING
- 5 OTHER (Please specify.) _____

4. As a university professor, how many **total** years teaching experience, including this academic year (2003-2004), do you have at the university-level?

_____ YEARS

5. Is there any additional information, specific to your position, which would be helpful to the researcher in understanding your responses?

POETRY USE SURVEY
Perceptions of Poetry

Consider your general feelings about poetry and the general use of poetry in your teaching. Using the scale below, please select **one** response choice to indicate your **level of agreement** with each of the following statements. Place the number corresponding to your choice in front of each statement.

RESPONSE CHOICES

7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

- _____ I believe the teaching of children's poetry is important.
- _____ I view children's poetry as an essential part of my courses.
- _____ My courses provide opportunities for the sharing of children's poetry.
- _____ I believe there is a correct interpretation of any given poem.
- _____ I have a strong knowledge of children's poetry.
- _____ My personal experiences (e.g., family, church, etc.) with poetry have fostered a love of poetry.
- _____ My own college coursework prepared me to teach others about children's poetry.
- _____ I believe the analysis of children's poetry is an essential skill for preservice and inservice teachers.
- _____ Children's poetry is interwoven throughout my courses.
- _____ I support multiple interpretations of poetry.
- _____ Current curricular demands prevent me from teaching poetry in the way that I'd like.
- _____ I try to include more children's poetry in my courses now than I have in previous semesters.
- _____ I hope that my students will provide the kinds of poetry activities and assignments in their own classrooms that I have provided in my courses.
- _____ I encourage students' personal connections to children's poetry across various texts.
- _____ I include a range of poets in my courses.

Do you wish to comment on any of the items above? (Please specify the item(s) on which you are commenting.)

POETRY USE SURVEY
Framing Specific Responses

1. Consider the **one** course in which you teach or include children's poetry most often. Please write that course title below:

*You will refer back to **this particular course** for the remaining pages of this survey.*

IF CLASSROOM TEACHER, GO TO QUESTION 4.

2. At this time, is the course you identified above considered:

- 1 REQUIRED for teacher education
- 2 ELECTIVE for teacher education
- 3 OTHER (Please specify.) _____

3. Are the students in the course you identified above:

- 1 UNDERGRADUATE
- 2 GRADUATE

4. Do you wish to share anything about **this course** that would be helpful to the researcher?

POETRY USE SURVEY
In-Class Activities

Consider the last time you taught the course you identified on the preceding page ("Framing Specific Responses," p. 3, #1).

Using the scale below, please select **one** response choice to indicate the **frequency** with which **you**, as the instructor, engaged in the following activities during the actual course meetings throughout the semester. Place the number corresponding to your choice in front of each statement.

RESPONSE CHOICES

7 Always	6 Almost Always	5 Usually	4 Sometimes	3 Seldom	2 Almost Never	1 Never
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- _____ I read children's poetry out loud.
- _____ I invited students to participate in the oral reading of children's poetry.
- _____ I provided opportunities for students to read children's poetry silently.
- _____ I invited students to respond to children's poetry in written formats (narrative, memoir, poetry).
- _____ I invited students to respond to children's poetry in discussion formats.
- _____ I discussed biographical information about children's poets.
- _____ I discussed awards that recognize children's poetry, such as _____.
- _____ I discussed poetry research (e.g., Kutiper & Wilson, 1990; McClure, 1985; Terry, 1974; etc.).
- _____ I discussed poetic elements (e.g., metaphor, simile, meter, rhyme).
- _____ I discussed poetic forms (e.g., haiku, cinquain, free verse, etc.).
- _____ I discussed guidelines for the evaluation of children's poetry.

Do you wish to describe additional in-class activities or provide comments on any the items listed above?
(Please specify the item(s) on which you are commenting.)

POETRY USE SURVEY
Course Assignments

Consider the last time you taught the course you identified (“Framing Specific Responses,” p. 3, #1).

Indicate whether you included the following assignments by circling the word “YES” or “NO.” Keep in mind that although you may include children’s poetry in your course, you may not assign some (or all) of these choices. Choose “NO” if a particular assignment does not apply to your course.

ASSIGNMENT	1. YES	2. NO
Students created personal poetry collections.	YES	NO
Students researched biographical information on poets’ lives and work.	YES	NO
Students created thematic collections of poetry.	YES	NO
Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as: _____.	YES	NO
Students responded to poetry in written formats.	YES	NO
Students responded to poetry in formats other than writing (e.g., illustration, photography, music, etc.).	YES	NO
Students read specific books of poetry, such _____ as: _____.	YES	NO
Students read specific books about the craft of poetry, such as _____.	YES	NO

Do you wish to describe additional course assignments or provide comments on any of the items listed above? (Please specify the item(s) on which you are commenting.)

POETRY USE SURVEY
Open-ended Questions

1. Which poets do you highlight in your course, and why?

2. Overall, what do you hope your students will learn about poetry for children?

APPENDIX B
APPROVED SURVEY COVER LETTER

February 16, 2004

Dear Survey Respondent:

I am June Jacko, a doctoral candidate at the University of North Texas. The researcher-created survey you have before you represents the initial phase of my doctoral dissertation, "The Teaching of Children's Poetry: An Exploration of Instructional Practices in University Courses of Children's Literature, English, Language Arts, and Reading Education." As a member of the Children's Literature Assembly (CLA) and a leader in the field of children's literature, your participation in this study is requested.

While we have a good deal of information regarding children's experiences with the genre of children's poetry, we lack information regarding the kinds of experiences afforded pre-service and in-service teachers as they engage with this genre in their preparatory or continuing coursework. This survey seeks to ascertain those instructional practices. Your expertise in the field of children's literature will provide invaluable insights into current practices.

This six-page survey includes questions of general perceptions of poetry, in-class instructional activities, and assignments typically included in your courses. Each of these sections allows, invites, and encourages your written elaboration. Any additional information you provide will assist me in more richly describing, both in numbers and words, current practices in the teaching of children's poetry.

Two open-ended responses seek to describe the poets you typically highlight and the general goals you hold for your students, as you teach or include children's poetry in your courses. The depth of your responses will ultimately assist in the reporting of my findings. I thank you, in advance, for your participation.

If you are a university professor, your input will allow me to describe current practices employed in university courses where preservice and inservice teachers engage with the genre of children's poetry. If you are a classroom teacher, you are invited (and encouraged!) to participate, with the understanding that your input will not be part of this current study, but will be retained for a future investigation. In either case, your responses will remain confidential and there is no penalty to you, should you choose not to participate.

I value your time, expertise, and thoughtful responses. Your participation allows our knowledge of children's poetry to advance. The length of time you spend with this questionnaire will vary, however, you may expect to complete it in about 20 minutes. As a small expression of my gratitude, at the conclusion of data analysis, ten randomly selected participants of this study will be sent a book of children's poetry. I hope you will be one of those recipients.

I have included a postage-paid envelope for your convenience. I would appreciate receipt of your completed questionnaire by **March 1, 2004**.

Your participation is voluntary. If you have any questions please contact me at telephone number or Dr. Jean Greenlaw, Department of Teacher Education, University of North Texas, 940-565-2933. This project has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (940-565-3940). I expect to post the results from this study by December 2004, at www.coe.unt.edu/teachertools.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,
June M. Jacko

APPENDIX C

FULL LISTING OF POETS FOR ITEM:

“STUDENTS READ THE WORK OF AWARD-WINNING POETS”

APPENDIX C

Note: This is the full listing of poets given for the item “Students read the work of award-winning poets, such as...” See Table 19 for abbreviated, in-text table.

Table A1

Full Listing for Poets Named for Item: “Students read the work of award-winning poets”

Poet Named	Frequency
Adoff, Arnold	9
Greenfield, Eloise	8
Silverstein, Shel	8
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	7
Livingston, Myra Cohn	7
Merriam, Eve	7
Giovanni, Nikki	6
Nye, Naomi Shihab	6
Hoberman, Mary Ann	5
Kuskin, Karla	5
Bryan, Ashley	4
Fleischman, Paul	4
Grimes, Nikki	4
Hughes, Langston	3
Prelutsky, Jack	3
Ciardi, John	2
cummings, e.e.	2
Dakos, Kali	2
Esbensen, Barbara	2
Florian, Douglas	2
George, Kristine O’Connell	2
Mora, Pat	2
Sandburg, Carl	2
Wong, Janet	2
Appelt, Kathy	1
Bagert, Brod	1
Blake, William	1
Dickenson, Emily	1
Elliot, T. S.	1
Frost, Robert	1

(table continues)

Table A1 (cont.)

Poet Named	Frequency
Heard, Georgia	1
Hesse, Karen	1
Janeczko, Paul	1
Kennedy*	1
Lear, Edward	1
Levy, Constance	1
Lowry, Lois	1
McCord, David	1
Myers, Walter Dean	1
Shields, Carol Diggory	1
Soto, Gary	1
Stevenson, Robert Louis	1
Teasdale, Sara	1
Yolen, Jane	1
Zolotow, Charlotte	1

Note. *First name not specified.

APPENDIX D

FULL LISTING OF TITLES FOR ITEM:

“STUDENTS READ SPECIFIC BOOKS OF POETRY”

APPENDIX D

Note: This is the full listing of titles given for the item “Students read specific books of poetry, such as....” See Table 20 for abbreviated, in-text table.

Table A2

Full Listing of Titles Named for Item: “Students read specific books of poetry”

Specific Title Named	Frequency
<i>Knock at a Star: A Child’s Introduction to Poetry</i> (Kennedy & Kennedy, 1982)	4
<i>A Jar of Tiny Stars: Poems by NCTE Award-Winning Poets</i> (Cullinan [Ed.], 1996)	3
<i>Out of the Dust</i> (Hesse, 1997)	3
<i>The Random House Book Of Poetry For Children</i> (Prelutsky, [Ed.], 1983)	3
<i>You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You</i> (Ciardi, 1962)	2
<i>Joyful Noise: Poems For Two Voices</i> (Fleischman, 1988)	2
<i>Where the Sidewalk Ends</i> (Silverstein, 1974)	2
<i>The 20th Century Children’s Poetry Treasury</i> (Prelutsky, 1999)	1
<i>Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart</i> (Williams, 2001)	1

(table continues)

Table A2 (cont.)

Specific Title Named	Frequency
<i>A Child's Garden of Verses</i> (Stevenson, Robert Louis)*	1
<i>Confetti: Poems for Children</i> (Mora, 1996)	1
<i>Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English</i> (Ada, 1997)	1
<i>Carver: A Life in Poems</i> (Nelson, 2001)	1
<i>Grump</i> (Wong, 2001)	1
<i>Honey, I Love and Other Love Poems</i> (Greenfield, 1978)	1
<i>I Am Phoenix</i> (Fleischman, 1985)	1
<i>A Poke In the I: A Collection Of Concrete Poems</i> (Janeczko [Ed.], 2001)	1
<i>Rice is Life</i> (Gelman, 2000)	1
<i>The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide</i> (Pinsky, 1999)	1
<i>Witness</i> (Hesse, 2001)	1

Note. *Because many versions of Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* are available, and because a particular version was not specified, no copyright date is given for this title.

APPENDIX E

FULL LISTING OF POETS NAMED FOR OPEN-ENDED QUESTION 1

APPENDIX E

Note. This is the full listing of 105 poets named for Open-Ended Question 1: “Which poets do you highlight in your course, and why?” See Table 24 for the abbreviated, in-text table.

Table A3

Full Listing of Poets Named for Open-Ended Question 1

Poet Named	Frequency
Silverstein, Shel	23
Prelutsky, Jack	19
Greenfield, Eloise	18
Adoff, Arnold	15
Florian, Douglas	14
Grimes, Nikki	12
Livingston, Myra Cohn	12
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	11
Wong, Janet	11
Fleischman, Paul	10
Merriam, Eve	10
Nye, Naomi Shihab	10
George, Kristine O’Connell	9
Hughes, Langston	9
Lewis, J. Patrick	9
Kuskin, Karla	8
McCord, David	8
Janeczko, Paul	6
Stevenson, Robert Louis	6
Yolen, Jane	6
Bryan, Ashley	5
Carroll, Lewis	5
Ciardi, John	5
Giovanni, Nikki	5
Kennedy, X. J	5

(table continues)

Table A3 (cont.)

Poet Named	Frequency
Mora, Pat	5
Fisher, Aileen	4
Frost, Robert	4
Hesse, Karen	4
Hoberman, Mary Ann	4
O'Neill, Mary	4
Bagert, Brod	3
Blake, William	3
Dakos, Kalli	3
Dotlitch, Rebecca	3
Graham, Joan Bransfield	3
Holbrook, Sara	3
Lear, Edward	3
Myers, Walter Dean	3
Schertle, Alice	3
Soto, Gary	3
Viorst, Judith	3
Asch, Frank	2
Esbensen, Barbara	2
Little, Jean	2
Milne, A. A.	2
Moore, Lilian	2
Mother Goose	2
Rosetti, Christina	2
Sandburg, Carl	2
Seuss, Dr.	2
Thayer, Ernest L	2
Thomas, Joyce Carol	2
Williard, Nancy	2
Worth, Valerie	2
Ada, Alma Flor	1
Alarcon, Francisco	1
Aldis, Dorothy	1
Appelt, Kathy	1
Angelou, Maya	1
Behn, Harry	1
Bruchac, Joseph	1
Carlson, Lori	1
Clifton, Lucille	1

(table continues)

Table A3 (cont.)

Poet Named	Frequency
Cole, William	1
Collins, Billy	1
Creech, Sharon	1
cummings, e.e.	1
de la Mare, Walter	1
Dickinson, Emily	1
Donbar, John	1
Farjeon, Eleanor	1
Field, Eugene	1
Francis, Robert	1
Glenn, Mel	1
Harrison, David	1
Heard, Georgia	1
Hoffman, Heinrich	1
Jarrell, Randall	1
Johnston, Tony	1
Joseph, Lynn	1
Katz, Alan	1
Kennedy, Dorothy	1
Lansky, Bruce	1
Larrick, Nancy	1
Lee, Dennis	1
Lionni, Leo	1
Longfellow, Henry W	1
Moss, Jeffrey	1
Nash, Ogden	1
Oliver, Mary	1
Richards, Laura	1
Ridlon, Marci	1
Service, Robert W.	1
Shields, Carol Diggory	1
Siebert, Diane	1
Sierra, Judy	1
Singer, Marilyn	1
Smith, Charles R.	1
Snyder, Zilpha Keatley	1
Stepanek, Mattie	1
Stevenson, James	1
Swann, Brian	1
Turner, Ann	1
Wordsworth, William H.	1

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