# THE USE OF NONFICTION/INFORMATIONAL TRADE BOOKS IN AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Connie Craft Briggs, B.S., M.A.
Denton, Texas
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The purpose of the study was to describe the use of nonfiction/informational trade books within a literature-based elementary classroom by students and the teacher. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, the researcher became a participant observer in a third grade classroom during a two and one-half week thematic unit about the westward movement. Data were collected from field notes, audiotapes of class discussions and informal interviews, documents of students' work, photographs, daily observer comment summaries, and memos. These data were coded, analyzed for recurring patterns, and grouped together, resulting in grounded theory.

The results show that although nonfiction/informational trade books were used by both students and teacher within the context of literature-based instruction, nonfiction was not addressed formally in the classroom. Further, children were able to synthesize factual information from literature, but were not precise in their reasons for identifying literature as either fiction or nonfiction.

The study informs practitioners by providing

descriptions of actual instruction in a third grade literature-based classroom, and it informs the research community by developing grounded theory concerning the use of nonfiction/informational trade books in an elementary school setting.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

"Education in the 1990s is an exciting time for professionals who believe in the power of literature" (Norton, 1992, p. 4). There has been a general movement, supported by research reports, educational specialists, and professional journals, to create rich classroom environments which involve students directing their own learning. There is also general agreement by these same sources for promoting the power of books other than textbooks as an integral part of the school curriculum.

Sources supporting the recommendations to utilize literature which enhances content areas include *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, et al., 1985), which recommends focusing more on literature in the classroom and less on worksheets. E.D. Hirsch in *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987) also recommends a curriculum which includes a strong component of literature. The California State initiative (California Department of Education, 1988) has led the way for other states recommending, or even mandating, that schools use more literature in the classrooms. The increased number of journal articles and conference presentations about the use of children's literature to support the elementary school

curriculum reflect the trend toward this philosophical change by teachers and researchers.

Writers of textbooks for practicing and preservice teachers recommend that educators supplement and complement all content areas with children's trade books. Jarolimek and Parker (1993) include a whole chapter about planning integrated social studies units around children's literature and Grega (1994) includes children's literature in a chapter on how to use different resources to teach science in the elementary school. Children's textbooks in major curriculum areas encourage the use of children's trade books to supplement pupil texts in elementary school classrooms (*Health for Life*, 1990; *Our Country's Communities*, 1988; *Science Horizons*, 1991). Recent content reading texts for preservice teachers advocate the use of children's literature to connect content areas (Danielson & LaBonty, 1994; Moore, et. al., 1994; Tierney et. al., 1990; Vacca & Vacca, 1993).

There is a growing interest by researchers and teachers in using the genre of nonfiction/informational trade books to support content area teaching. Several books have been published in recent years that address this specific genre of literature and document the recent attention. The National Council of the Teachers of English established a committee on using nonfiction in the elementary language arts classroom to promote the use of children's nonfiction.

The publication, *Using Nonfiction Trade Books in the Elementary Classroom: From Ants to Zeppelins* (Freeman, 1992), is the result of that committee's work. *Nonfiction for Young Adults: From Delight to Wisdom* (Carter and Abrahamson, 1990) discusses issues relating to informational books and emphasizes the role of nonfiction in young adult book selection. Beverly Kobrin (1988) has published a reference book of nonfiction titles appropriate for elementary school students and includes selection guidelines for parents and teachers.

Textbooks written for the study of children's literature also address nonfiction/informational trade books. Newer editions include detailed descriptions of nonfiction/informational trade books. Huck, Hepler & Hickman (1993), Norton (1987), Brown & Tomlinson (1993), all authors of popular books for children's literature exploration, include chapters on nonfiction children's literature. In their writings, the authors discuss the importance of the books, present suggestions for their use, and identify criteria for selection and evaluation. These are important considerations for teachers to use in selecting and using this genre of literature in their classrooms.

Journal articles recommend the use of nonfiction as read-aloud material (Carter and Abrahamson, 1991), models for writing (Freeman, 1991), material for readers' theatre

(Young and Vardell, 1993), and to complement content area texts (Billig, 1977; Moss, 1991).

In addition, The National Council of Teachers of English has established the NCTE *Orbis Pictus* Award to promote and recognize excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children. Former chair, Sylvia Vardell, explained the rationale for the creation of this award:

> In recent years, nonfiction for children has emerged as a very attractive, exciting, and popular genre. And the practical uses of nonfiction in elementary teaching have long been apparent (Vardell, 1991, p. 474).

While the use of nonfiction in the elementary classes is encouraged, and while the genre is distinguished by the *Orbus Pictus* Award, there exists little information describing how supplementary nonfiction books are currently being used in actual practice and in elementary classrooms. This study documented actual practice by providing a description of one teacher's instructional strategies and students' interaction with nonfiction tradebooks in an elementary classroom.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to describe teacher/student interactions with nonfiction/informational trade books within a literature-based classroom. The classroom teacher selected a unit of study. The researcher

then asked three experts in the field of children's literature to recommend books, both fiction and nonfiction, that supported the unit of study chosen by the teacher. From these recommendations, books were collected and provided for the teacher to consider while planning the unit. The study examined at the strategies the teacher used to incorporate literature into a thematic curriculum, as well as the students' reactions to these strategies and their interactions with the literature presented. The study did not attempt to change or measure literacy development, but rather to record "what was" by providing a comprehensive, accurate, detailed description of the interactions and reactions of students during the study of a thematic unit presented in a literature-based classroom.

## Statement of the Problem

The problem was addressed by asking three questions:

1. How are nonfiction/informational trade books being used in a literature-based classroom?
2. How does the teacher present and share this literature?
3. How do the children react and interact with nonfiction literature?

## Research Questions

The qualitative approach to research began with broad questions to provide early guidelines for inquiry (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992, pp. 154-155; Kamil, Langer, & Shanahan, 1985,

pp. 74-75). As data were then collected and analyzed, the questions became more focused. The following general questions provided structure to the beginning stages of this qualitative research study:

1. When given both fiction and nonfiction/informational trade books to support a thematic unit, how does one teacher choose to use these books as part of the curriculum? What instructional strategies does this teacher use? How are the books presented?
2. How do the students react to the nonfiction literature presented by the teacher?
3. What choices do students make between fiction and nonfiction/informational trade books when they self-select books to support a topic of study? How do they interact with these books?

## Significance of the Study

Although there is a growing body of research on literature-based reading instruction, researchers indicate there is a need for research that details what is actually taking place within the context of literature-based classrooms.

Simons (1988) states that there are professional journals filled with articles about literature-based reading instruction and presentations abound on the topic at professional conferences, yet he wonders, what is really taking place within the classroom. Pearson (1989) points to

the need of more descriptive studies of actual practice. Zarillo (1989) also calls for more study on the investigation of specific teaching techniques in literature-based programs.

The use of supplementary children's trade books in elementary school classrooms is strongly advocated by authors of textbooks written for preservice teachers, in teacher's manuals accompanying textbooks and basals written for use in elementary schools, and in professional journals. However, there is little information available to indicate how supplementary children's nonfiction/informational trade books are used by teachers in their classrooms and how students react to these books.

A review of literature uncovered little information to indicate how supplementary children's nonfiction/informational trade books were used by elementary teachers in their classrooms. One study, (Herbrig, 1980) surveyed fourth-,fifth-, and sixth- grade teachers to document how nonfiction/informational books were used in their instructional programs and what factors influenced the use of the books. She recommends that

> Further study . . .the manner in which the books are used could lead to a better understanding of the contributions made by the books. . . Investigation of the process of pupil response to nonfiction-informational trade books to determine

> how the reader interacts with the books could increase understanding of the value and the use of these books in the classroom (p. 131).

This proposed study adds to the knowledge-base by describing actual instructional practices and interactions in a literature-based classroom. More specifically, it provides a "rich" description of actual classroom interaction with nonfiction/informational books through thematic instruction. This research is important in that it provides a basis for additional studies which might promote the use of nonfiction/informational books and encourage practitioners in the field to use this genre of literature as a supplement to curriculum areas.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined to state as clearly as possible, the ways in which they were used in this study:

1. *Literature-based*--Defined as a classroom in which children's trade books are used as the major source of reading material in order to support the development of the curriculum.
2. *Fiction books*--Defined as books which contain narrative prose with characters and events created wholly or in part from the author's imagination. Although fiction may contain factual information, the primary purpose of this genre is to tell a narrative story.

3. *Nonfiction books*--Defined as books which contain factual information, poetry, or biographies. Although some nonfiction may contain narrative structure, the content emphasis of this genre is documented fact.
4. *Informational books*--Defined as a subcategory of nonfiction, these books are written expressly to present information, facts, or generalizations which do not rely on a story framework as the primary emphasis. This subcategory excludes poetry, drama, fables, myths, legends, fairy tales, biographies, reference books, and textbooks.
5. *Nonfiction/informational*--Defined to include informational books and biography.
6. *Trade books*--Defined as books published for sale through book stores to the general public and libraries. These may be fiction or nonfiction and may be used in classrooms and school libraries for instruction.
7. *Textbooks*--Defined as books published specifically for the classroom use by pupils.
8. *Reference books*--Defined as books used for specialized consultation to obtain information and in this study will include dictionaries, encyclopedias, atlases, and almanacs.
9. *Thematic unit*--Defined as an integrated unit of study centered around one broad theme, such as habitats,

friends, Africa, etc., to include all content areas.

## Limitations

The researcher was a participant observer. Due to the nature of this participation, the researcher may have inadvertently affected the behavior which is being observed. Attendance of the researcher into the dynamics of the classroom was intended to cause no change or disruption in the normal flow of the classroom. A researcher who is a participant observer attempts to fade into the woodwork by being purposefully unobtrusive (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992, pp. 88-90). Because the observer was the primary instrument of the research, there was an ever-present possibility of bias. The researcher attempted to control and minimize this effect by being objective during reflective note taking and using a second researcher during initial analysis of data. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, generalizing to other settings is inappropriate.

## Assumptions

It was assumed that no unusual external conditions which exist adversely affected the results of this study.

# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of literature related to this study is presented in two sections. First, literature which focuses on the components and definitions of literature-based reading programs are discussed. Included in this section is the use of the terms trade, nonfiction, and informational as presented in the literature. Second, the review includes research studies that focus on literature-based instruction and particularly instruction using nonfiction and informational literature in an elementary classroom.

Historically reading has been taught in schools with basal reading programs. These programs are used by more than ninety-five percent of all school districts through sixth grade (Chall & Squire, 1991, p. 123). Program components include basal texts, and ancillary materials such as workbooks, end-of-chapter tests, drill-and-practice sheets, cassettes, videos, games, and a host of other materials. They sometimes include classroom libraries of program-related titles for independent reading, or related programs for teaching spelling or writing in relation to reading. Basals reflect current philosophy. By looking at the changes in reading programs over the years one may see the reflection of changing views of reading process from

traditional to a more holistic model by researchers and ducators.

## Historical Reading Models

The past twenty years have seen a theoretical shift in the way researchers view the process of reading. Prior to 1970 reading instruction was presented part to whole (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967). Children were taught isolated sounds, then sound-symbol correspondence, and then sight words. Finally, children were allowed to read sentences and whole texts. This view of teaching reading is changing. These previous models are being replaced by models that emphasize cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and affective dimensions of reading (Paris, et al., 1991). This interactive view of reading, in which schema and background experience play a vital role in the interpretation of text (Rumelhart, 1976), has helped to change the way in which teachers view reading instruction. The former reading goal of mastering skills and being able to decode words has given way to a new, broader goal of developing independent lifelong readers who read with confidence and enjoyment (Paris, et al., 1991).

## Contemporary Reading Models

Because of the new understandings of how children learn to read, educators are changing the way they teach. They are moving from a fragmented skills-oriented practice to a more holistic view of how children should be taught to read.

Changes in attitude towards the basal reader, which promotes and practices subskill theory, is also being seen. In a study for the National Council of Teachers of English on basal readers, Goodman, et al. (1988) report that although many children were taught to read with the basal program, criticisms of basal reading series are becoming more frequent and harsh. Ken Goodman (1986) states that educators are coming to realize that they have made mistakes by attempting to simplify language learning. Teaching children bits and parts of paragraphs and sentences with controlled vocabulary, or short choppy sentences in primers and pre-primers, produces non-texts, and violates the expectations of even young readers who already know how a real story works. Tunnell, et al. (1988) also question the view of reading as the mastery of skills presented in the basal readers:

> Unfortunately, basal readers, skill cards and phonics lessons are all too often the total reading program. Reading aloud or silent reading time is ignored or sandwiched in. . . The process of reading has been broken down into a thousand intricate parts that are then taught to children in the hope that they will weave them all back together in the act we call reading. Reading instruction in many schools is artificial--

> workbooks, exercise sheets, basal readers, texts, and other materials seldom read outside of school. In short, students are seldom involved in "real reading" (p. 38).

The change in the way educators view reading is reflected in the recent basal series. The most recent generation of basals is making the transition to high quality literature-based selections. Wiggins (1994) states:

> They [basals] are no longer a series of isolated, disconnected stories and poems artificially contrived to emphasize a particular skill or to teach a controlled vocabulary. They have become a source of materials that can support an integrate reading-writing classroom (p.452).

Greenlaw (1994), in a response to Goodman, et. al.'s, (1994), criticism of the basalization of picture books, states that:

> The world is in a state of constant change, and publishing is no different. The basal materials of today are vastly different from those of the 1940s and 1960s. As beliefs change and knowledge about the reading process advances, the basals will continue to change (p. 29).

She concludes her rebuttal by stating that all educators are striving for the same goal, to give children the best

opportunity to achieve literacy. There is no one best method.

Even though contemporary basals are quite different from their sterile counterparts from previous years and continue to reflect changes based on current research of the reading process, many educators believe only "real" literature can "assure the experiences their pupils have with them [books] are authentic and supportive of their development as readers" (Goodman, et al., 1994, p. 22).

An alternative to the use of basal readers to teach children to read is the use of real trade books or children's literature. Many school districts are recognizing the value in using trade books and are moving toward a literature-based curriculum. Some states, such as California, have mandated literature-based curricula. In 1985, Illinois Public Act 84-126 amended the school code of Illinois to include specific goals and objectives for reading, writing, oral communications, literature, and language functions. *Becoming A Nation of Readers* (Anderson, et al. 1985), a national study directed at improving reading instruction, also supports the idea of using more literature in the classrooms of America.

## Components of Literature-based Reading Programs

It is necessary to have criteria in order to identify a classroom as "literature-based." Common elements found in

literature-based reading programs have been identified by several studies. They are listed below:

1. *Reading aloud*--Teachers regularly spend time reading aloud to their students (DeLapp, 1989; Hepler, 1989; Simmons, 1988; Zarillo, 1989).
2. *Response to literature*--Students respond to literature through a variety of ways (DeLapp, 1989; Hepler, 1989; Simmons, 1988; Zarillo, 1989). Activities pose interpretive questions. Open-ended questions and response activities allow children to share their interests, questions, and interpretations after reading a book. Writing by children on self-selected topics was mentioned by DeLapp (1989) as a response to literature. Zarillo (1989) also listed students working cooperatively to produce a variety of projects relating to books as possible responses to literature.
3. *Individualized reading time*--Children have time to read self-selected books and complete individual responses (DeLapp, 1989; Simmons, 1988; Zarillo, 1989). This often takes the form of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) where students and teachers read materials of their own choosing without interruption.
4. *Teacher directed lessons*--Direct instruction focuses on word recognition and meaning on a needful basis as it relates directly to the books and writing of the children (Simmons, 1988; Zarillo, 1989).

5. *Discussion of books*--Children discuss and reflect on their reading in small groups, large groups, or teacher conferences (DeLapp, 1989; Simmons, 1988).
6. *Integration of literature to all content areas*--Children read good books centered around a unit or theme (DeLapp, 1989; Hepler, 1989). Content areas include math, science, social studies, spelling, and language arts.

Though each study cited employed its own type of literature-based instruction and elements of instruction varied depending upon the age of the students, the common elements listed above were found in the different approaches. Any classroom identified as "literature-based" should exhibit a majority of the components cited.

## Definition of Terms

The terms *trade books*, *nonfiction*, and *informational* are often confused and inexact in discussions of children's books in educational literature. Typically, trade books are described as those books produced and promoted by publishers for purchase by library and bookstore markets. They are designed to be used by individuals and are classified as fiction or nonfiction. They are often used to supplement classroom instruction.

Within the division of trade books is a subdivision defined as informational books. One will find various definitions for the terms informational and trade books in

the literature. Fisher (1972) states that both terms, nonfiction and informational, are needed and neither can stand up to close attention:

> Historical novels are normally classified as fiction when they are neither wholly nor materially so. Even if we call them "stories" rather than "fiction" it is still clear that they have some right to be classified informational books .... The distinction between fiction and nonfiction is no clearer if we used the term "informational books" and "stories."
>
> A great many factbooks make use of incidental fiction, and who could argue that fiction has no element of fact? The distinction between fiction and nonfiction is blurred and constantly shifting but we still use it and need it (p.11).

Fisher states that the terms *fiction* and *nonfiction* are terms used generally. For example, in a novel, fiction is most important and has priority; the facts are used to support the story. In nonfiction, the knowledge presented is most important, and the writer could use any technique to get those facts to the reader.

Arbuthnot and Sutherland (1972) state, "Informational books, in contrast to books of fiction, are primarily concerned with facts" (p. 586). To these authors, books for younger children present facts in a story, or narrative

format, but informational books for older students do not have such a structure. Informational books include those works written about specific content areas; religion and the arts; and activity, experiment, and reference books. Arbuthnot and Sutherland prefer the term informational to describe books of fact.

Smith and Park (1977) also prefer the term informational:

> [Informational books] are written to do what the title implies: impart information. Although many adventure, biographical and realistic stories impart information, their primary purpose is to weave a story using a definite style ... Informational books, on the other hand, are designed to impart information without necessarily telling a story. They narrate true incidents but the narrative is secondary (p. 440).

Glazer and Williams (1979) place informational books under the general heading of nonfiction and retain them as a type of nonfiction book. They agree with other writers that informational books are those "presenting hard facts on subjects such as science or nature" (p. 408).

Carter and Abrahamson (1990) give a concise rationale for what constitutes nonfiction:

> Nonfiction books aren't defined by the degree of authenticity or fabrication within their pages, but rather, by whether they belong in one of two subclassifications in the Dewey Decimal System. . . Librarians removed all their [authors] novels and short stories from literature, or 800s section, and placed them in a separate area simply arranged in alphabetical order by the author or editor's last name. Thus fiction was born. And nonfiction, depending on one's orientation toward literature, became either everything but fiction or merely the remainder of the collection. Poetry survived as nonfiction, as did plays, comic books, jokes, riddles, superstitions, and folktales. . ." (p. x-xii).

Carter and Abrahamson (1990) go on to say that "simply put nonfiction is any book that is not a novel or a short story . . . including books cataloged by subject as well as form: factual books about topics such as the solar system, automobiles, curiosities and wonders, and cooking."(p. xii) These are best known as informational works.

Children, who were taught the basic classification skills, were not confused by the crossover of terms; however, the study of children's literature by researchers has forced distinctions. Regardless of definitions or systems of classification, confusion resulted. Sebesta and Iverson (1975) state that we are left with a not-quite-so

satisfactory term *nonfiction* and a growing sense of the importance of this literary type. They point out that children and publishers are not put off by this difficulty and that nonfiction is a major part of the reading diet of many children (p. 354).

In the past, nonfiction/informational trade books have not received the same respect as fiction. Whether the lack of respect is due to the number of books that were on the market, or that teachers have not seen the benefits of using nonfiction/informational books in the classroom, is still unclear. In recent years the number of nonfiction/informational books being published has increased tremendously. More teachers are using a thematic, literature-based approach in teaching, which incorporates both factual information and fiction. Even though teachers often miscategorize nonfiction books in the Dewey Decimal system, students fail to notice the misrepresentation and continue to read this genre of literature.

## The Use of Informational Trade Books

Historically, the lists of awards for outstanding children's books do not contain a large number of nonfiction titles. In his article "Where Do All the Prizes Go? The Case for Nonfiction", Milton Meltzer (1976) lists the Newbery Medals presented to authors for "the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children," and laments the lack of awards given to

nonfiction books (p. 17). Since 1922, when the award was first begun, only six nonfiction books have been winners. The first nonfiction winner was an informational book and the other five nonfiction books to win have been biographies. The last nonfiction book to win this prestigious award was entitled *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, by Russell Freedman (1988). In his Newbery Medal acceptance speech Russell Freedman discussed nonfiction,

> While nonfiction has never been completely ignored, for a long time it was brushed off and pushed aside, as though factual books were socially inferior to the upper-crust stuff we call literature. Upstairs, imaginative fiction dwelled grandly in the House of Literature. Downstairs, hard-working, utilitarian nonfiction lived prosaically in the servants' quarters. If a nonfiction book were talented and ambitious enough, it could rise above its station. But for the most part, children's nonfiction was kept in its place (p. 445).

Meltzer (1976) acknowledges that book awards are designed to honor the best literary works, but contends that many persons do not consider nonfiction works to be literary: "The laurels crown the storyteller. Librarians, teachers, reviewers--the three groups who usually administer the awards or serve as judges--seem confident that only

fiction can be considered literature" (p.17). Meltzer made the case for nonfiction as literature. He said:

> Literary art has . . .two related aspects: the subject and the means the writer uses to convey his ideas -- the craft. The craft is making, shaping, forming, selecting. And what the reader gets from the exercise of the writer's craft upon a subject is an experience. If the subject is significant, and the artist is up to it, then the book can enlarge, it can deepen, it can intensify the reader's experience of life (p. 18).

Meltzer says that all the elements important to making a fiction book are just as important to a piece of nonfiction.

Smith (1953) disagrees with this perspective of nonfiction as literature and believes it is the author's intention that distinguishes literature from nonliterature. She writes, "In the telling of a story the author's whole mind and heart are necessarily engaged and his preoccupation is with the art of literature. This can only be a secondary consideration with the writer of an informational book. His interest must center in the special field of knowledge he is to present" (p. 180). She concludes that informational books are "infrequently literature and seldom do they survive the generation for which they are written" (p. 180).

Meltzer refutes Smith's position on nonfiction, claiming she is guilty of remembering only the best writers of fiction when she discusses children's literature and thinks of only the "hacks" when she discusses nonfiction. Other educators support Meltzer's views.

Wenzel and Arbuthnot (1971) believe that "Informational books are as legitimate a category in the body of children's literature as fiction, poetry, or biography" (p. 94). They also state that informational books have a wide range of literary quality. Smith and Park (1977) also recognize nonfiction/informational books as a legitimate category of children's literature.

As teachers implement literature-based programs across the curriculum, they see advantages of children's nonfiction as a vehicle for helping students learn subjects such as social studies, science, and health. Often nonfiction is the catalyst that starts a child down the path of becoming a lifelong reader. "Inquisitive young minds crave new information and there is a world of literature awaiting them," (p.66) states Greenlaw (1978) as she discusses informational trade books and their many uses in the classroom. She contends that informational books should be used to expand and encourage creativity, to supplement and replace textbooks in science or social studies, and to provide for individual tastes in reading. Greenlaw concludes that children can perceive other cultures through

art and ceremonies recorded in informational books and can gain a perspective on countries "attained in no other way" (p. 498).

Despite these strengths, nonfiction still does not enjoy the literary recognition as does fiction. In the past, nonfiction has taken a back seat to fiction, even the name has negative connotation. Author Jane Yolen (1981) says that the word *nonfiction* sounds like it had been in a contest with fiction--and lost. Roop (1992) writes that "Once upon a time nonfiction was the ugly duckling of children's books" (p. 106).

Recent professional books have been published that reflect the growing interest in using nonfiction and informational books in the classroom. Beverly Kobrin's book, *Eyeopeners! How to Choose and Use Children's Books about Real People, Places, and Things* (1988) was the first reference to recommend specific nonfiction titles (over 500 titles) and to suggest ways such volumes help children learn at home and at school. Carter and Abrahamson's book, *Nonfiction for Young Adults: From Delight to Wisdom* (1990), discusses issues related to informational books and addresses the role of nonfiction in young adult book selection. The National Council of Teachers of English published *Using Nonfiction Trade Books in the Elementary Classroom: From Ants to Zeppelins* (Freeman and Person, 1992). This compilation of chapters written by classroom

teachers, college educators, librarians, and children's authors, moves nonfiction into the spotlight and gives credence to the idea that nonfiction literature is gaining momentum as a respected literary genre, important in the information- seeking behavior of children, as well as in their recreational reading.

Informational/nonfiction books are being lauded for the contribution they make by integrating language arts and making interdisciplinary connections to content areas. Each year the Children's Book Council works with the National Science Teachers Association and the National Council for the Social Studies to compile annotated bibliographies of "Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children" and "Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies."

The *Horn Book* magazine annually honors a small number of nonfiction books for excellence in production and graphics as part of their Graphic Gallery Competition. Many of these books can be used in teaching within specific content areas. *The Reading Teacher's* "Children Books" department routinely annotates nonfiction trade books according to content areas such as science or social studies.

In addition to these sources for books, professional journals have regularly published articles encouraging teachers to include children's nonfiction/informational books in courses of study to enrich and extend instruction.

Moss (1991) lists the advantages of using nonfiction trade books as a complement to content texts and provides criteria for selection. She contends that content areas can be individualized by using nonfiction trade books which are closer to individualized reading levels. Nonfiction books also have engaging content and high visual appeal, making them interesting to and exciting for children.

Nonfiction trade books provide for more depth of information on a particular content area. For example, the Renaissance may be addressed in a social studies textbook on one page, while an entire nonfiction book may address the specific topic of cathedrals of the Renaissance period.

Information in nonfiction trade books is arranged more logically than in textbooks. While content can drive the organization of a nonfiction book, textbook content has to fit in a superordinate pattern.

Nonfiction trade books are also more current than content textbooks. Typically content area textbooks are revised every five to ten years, while trade books are published every year (Moss, 1991).

Specific activities for nonfiction are also mentioned in many articles. Young and Vardell (1993) discuss the benefits of changing appropriate nonfiction selections into Reader's Theater scripts that span all content areas. They state, "Using nonfiction books as legitimate literature for

reading and learning in the content areas is an interesting, lively way to share up-to-date information" (p. 405).

Current research, reference materials, professional journals, and increased teachers' interest in using nonfiction/informational books in the curriculum have elevated the status of this genre of literature. Teachers are beginning to value nonfiction/informational books for their contribution to content learning by providing up-to-date information, depth and breadth of topics, logical text arrangement, and by addressing students' individual reading levels.

## Research Studies

There have been many research studies concerning literature-based reading programs and their influence on children's learning. In a landmark study, Cohen (1968) looked at the effect of literature on reading achievement with second graders in an inner-city New York school. She found an increase in reading achievement for those students who received daily exposure to literature. Other studies addressing the issue of student reading achievement in literature-based classrooms (Cullinan, et al., 1974; Eldridge & Butterfield, 1984, 1986; Heibert, et al., 1989; Larrick, 1987; Taylor & Frye, 1989; and Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989) report similar results: that by using literature in the curriculum teachers can increase reading comprehension.

Two studies document the investigation of the content of instruction in literature-based classrooms--what is actually taking place on a day-to-day basis. One of the studies (Emery, 1991) focused on amount of time involved in various literacy tasks within the context of a literature-based classroom. The other (Canavan, 1992) involved participant observation to document the nature of instruction in a literature-based classroom. Both of these qualitative studies share insights into classroom interactions among students and teachers and literature.

A review of literature by the researcher found only one study that addresses, specifically, the use of nonfiction or informational trade books within an elementary literature-based classroom. Herbrig (1980) investigated the use of children's nonfiction/informational trade books in selected fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classrooms.

This study used self-reported teacher surveys and personal interviews with the teachers to document how the books were used. Herbrig (1980) recommended that further study should be conducted to determine the manner in which informational trade books are used within a classroom. Another recommendation was to record reader interaction with nonfiction informational books.

Research studies and a review of literature continue to indicate the need for further research in the area of literature-based classrooms. (Canavan, 1992; Cohen, 1968;

Eldridge & Butterfield, 1984; Herbrig, 1980; Larrick, 1987; Taylor & Frye, 1989; Tunnell & Jacobs, 1989). The studies previously documented have been limited in the areas investigated. Further studies need to focus on how nonfiction/informational books are being used on a daily basis, how teachers use these books, and how students react to them.

In conclusion, this review of literature provides a synthesis of research focusing on components and definitions of a literature-based approach to reading and, more specifically, on the definition of terms and the use of nonfiction/informational literature in an elementary classroom.

# CHAPTER III

# PROCEDURES

## Research Approach

In order to observe the interactions among students, teacher, and informational trade books, a qualitative, naturalistic, ethnographic approach was used for this research. Bogdan & Biklin (1992) define this approach as one in which the main source of data gathering is participant observation and the focus of the study is to provide a "thick description" of what is taking place within the context of the setting. "The ethnographer's goals are to share in the meanings that the cultural participants take for granted and then to depict the new understanding for the reader and for outsiders" (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992, p. 38).

A qualitative design provided information about frequency and types of involvement, as well as pertinent descriptive information about the interactions among students, teacher, and books within the context of the classroom. "Data are collected in the form of words . . . rather than numbers. Data include interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, memos, or other official documents" (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992, p. 30). This design incorporated ongoing observation and data collection in order to provide a description of process

and not just end results. Data analysis was ongoing and inductive, providing continuous opportunities for clarification of the focus of the research. The researcher took on the role of observer-participant and there was little disruption in the natural setting. These elements combined to provide the strength of this study (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992).

In summary, the qualitative research approach includes the characteristics of participant observation, descriptive data, and search for meanings through inductive analysis by the researcher.

## Time

Data were collected for this study starting on April 5, 1994 and continuing until the particular unit of study had been completed on April 21, 1994. The researcher observed the first day the thematic unit was introduced and two days a week thereafter, for the entire school day. One day of observation was missed during this period of time because the students were practicing for a school play. The observations took place during the entire thematic unit from start to finish.

## Subjects and Site

The site selected for this study was a public elementary school located in Wapanucka, Oklahoma, a small town (approximate population of 500) in the southeastern

part of the state. The population included the nine children enrolled in the only third grade classroom in the school and their teacher.

This classroom was chosen because of the instructional techniques used by the classroom teacher. Mrs. T. holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and has taught for 29 years in elementary schools.

During an interview she shared that she began to make the transition to an integrated literature-based approach about four years ago. An educator friend, who at the time was a doctoral student at the University of Oklahoma, shared some instructional techniques and she tried them. She then attended a couple of whole language workshops and began the thematic literature approach with one social studies unit. Her entire curriculum is now planned around thematic units supported by quality literature. She said "Teachers who don't teach from this approach don't know what they are missing. It is so much more interesting. Everything just flows together." She is the only teacher in this school who teaches from this perspective.

Mrs. T. regularly incorporates daily independent, self-selected, silent reading time; shared reading and writing time; literature response journals; literature discussion groups; extension projects; and the presentation of literature by reading aloud to students. She integrates the content areas by teaching through a thematic unit approach.

These are the characteristics that determine literature-based instruction as cited by Zarillo (1989), Hepler (1989), Simmons (1988), and DeLapp (1989).

The teacher had already consented to participate in the study during its conceptualization. After the research proposal had been approved, permission to observe the classroom instruction during the month of April, 1994 was obtained from the principal and the district. Permission was also secured from students' parents (See Appendix A).

## Physical Setting: The School

The school sits on the edge of town. The older part of the building houses the elementary grades and a newer addition to the school accommodates the high school. A building which serves as cafeteria/auditorium is also attached to the main building. It is not a particularly aesthetic looking building from the outside. The main building is built of red brick and the blue, metal cafeteria/auditorium and cinder block gymnasium have been juxtaposed onto it. Upon entering the elementary building, one finds the principal's office on the right; next door to the office is the girls' restroom. One notices immediately the Native American collection of artwork that is displayed down the hallways in the school. This attractive display seems almost out of place in the otherwise nondescript building. I was told this collection had been donated by the various artists to the school. Turning left one sees a

long hallway in which the upper elementary classrooms can be found. To the right is a short hall which ends in a T. Kindergarten, first-, and second- grade classrooms are in the hallway to the left. The right of the T ends in a culdesac where one finds a small room which houses library books and a computer, a music classroom, a storeroom, and Mrs. T.'s third grade classroom. There are also sinks and a water fountain in this area.

Physical setting: The Classroom

Entering the classroom, one finds to the right the "front" of the classroom. The chalkboard is centered along this wall. Above the chalkboard are charts sharing key words and information about when to add, subtract, multiply, and divide.

Counter clockwise around the room there is a large bulletin board used during the daily math lesson. There is a calendar, where each day a child writes a number sentence that equals the day's date in each blank; the day's date and temperature; a clock to show time; a wipe-off board for the word problem of the day; and student-made charts depicting monthly temperature records, freezing points, boiling points, body temperature, and definitions for horizontal, vertical, oblique, and equivalent measures.

Above this bulletin board is a counting chart, a multiplication chart of 7s, a perfect square chart, a chart

of number words, and a chart listing different response activity choices.

Next to this bulletin board is a table which holds two computers and a Geosafari Board. To the right of the table is an oversized student drawn map of the United States. It is outlined, colored, and labeled extensively with book titles and landmarks. In the corner on this wall is a filing cabinet.

The back wall of the classroom is mostly windows. A string is attached at the top ends of the windows and a student drawn time-line with illustrations hangs from it. It begins with the Revolutionary War and continues through the westward movement. Another string runs about half-way down and across the windows and holds student response charts from various books that have been read. A clock is mounted on the wall to the right of the windows. The teacher's desk also sits in front of these windows facing the front of the room.

An unused door, decorated with student charts, is in the corner of the next wall. A tall bookcase is next to the door. It is filled with old books and has a globe on top of it. Next to this bookcase is an oversized student-drawn map of the world. It is also outlined, colored, and labeled. Below this map are low bookshelves on which classroom sets of textbooks and a partial set of encyclopedias are shelved.

On the top of this bookshelf is another globe and several student atlases.

Next to the world map is a metal cabinet with doors and a small table. Above the table is another chart titled "After You Read A Book" which lists alternative response activities. In the corner sits a television and V.C.R. Above it is a teacher-made calendar. On the door, which exits into the hall, there is chart paper on which students write new vocabulary words and definitions they encounter from their reading. A number line encircles the top of the room.

A large round table sits in front of the windows. On it are the books brought in for this unit. Student desks are arranged in two rows of three desks facing each other in the center of the room.

## The Daily Schedule

Upon arrival at school all elementary classes attend a "Good Morning Sunshine" assembly. Students converge in the auditorium where one student from each class has a part. A first grader leads the flag salute, another student tells today's date, a couple of students tell a joke, the lunch menu for the day is read, and children's birthdays are acknowledged with the *Happy Birthday* song. This assembly is part of the daily routine and takes about ten minutes.

Once back in the classroom, a typical day would begin with 10-15 minutes of time for studying the week's spelling

words. (Spelling tests are given each Thursday.) The rest of the morning, until lunch, would be spent reading and responding to literature. This takes many forms and includes the integration of content areas. Children have sustained silent reading time, as well as shared reading time. They also engage in different writing activities, whether self-initiated or teacher selected. Directed lessons are interspersed throughout the day. The afternoon would be a continuation of the morning work. During this time children can also go to the library to get a book or test on the Electronic Bookshelf. The last hour to hour-and-a-half of the school day is spent on a directed math lesson. Children attend art in another classroom every other Thursday. Although the above activities picture a typical day, the schedule is nonetheless flexible.

## Social/Emotional Environment

The social climate of the classroom is neither rigid nor autocratic. The atmosphere is one of informality and sharing. Everyone is at ease and busy. Students do not wait for the teacher to tell them what to do. They often self-initiate activities and go to the teacher to confirm a response project they have chosen. At the end of the first day's observations, comments made by the observer (O.C.) state: "It seemed as if the day went so smoothly--no stress for the children or the teacher. Looking back I can see skills and content were taught within the context of the

literature and appeared to happen unobtrusively." Comments by students were made on two days of the observation period about how quickly the day flew by.

Children feel free to read on the floor, at the teacher's desk, at their own desks, or out in the hall. They often pair up to read, discuss a book, or do a response activity after a book has been completed. Students frequently go to the teacher to share something they have read or written and the teacher validates this interest by occasionally asking them to share it with the rest of the class. The teacher encourages and praises student work and effort in a variety of ways throughout the day. The students are encouraged to take risks by using invented spelling in their writing. When asked by a student to spell a word, the teacher modeled a rhyming word strategy. The student spelled an approximation of the correct word and Mrs. T. said, "Fine, I know what you mean." Another time the teacher remarked, "Honey, it sounds like M A N E, its how we ought to spell it, but it is spelled M A N Y." One can observe the respect between and among the teacher and the students.

## Data Collection

The basic outline for this study was to observe in an elementary classroom in which a teacher uses both fiction and nonfiction/informational children's trade books to teach a thematic unit and collect data to describe what was taking

place. The classroom teacher identified Westward Movement as the topic of the unit to be taught during the month of April. The researcher then asked three experts in the field of children's literature to recommend both fiction and nonfiction/informational books that supported this unit of study.

M. Jean Greenlaw, Regents Professor at the University of North Texas, recommended a list of possible books for inclusion in this unit. Dr. Greenlaw has been a book reviewer for 23 years and has written and spoken extensively about the field of children's literature. Since 1981 she has been a coordinating author for the Houghton Mifflin reading system and is currently a reviewer for *The New Advocate*. An extensive list of recommendations was also shared by Dr. Betty Carter, who teaches young adult and children's literature at Texas Woman's University in the school of Library and Information Studies. She also is considered an expert in the field of children's literature and serves as a book reviewer for *The New Advocate*. Dr. Carter has been a member and past chair of the American Library Association's Best Books for Young Adults committee. The third person asked to contribute to the unit booklist was Dr. Mary Hitchcock, professor at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Dr. Hitchcock has expertise in the field of children's literature and teaches a thematic approach

using literature in her undergraduate and graduate language arts classes at the University.

From these lists a selection of eighty-seven books representing both genres of literature was provided for the teacher and students to use during the westward movement study (See Appendix B). The researcher obtained as many books from the lists as were available from libraries at Texas Woman's University, University of North Texas, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, and personal collections. This variety of books included myths and legends, biographies, poetry, historical fiction, informational series books, and beginning reader chapter books. While the researcher selected books which represented a broad range of subtopics associated with the westward movement, little consideration was given to readability level of the books.

The study used a variety of key-qualitative data gathering techniques. These techniques included fieldnotes, informal student and teacher interviews, student work samples, and photographs.

## Fieldnotes

Direct observation of the classroom was recorded in written field notes that provided a primary data source. Fieldnotes were taken on a lap-top computer by the researcher during the time the class was being observed.

Two kinds of fieldnotes were taken--descriptive and reflective. "The descriptive part of the fieldnotes, by far the longest part, represents the researcher's best efforts to objectively record the details of what has occurred in the field" (Bogdan & Biklin, pp. 108, 119). These notes included material about the physical surroundings, the participants, and the events. A tape recorder was used to capture group interaction and individual interviews. As much as possible the conversations and comments of the participants were recorded verbatim; when it was not possible to write all of the conversation, key words and phrases were expanded immediately after the observation was completed.

Reflective notes were more subjective. "The emphasis is on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices" (Bogdan & Biklin, p. 121). These comments were identified by the notational convention "O.C." which stands for observer's comments and were added during reflective reading of the field notes immediately following the observations.

## Interviews

Another key source of information was interviews, conducted informally, with the teacher and the students and recorded on a mini-cassette recorder. The tapes were listened to, by the researcher, and relevent sections of them were transcribed and coded. This information was

correlated with field notes to establish triangulation of data. Ongoing interviews with the participating teacher documented her rationale and implementation of methods. She was asked about the development of her teaching approach, the selection of trade books for instruction, her use of textbooks in the curriculum, and student assessment. She also discussed the affective benefits, for both the students and herself, of teaching from a literature-based approach.

## Documents

Artifacts such as student work samples (children's writing, journal entries, reading responses, etc.) were collected or copied and keyed into the fieldnotes for triangulation of data. The thematic lesson plan and checklist were also included. Parental release forms were secured in order to use children's work or quotes from children's verbatim comments for publication purposes. Identities of the participants were kept confidential and anonymous.

## Photographs

Photographs provide strikingly descriptive data (Bogdan and Biklin, 1992, pp. 137-144 ). Photos were taken to show the layout of the classroom, furniture arrangement, book collections and storage, bulletin boards, charts, and maps. Photographs were taken the last day the researcher observed.

## Analysis of Data

The constant comparative method of data collection was used (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992, p. 72). Glaser (1978) recounts the steps in the constant comparative method of developing theory as follows:

1. Begin collecting data.
2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus.
3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus with an eye to seeing the diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.
5. Work with data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships.
6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories.

Field notes were transcribed and expanded through researcher reflection, a process in which the researcher read through the notes consciously trying to remember anything that was left out. Comments were added to the notes as they were reread by the researcher. The notes were summarized on a regular basis; these summaries were then examined in an effort to identify categories or patterns.

Once major patterns had been identified, a second person was asked to look at the fieldnotes to assess the accuracy of the categories. This person, a professor of reading education and colleague of the researcher, had experience with analyzing qualitative data. There was general agreement about the identified categories, yet the second person pointed out that some data could be used in several categories. These data were cross-referenced. The emerging data found in summaries were compared with data from other sources; for instance, interviews with key informants were analyzed and compared in an effort to substantiate or refute emerging categories. This process of constantly comparing information from a variety of data sources addresses the issues of validity and reliability and is typically referred to as triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Analysis during data collection also employed coding of data according to emerging categories of behavior. The data were explored and examined in an effort to identify certain typical patterns of behavior. These patterns of behavior were then categorized by similarities. The data were grouped together according to perceived similarities in the behaviors. Code-recode techniques were utilized to achieve consistency of analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This was accomplished by double-coding field notes, once as soon as possible after the observation and, again, at a later time to establish internal consistency. Another researcher also

reviewed portions of the data and assigned codes or categories to it to add reliability to the coding. Emerging categories and themes were used to guide further data collection during the study by providing additional questions to be answered as well as areas where similarities were noted and further investigation was needed to confirm or refute perceptions.

Data analysis after data collection was continued with iterative reviewing, summarizing, and coding according to emerging trends and patterns. Data displays in the form of charts were used as a part of this process to allow the researcher to view many aspects of the data together. Triangulation of information among data sources was continually employed, comparing the researcher's perceptions to those of the key informants and others involved. The information and relationships emerging from this analysis were used to develop a description of the interactions taking place with informational trade books within a literature-based classroom.

This research consisted of an ethnography using qualitative research procedures, with the researcher as the primary instrument of research. The research attempted to gather data through the qualitative research characteristics of participant observer, thick description, unstructured interviewing, document analysis, and ongoing, inductive analysis leading to grounded theory. A narrative describing

the interactions between the teacher, students, and nonfiction/informational books follows.

# CHAPTER IV

## FINDINGS

In order to answer the question, "How are nonfiction/informational trade books being used in a literature-based classroom?" the researcher became a participant observer in a third grade classroom during a unit of study, which began April 5 and ended April 21, 1994. A qualitative method of research was conducted which included the gathering of evidence from fieldnotes, interviews, photographs, and student work samples. Once the samples were coded and analyzed, four major categories of information were revealed. This chapter presents data to support each category of interaction observed during the study.

The chapter is organized into four major sections. The first section will cover implementation. This includes the teacher's approach to planning the year's curriculum, and particularly the beginning of the unit observed for this study. A description of the school's library is also included in this section. Section two establishes the classroom as literature-based by describing interaction within each of the common elements of literature-based programs as described in the literature. Section three addresses assessment and section four describes specifically

the interactions and reactions to and with nonfiction/informational literature.

## Implementation

### Planning

During an informal teacher interview Mrs. T. shared how she planned her curriculum. She said that she planned all the units she would teach during the year before school began. A list of content objectives was established. She then coded the Oklahoma Learner Objectives (state mandated curriculum) to the integrated thematic units. She indicated that covering all the mandated objectives was her biggest concern when she began teaching from this perspective, but that this concern was soon dismissed. She added,

> . . .over and over again we cover these objectives. You cover the objectives the first semester and then they are repeated over and over. That's how students learn them. You can give me any library book and I can show you about ten objectives in several subjects that you can cover.

The researcher saw no written content objectives for the Westward Movement Unit. Other than the semantic map, which listed lesson elements, no other lesson plans were evident. When asked about content objectives, Mrs. T. said she didn't write them out specifically; they were in her

head. The content objectives she then shared were broad: "History-how our country was settled, how hard it was, the different peoples that came, how people pushed farther and farther west." She said that the content objectives were kept broad because it allowed the children to do whatever they wanted to do with them. This led to a question about the need to cover the Oklahoma Learner Objectives mandated by the state. She said that the state requirements had been covered earlier in the year and that the Westward Movement Unit went beyond what the state objectives were.

When asked how she selected books to go with the units she indicated that she used three criteria. One, she selected books she likes. She said, "If I like the books the students usually like them." Second, she selected books based on respected authors--such as Jean Fritz, recipient of the *Orbis Pictus* Award, Newbery Award, and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award. Third, books are selected to support content she wants to teach. She said that sometimes books are recommended by friends, or she may go browse in a bookstore to find books she wants to use. I asked if a balance of fiction and nonfiction was a consideration in choosing books to support the units. She said, "Yes, I try, but I probably have more fiction than nonfiction. Kids like historical books about real people."

When asked what would help her to use more informational trade books to support the curriculum she said

in one word, "Money." This led to a question about the administration's support for a literature-based curriculum. Mrs. T. does not ask the school to buy textbooks or workbooks for her class, and she does not receive money for trade books to support the curriculum. She said, "When I think about how much all the artwork in the halls are worth and how many books that money would buy" . . . (She was referring to the collection of Native American art that is exhibited throughout the school.) She buys class sets of books that she wants to use in her classroom. She said if her husband knew how much money she spent on books he would just die.

I asked how many books she usually wanted to have to support a unit. She said that with most of the units she has a good chapter book and at least ten other books. She also uses newspapers, *Weekly Readers*, and occasionally some stories from the fourth grade basals. She plans for a unit to last two to three weeks.

The last two years the overall organizing structure for the curriculum has been the United States map. Students began the year by studying the Pilgrims in England and the Netherlands, and their voyage to the United States. They continued studying curriculum based upon a chronological time frame and the westward expansion. By the end of the 1993-94 year they have made it to Oregon and California and Alaska. The content areas of math, social studies,

spelling, science, and language arts were integrated as the class journeyed across the continental United States. Mrs. T. shared her semantic map of the lesson plan for the Westward Movement unit (See Appendix C).

## Beginning the Unit

A couple of weeks before the westward movement unit was to begin, the books selected to support the unit were taken by the researcher into the classroom to facilitate teacher planning. When the books were carried into the classroom and set on the table the children were so excited! They were impressed with the number of books and commented about how much money they must be worth. They were not allowed to read the books until the first day of observation.

The books were displayed on a table in the classroom. On the first day of the study the teacher gave instructions for the children to go to the table and choose one chapter book and a shorter book they could read through that morning.

The children were given a Westward Movement Checklist (See Appendix D). This checklist provided some structure, guidance, and objectives in the areas of reading, math, science, language, and social studies. Children would work through these objectives during the unit. From here on children had free choice of the books on the table.

## Library

The school library was housed in a room approximately eight by eight feet. A sign on the door of this room said "Teacher's Lounge." Although the copy machine and a telephone was also in this room, no chairs or couches, refrigerator or microwave gave the room away as a lounge area.

A quick count of books on shelves revealed around seven hundred-fifty books. These books served grades second through sixth grades, a population of approximately sixty students.

Close scrutiny found one shelf of ninety-one nonfiction books (five sets of series books). These included a set of books about young scientists; career discovery; Indian tribes; a Jane Goodall series on animals; and wonders of the seasons, rivers, deserts, etc. Other nonfiction/informational books found in the library were the Magic Schoolbus series, Let's Read to Find Out books, and some biographies. There was an approximate total of one hundred and fifteen nonfiction/informational books in this library.

All the books in this library are on an Electronic Library System. Children read books and then they took a test from the computer database of the Electronic Library System on each particular book. Two computers were set up in the room. The school did not employ a certified

librarian. Instead, a teacher's aid was assigned to the library in the afternoons to oversee the circulation of books and the testing. Students were allowed several attempts to pass the objective tests over the books. The youngsters were not required to take the computer test over every book they read; however, at the end of the year students who had read a certain number of books and passed the tests are rewarded by a "mystery" trip. This year students went to a children's museum in Seminole, Oklahoma. Most all the students chose to participate in the program. The teacher said that students got mad if they read a book only to find there was no test for it. Other than personal books this was the only literature to which the students had access.

When asked about library acquisitions: how many new books were purchased each year, money spent, criteria for selection, etc., Mrs. T. said that books were selected by what software was available on the Electronic Library system. Each teacher was allowed to select one new test-bank disk and the books that went with it per year. This amounted to approximately seventy-five new books per year. Teachers were allowed to request books other than those on the Electronic Bookshelf list only if there was any "extra" money. Tests for these books could be constructed by the teachers and added to the data-base.

In summary, this setting and type of planning reflected the characteristics of a typical integrated thematic unit in Mrs. T.'s class. The first day of this unit was no different, except for the number of books brought in, from other units that the children had worked on during the school year. The minimal library provided little support to curricular areas.

## Literature-Based Curricular Elements

The review of literature established common elements found in literature-based classrooms, such as, reading aloud, response to literature, individualized reading, teacher directed lessons, discussion of literature, and integration of content areas. These elements are addressed individually to establish that Mrs. T.'s classroom was truly literature-based and to describe the interactions which took place within the classroom.

### Integration of Content Areas

By integrating the content areas around a central theme a continuity occurred which made the daily lessons relevant and meaningful to the children. The U.S. map was a central piece of the curriculum and served to connect social studies, reference skills, and map skills to the rest of the curriculum areas.

Social Studies/ Reference Skills

The U.S. map served to help integrate geography and social studies into the daily curriculum. Mrs. T. often went to the map to point out locations discussed in stories and books. Students, after reading a book or story, would label towns mentioned in the story, routes the settlers took, rivers, mountains, railroads, or the section of the country corresponding to the story's setting.

One boy wrote a summary about his book. After it was read to the class the teacher asked him to show the class where this story took place on the U.S. map. Another boy went to the map, found and labeled two towns, one in California and one in Arizona. When asked what he wrote, he said, "This town is where the boy is and this town is where his Pa is at." Another student went to the map with his teacher and identified North Carolina. He followed the storybook family's migration to the West. Once he was finished with his book jacket, he was going to mark the trail on the map. He would also include the trail on the map key in the corner of the map.

The world map was also used. After reading about clipper ships, a boy, D.J., traced the journey on the world map and added it to the map key. Later, Mrs. T. asked D.J. to show the other children the route on the map that the clipper ship had taken.

In order to locate these places on the maps students often used the children's atlases, encyclopedias, and other books as references. One student read *America the Beautiful*, by Katherine Lee Bates, and wanted to put each of the locations mentioned in the book on the map. She looked up Monument Valley, Utah in the atlas and it was not listed. She and the teacher then went to the encyclopedias. The teacher asked her which volume to look in and then helped her look up the topic alphabetically. They had to go to another volume. The teacher said, "This is like a game. I really like puzzles like this." Another girl, who had finished with her project, joined the first girl to label all the locations discussed in the book.

Another day Mrs. T. brought in individual copies of a local newspaper that had included a supplemental children's section celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail. The newspaper had landmarks along the trail listed with a sentence about each one. The teacher assigned one landmark for each student to read about, research, and put on the map. She told them they could use the encyclopedias, atlases, map books, etc. and she would help anyone who needed help.

Students quickly scampered to look in various resource books for their assigned landmark. The students went to the encyclopedias only to find that someone had borrowed several of the copies. They did not have a complete set. Students

were sent to another classroom to see if they could recover the missing volumes, but some of the older students had taken some of them home. Students made do with the resources that were in the room.

By using the various resource books, including some of the books that had been brought in for the unit, all students finally found their landmark, read about it, and put it on the map. Students not only had to use reference skills, but they had to find the appropriate state on the map once they found the landmark. They also had to learn how to make appropriate map symbols for mountains, state capitals, etc.

Science

Two science lessons, which had been planned around this unit, were about the five senses and landforms (See Appendix C for lesson plan).

Children read about landforms (pp. 137-139) in their science books. They then used reference books to find the land elevations for all the continents on the map. These elevation areas were colored in on the world map and added to the map key.

Mrs. T. set the purpose of the five senses science lesson, which continued over the course of several days, early on during the reading of the books which had been brought in for this unit. She told the children that the science lesson they would do from these books would be about

the five senses. She asked the children to help her list the five senses on the board. She then told the students to think of the five senses and how the characters in the books felt as they read their books. They were asked to write down what they found. This lesson continued throughout the unit.

One day the children were asked to take out their science textbooks, read page 70, and answer the two questions at the bottom of the page. Mrs. T. then handed out a class set of Aliki's *My Five Senses* and asked the students to read them in pairs. After reading the book, each child was to draw illustrations of each of the five senses and label them. As different books were read and discussed, Mrs. T. would come back to describing the characters' emotions through the five senses: how they felt, what they saw, what they smelled, etc.

During the last week of the unit children were given an objective test over the five senses for a science grade. The culminating activity with the unit books were individual description/poems about the westward movement and most children focused on the five senses to portray the feelings of the settlers.

One day, after lunch, the children sat on the floor to watch *Reading Rainbow* on the T.V. The book shared was *Milk Makers*, by Gail Gibbons. Two more books, *From Blossom to Honey* and *Whales, Dolphins and Mammals* were highlighted

during this 30 minute segment. After the program Mrs. T. initiated an informal discussion about the four food groups. The students shared the foods they had eaten during the week and Mrs. T. tied that information to what the settlers had available to eat during their westward journey. This was an opportunity for an incidental science lesson.

Math

Although time was set aside each day for a dedicated math lesson, Mrs. T. integrated math with the literature throughout the day.

One day math was used as a summary activity to the morning reading. After the students had finished reading a book of their own choice, the teacher asked them to get out a piece of paper and, using something from the book they had read that morning, make up a written math problem. They were also to write out the math sentence and work the problem. When everyone finished she asked the students to get out their chalkboards. All the students had an individual chalkboard, chalk, and sock in their desks. Each pupil, in turn, came to the front of the classroom and read his/her story problem. During these readings the other students wrote down the number problem on their chalkboards and calculated the answer. The whole class would hold up their chalkboards to show the teacher. The student at the front of the room would then say, "I hope you got _____ for an answer." The problem would then be worked on the large,

wall-sized chalkboard for those students who needed assistance. An example problem, which a student originated from *Coyote Steals the Blanket*, by Janet Stevens, was: There were 300 blankets. Coyote stole 94 blankets. Hummingbird stole 87. How many blankets were left?

Mrs. T. also dealt with using math in practical ways throughout the day. At various times, students were asked to calculate how many minutes were left of class before recess. Similarly, they were asked to calculate how many pages they had read in their books and how many pages they had left to read.

Students were also encouraged to use math independently. Two girls went to the blackboard and put a problem on the board. They wrote the current year and subtracted the date in the book *Aurora Means Dawn*, to find out how long ago the story happened. They then went to the teacher and told her the story happened one-hundred and ninety-four years ago.

Another girl wrote a retelling about Annie Oakley from the book *Little Sure Shot The Story of Annie Oakley*. The teacher asked how old Annie was when she died. The student went to the board, set up the problem on her own, and then calculated the arithmetic problem.

The last day of the unit the teacher was doing a review math lesson on perimeter and area. After she had elicited

formulas from the children and they had been written on the chalkboard, she asked,

> How can perimeter or area be used in real life? Pretend you are settlers and have just made it to Oregon. You are there and trying to set up a homestead. Make up a story problem about finding the area or perimeter. How would you use it?

Students were having a difficult time thinking of a reason to use area or perimeter. After giving hints about why settlers would need to use these formulas, and providing plenty of wait time, the teacher gave students some examples, such as figuring the size of a corn field, or a living room. The students, after being posed the problem, could set up the problem and work it. Mrs. T. said, "This shows me one thing, third graders can work a perimeter or area problem, but have little reason to use it. Math has to be useful in order for you to remember and use it."

Music

One morning, after the morning assembly, Mrs. T. and her class stayed in the auditorium to sing two songs. One song was about the gold rush and the other was about settling the west. The songs had been found by a student in one of the books that had been brought in for the unit. Mrs. T. played the piano and the children sang from ditto copies of the songs. They really enjoyed the music. The children asked to sing one song three times. When asked if

there was a specific objective for singing these songs, Mrs. T. said, "Not really. Just that the songs were about history and that people made up songs about their everyday lives." These objectives were not explicitly stated to the students.

Spelling

One morning I entered the classroom to find new students. Mrs. T. asked the whole class to get ready for their spelling tests and gave tests to three different groups of students, round robin fashion. Each word to be spelled was pronounced in isolation and then presented in context in a sentence. Not all the students had the same number of words. When two boys finished their test they went to the bookshelf to look quietly at books. I later asked her why the extra students were in the classroom during spelling and how the spelling program worked.

She explained that the school used the Economy spelling program. Students were ability grouped and went to different classes for a pretest. The teacher looked at the pre-tests and made individual spelling lists for the students to study. The students were then tested on these words the following Friday in their own classrooms. Children usually do not have more than 10 to 12 words to learn each week. They study words taken from the master lists of words on which they were pretested, and then they self-select words that are added to the list to make up the

week's list. Their self-selected words come from those they encounter during reading time or words that are taken from consistent misspellings in their individual journals.

Each child had a small word list attached to his/her desk. The first thing in the morning students spent some time studying spelling words. Some students got out their individual chalkboards and practiced, and others called out words to each other. They often paired up to study the words.

Language Arts

Reading, writing, speaking, and listening were used as the glue that held the content areas together. For example, children wrote summaries, journal entries, and letters written from a story character's point of view, etc. Sometimes the teacher would ask students to make lists of kinds of transportation, ways settlers used their senses, etc., or to write poems. Students shared some of their writing daily both with individuals and the whole class. When it was time for a student to share in front of the class, the others listened respectfully.

In summary, each content area was integrated into the Westward Movement Unit. Students were engaged in meaningful activities driven by student interest (such as self-selected reading material) and need (such as individualized spelling lists), rather than time and textbook organization. This interrelatedness of content areas provided a learning

atmosphere free from stress which, in turn, validated the students' attempts at risk taking.

## Directed Lessons and Word Study

Directed lessons seemed to follow two formats, planned and incidental.

### Planned

Planned directed skill lessons on homophones, a/an, possession, subject/verb agreement, capitalization and punctuation, contractions, and cursive letters were observed. Mrs. T. would ask the children to return to their seats and pay attention to the front of the room while she shared short mini-skills lessons. Rarely did they last more than 10 minutes.

When, for example, she discussed the homophones she said, "Sometimes I see signs in town that don't use these properly. Sometimes they are hard." Another day she praised a child publicly for using the correct form of the pronoun homophones "there-their-they're."

Most of the time she would put examples of sentences on the board and ask the students to signal the correct response by either holding up one finger or two, holding up a fist or open palm, or showing an "a" or "an" on a piece of paper. The sentences were always either about the children personally, or related to the unit of study. When discussing the "a/an" lesson, she said that they knew the

correct answer when they talked about it, but were not using it in their writing so they were going to talk about it some more. Skill competency was recognized when it was used in application.

Incidental

Often students would ask about a skill which would result in an on-the-spot mini-skill lesson. One child asked a question about contractions. The teacher got the class's attention, wrote the word on the board to indicate the difference in the possessive "your" and the contraction "you're." She praised the student by saying, "I'm glad you noticed that. Most older children would have written it like the possessive."

When asked who was telling a particular narrative story, the teacher replied, "I'm glad you brought this up. It is something I want us all to look at. Who told each of the stories you are reading?" That afternoon, as a closure activity, children were asked to think about and share who was telling the story they had read. The class discussed key words that would clue them in to this information.

During shared reading, either by the teacher or a student, a vocabulary word would be taught incidentally. Students would either be given a definition, or asked to predict what a word would mean.

Mrs. T. used modeling in a variety of ways to teach vocabulary words incidentally. When a child asked help with

a spelling word she modeled a rhyming word strategy. When the child attempted the spelling she said, "Fine, I know what you mean." Another time she sounded out the word "buffalo" for a student and said, "You know I never tell you how to spell a word correctly and you do a wonderful job."

She modeled context clues to help with word meaning several times. Structural analysis was also a strategy presented. Once a child was sharing a response to a story and read, "Many people died of cholera, a disease people got from drinking impore (sic) water."

Mrs. T. asked the student what impore meant.

The student said, "Not good."

Mrs. T. replied, "Right, but it is pronounced impure. Pure means good and the prefix 'im' means not."

She also encouraged students to visualize. When a character was described as a "sawed-off ranch foreman" she asked students to picture him in their minds before discussing what the term meant.

Word Study

Word study was part of the everyday curriculum, but generally was initiated by the students at this point in the school year. A couple of times Mrs. T. asked students to look in the book they read that morning and come up with one word that they didn't know and write the pronunciation, respelling, and make sure they knew the meaning.

There was a vocabulary chart on the doorway leading into the hall. As students encountered words they did not know, they looked them up and wrote the word, respelling, and a definition on the chart. By the end of the second week of the Westward Movement Unit a second page had to be added to the chart. Students were interested in building vocabulary and finding unusual words. They often discussed word meanings and pronunciations among themselves.

To summarize, the teacher had specific skills lessons in mind as objectives during this unit of study. Other skills were taught incidentally, as needed by the students. Skills were introduced, discussed, and practiced a number of times. When Mrs. T. saw the skills being used in application she would assume they had been sufficiently taught.

## Sustained Reading

Children were given large segments of time to engage in sustained reading and respond to literature during each class day. Children read silently, in pairs, in small groups, and, after preparation, orally to the rest of the class. The teacher also read to the class.

The entire curriculum in Mrs. T.'s class centered around reading for meaning. For example, Mrs. T. talked about book characters' feelings in a previously read book, and then she asked the students to watch for emotions in the characters of the books they were currently reading: what

they smelled, saw felt, etc. Several times the teacher asked students to think about what they had learned that day from their reading. This information was observed and coded into the notes in the form of observer comments. Later, the teacher was asked about this observation and she agreed that comprehension was a major yearly objective.

A comprehensive record of each student's reading for the year was constructed by looking at three major areas. (1) The teacher kept a reading list of all the books she had required the students to read in class, either literature or basal stories. (2) The school has the Electronic Bookshelf library system. Children self-selected books to read and then took comprehension tests on the computer over the books. A management system kept a list of each student's reading record, and those records were acquired for each child. (3) Each student kept a record of the books he/she self-selected from the unit books.

Independent Silent Reading

Mrs. T. devoted most of each morning to silent reading time. Children could select any books from the table to read. Sometimes she would ask them to find a book they could finish that morning. She also expected them to continue reading self-selected chapter books. Students were always eager to read. Two different times during the observation period students asked Mrs. T. if they could begin reading their book. One time she laughed and said, "I

can't remember any student asking to read a book when I taught the other way." Students felt free to scatter all over the room in a variety of poses during silent reading time, totally engrossed in the books.

Often the teacher would give a silent reading assignment. There was a class set of the book *If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon* by Ellen Levine. This book has a question/answer format. Each child was assigned two pages to read silently. Once they were finished they were told to get a partner and share what they had read.

Paired Reading

Students often chose to read with partners. They might take turns reading aloud, or they might read together silently. The couples scattered all around the room, and if the noise bothered any of them they went out into the hall to read. This paired reading experience often culminated in a joint response activity such as a play, summary, or questions and answer charts.

Oral Reading

Oral reading was usually the result of the sharing of a response activity with the rest of the class. The teacher often asked the students to practice with someone before they shared their reading orally in front of everyone. Instructions for morning closure might be to read something

the youngster had written and practice it to read to the class.

Teacher Read-Aloud

The two books read aloud to the children during the unit of study were *The Blind Colt*, by Glenn Rounds, and *The Hundred Dresses*, by Eleanor Estes. As Mrs. T. introduced *The Blind Colt* she said there were several other books by this author in the classroom and the author was a real cowboy. She chose this book because it fit in with the five senses by addressing sight. *The Hundred Dresses* was chosen because it tied to the way the people dressed during this time in history. She compared the dresses book with another book, *If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon*. She also referred children to other books on the table that would show how people dressed back then.

When reading aloud, the teacher stopped often to ask questions of the students or allow them to make connections to their own lives by sharing an experience orally. She often gave them a purpose for listening such as "Keep your ears open to see if they are having fun with Wanda or making fun of her." Students were asked to make predictions about what they thought would happen next in the stories. The teacher did not read aloud every day. When asked which books had been read by the teacher during the year the students quickly rattled off six titles (See Appendix B).

In summary, reading was used in meaningful ways to gather information, share with others, and for pure enjoyment. Reading skills were practiced in the context of purposeful reading.

## Response to Literature

One hundred and sixteen samples of literature responses were collected over the two and one-half week period of observation (See Appendix E). These samples represented fourteen different kinds of response activities. The responses were coded to indicate that they were either teacher-directed, to correspond with content lessons, or self-selected by the students. Whether the responses were to fiction or nonfiction/informational books was also noted.

In an interview, Mrs. T. shared that at the beginning of the year she introduced each response activity one at a time. The response was modeled by the teacher and assigned to the whole class. Once a response had been introduced and practiced, the children were free to choose that activity for a book response. The teacher was moving the students toward independence.

Two charts in the classroom listed possible response activities for student reference. One chart entitled, "After You Read a Book" listed: (1) write a letter, (2) write, or write and draw a summary, (3) make a journal entry as a character, (4) make a chart, and (5) write a poem. The other chart, entitled "Response Activities", listed: (1)

design a book jacket (front and back), (2) write a diary entry, (3) write a letter to the character in the book, (4) make a dictionary of new words, (5) retell and draw the book, (6) rewrite the ending, (7) write a letter to the author, and (8) do a puppet show about the book. At this point in the year students were encouraged to self-select response activities for each book they read. When a boy asked Mrs. T. what he should do as an activity she said,

> You choose your activity--I could tell you what to do, but your book will tell you what to do. You kids come up with more activities than I could imagine. You may choose your activity. Some of you may want to make a science lesson or a social studies lesson out of it. You may want to write a summary, do a drawing, make a map, or write a poem or chart. If you aren't able to find an activity then I will help you choose.

The only stipulations required by the teacher at this point were that students choose one of each kind of response during a unit study.

The first day of the unit Mrs. T. noticed several of the children illustrating and writing summary charts. She said she was glad that they were all getting the charts out of their systems. They would have to choose other response activities for the rest of the unit study.

Another time a child approached the teacher and asked what he could do. She said it was up to him, but he couldn't do what he did yesterday. There were choices on the wall to give him ideas and it was his choice. He later came back and said he was going to do a book jacket. Making a book jacket required the writing of the summary of the book, writing a piece about the author, and illustrating the front of the jacket. Mrs. T. told the student to first write a summary of the book to go on the jacket.

Assigned responses

A couple of assigned response activities related to the science lesson on the five senses. After having read Aliki's *My Five Senses*, children were asked to list the five senses and give an example of each in an illustration. Another time, students were asked to think about what the settlers saw, felt, tasted, and heard on their westward journey as they read their morning book. This focus resulted in each student writing a couple of paragraphs.

Students were given a class set of *If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon*. The boys were assigned the first seven pages and the girls the last seven pages to read. They could read in pairs or individually. All of the children paired up to read this assignment. Once they had the pages read they were to decide on the most important facts they had learned and then write these facts on one large piece of chart paper taped on the chalkboard. These facts were categorized and

rewritten in a paragraph form by the teacher. It was then displayed in the classroom.

Another teacher directed response activity was for the students to read in their books, formulate a question and answer, and then share the information with the others. Mrs. T. reminded students to read carefully, in order to be accurate, because others were not reading their book. Students shared their questions/answers orally with the rest of the class.

One response activity, instigated by the teacher, resulted in labeling the map. Students were each asked to label an Oregon Trail landmark after they had researched and read about it.

Math journals were kept by each student. They were assigned to write word problems from the literature they had read. The number sentences were also written and the answers calculated.

Students were required to take a piece of writing through the entire writing process. It became the culminating activity for the unit. The students did a rough draft, self-edited, peer-edited, conferenced with the teacher, and completed the final copy on the computer. Some of the students used the computers in the classroom, but the teacher arranged for all of the students to go to the computer lab in order to finish the assignments. Mrs. T. made a copy of each of the completed assignments for the

students to take home. The originals were displayed on the string across the back of the classroom. The students were very proud of them.

Student Chosen Response Activities

It was understood that a response activity of some kind would be done after the reading of each book. The children looked forward to these activities. A couple of times individual students asked to stay in from recess in order to work on a project.

The children were quite creative in their responses. Two girls wrote a play from the book *Little Sure Shot,* a biography about Annie Oakley. Once it was completed everyone watched as a mustachioed male character and Annie Oakley carried on a dialogue read from the script.

One girl drew a two-foot tall paper doll character and wrote a character diary entry on her dress from the book *Only Opal*. The book title was the character's eyebrows.

Several students wrote letters, to the teacher, summarizing a book they liked; to the author; or to a character from the book. One girl wrote a letter as the paintbox in *Aramenta's Paint Box*. The paint box shared where it had traveled and to whom it had belonged.

Other response activities included book jackets, dictionaries, lists of facts, retellings, charts, poems, diary and journal entries, and summaries.

Students always shared the response activities in some way with the rest of the class, either by displaying the charts and drawings in the hall or in the classroom, or by sharing orally. Often, as a closure activity, students were required to come up to the front of the classroom and share what they had written with the rest of the class.

In summary, data supported that Mrs. T. taught from an integrated literature-based approach. As a result, children were able to make connections between and among content areas. Response activities formed the basis for reading comprehension assessment. Response activities were both assigned and self-selected. These response activities provided students opportunities to connect content to literacy. Response activities formed the basis for reading comprehension assessment. They also provided the teacher opportunities to evaluate content and language arts by looking at authentic samples of student work.

## Assessment

Two categories emerged concerning assessment. One category was grouped as teacher assessment. The second category, a major focus of the classroom, was student self-assessment.

### Teacher Assessment

During an interview, Mrs. T. shared that grades were taken from the student's written responses. She took

language grades and reading grades based upon comprehension from their writing. They also had spelling, social studies, and science grades. Math grades were taken from the story problems they wrote from their reading. She said,

> Language grades are taken from the children's written responses. I will not grade a skill until it has been introduced and talked about in connection with their writing many times. I will tell the students I am grading a certain skill before giving them an assignment. Sometimes they are given two grades--one for content and one for the targeted skill.

Students were given short criterion-based tests in content areas. For example, the gradebook reflected a test was given over the five senses during the time this unit took place.

Mrs. T. assessed oral reading by listening to students read from their trade books. She would sit on the floor, or in a chair beside them while they were reading silently, and ask them to read a section aloud to her. She often showed excitement when they were able to decode difficult words. One boy registered shock on his face when he read through a particularly difficult set of words. Mrs. T. exclaimed,

> Clayton, Clayton, I'm proud of some of the words you sounded out. You looked all the way to the end of the sentence and self-corrected. Do you

know why? Because you are listening to what you are reading. Good job!

Mrs. T. would often go to the blackboard and write a respelling for a word a student was having difficulty pronouncing. The student would sound out the word and go on reading.

Comprehension was also assessed informally. The teacher would go from student to student checking on their work. She would take time to discuss the story as it was being read, sometimes asking probing questions about what they were reading. Example:

Teacher: "What did you notice about the clothes?"

Student: "The clothes looked dirty."

Teacher: "Why do you suppose that? Why didn't they just put them in the washing machine?"

Mrs. T. also checked listening comprehension. After students had shared a piece of writing with the class, she asked the audience(class) to share what they had just heard.

Mrs. T. always had something complimentary to say to each of them and asked questions that allowed them to self-reflect and critique their own work.

## Student Self-Assessment

Students were given an evaluation checklist to keep track of the requirements for this unit in the areas of reading, math, science, language, and social studies.

It was more for their use than for the teacher. Mrs. T. said the checklist was designed to help the students self-assess their progress. As they accomplished an objective students would cross it off their list.

Students were also given Student Conference Record for Reading forms. They were asked to fill out a form for each book read (See appendix D). This form served as a short, informal book report and also required students to list what kind of response they would like to do for this book. This form served as a reading record.

A major focus of instruction was directing children to self-assess. Jason came up to the teacher and showed her his work. He said, "Mrs. T., this is more than I have ever written in a long time." She said she was really proud of that.

One student was going to write a letter. The teacher said, "Write a good one." The student said "I'll do my best. It seems since I have been writing cursive, I can write better than I can print." Mrs. T. said, "I've noticed that too, I thought about that the other night."

Sometimes Mrs. T. had to redirect students to self-assess. When asked to find an unknown vocabulary word from the book being currently read, one boy said he knew all the words in his book. So Mrs. T. sat down with him and went through the book, asking him to read and asking questions

about some vocabulary words she thought he might not know. He found some words to put on the vocabulary list.

Students were asked time and time again to reread their writing, or to read it with a partner, before they either rewrote a draft, or orally shared the writing with others. When the teacher asked one young girl to read what she had written, Mrs. T. asked her if she had reread it first. When she replied no, Mrs. T. sent her back to reread it to herself to see if she found anything she wanted to change first.

When a student was having difficulty reading his writing to a partner, he showed it to the teacher and said "I have to work on this." She said, "Yes, when you find your mistakes it is much better than if I find them." Another boy said it didn't sound right and she replied, "You're right. Most of the time if you would just reread your writing you could catch your mistakes."

Mrs. T. asked the partners to listen carefully to help the readers by making sure the writing was clear and then making suggestions on how the writing might make more sense. Often rereading resulted in revising, adding more information, or just coloring the illustration.

When students self-edited a piece of writing that went through the entire writing process, they were told to circle the words that they thought were misspelled. They took the piece to the teacher and she went over each word, "talking

out" the correct spelling. If the word was spelled correctly she wrote OK above it.

Often the morning or afternoon closure activity would be for the students to reflect on what they had learned that day. The teacher accepted all comments and wrote them on chart paper. She told the children that this was a rough draft and she would later categorize the comments by topic. They would become a wall chart to be read later.

To summarize, informal assessment took many forms in this classroom. The teacher assessed students on an ongoing basis, mindful of each student's strengths and weaknesses. She constantly directed students to look critically at their own work while encouraging them to take chances and use the knowledge they had gained in application.

## Nonfiction

It has been established that Mrs. T. incorporated literature into a thematic unit of study, and that the children interacted with these books to construct meaning in content areas. This section will address specifically the interaction with nonfiction/informational literature during this unit of study. Nonfiction/informational literature was defined for this study as (1) books written expressly to present information, facts, or generalizations which do not rely on a story framework as the primary emphasis, and (2) biographies.

As Presented and Shared by the Teacher

In an interview Mrs. T. shared that she tried to use a balance of fiction and nonfiction books to support the units of study, but she conceded that she probably had more fiction than nonfiction. Mrs. T. provided a list of core books and stories read by the entire class (See Teacher's Reading List in Appendix B). This list indicated that thirty-eight percent of the books selected to support units of study during the 1993-94 school year were nonfiction. During the year six books were read aloud to the class by the teacher. Of these, five were fiction. The other was a biography. During the Westward Movement unit the fiction books *The Hundred Dresses* and *The Blind Colt* were shared orally with the class.

Nonfiction materials other than trade books were used during the unit of study. Mrs. T. brought in a class set of a supplement to a local newspaper, which celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail, as reading material for the students. The information from the newspaper supplement became part of a geography lesson.

She allowed students to watch *Reading Rainbow* one afternoon. This show shares and reviews various types of literature. This particular show highlighted *The Milk Makers,* by Gail Gibbons, and reviewed two other nonfiction books. The information in *The Milk Makers* was extended in a class discussion linked to nutrition.

Two informational books were used as class reading sets during the unit of study, *My Five Senses* and *If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon*. Mrs. T. had the children read these books silently, or orally in pairs, and then use them in inquiry-driven activities. These books served as the basis for content learning. The science textbook was used supplementally.

Often Mrs. T. would link fiction and nonfiction/informational books by association. When she read aloud *The Hundred Dresses* she referred children to the unit books on the table which explained or illustrated the way people dressed during this time period as resource books.

Another time a student shared a piece of writing about railroads. Mrs. T. said:

> Children, you haven't read the book Mrs. Briggs brought about the railroad. You haven't chosen all the nonfiction books yet. If you do you will learn a lot. I won't require you to read every word. Look at the books and find out about the railroads. You could put the railroad routes on the map.

This led to a student finding the book and looking through it.

Mrs. T. made several comments about books being true. After a student had shared part of an historical fiction

book and was asked to show the rest of the class on the map where the story had taken place, he shared that the teacher had said this part of the story was really true. Another time she commented, "That's what I find fascinating, it really happened to people."

## Children's Reactions and Interactions

Students were given no criteria for selecting books to read from the table other than the teacher asking them to select a chapter book to read during the unit and a book they could finish in one morning. They spent a lot of time looking through the books on the table and selecting ones to read. While they read books considered appropriate for their reading level range in their entirety, they looked at parts of books, illustrations, maps, etc. of those books that were clearly above their reading level. Mrs. T. referred students to the higher reading level nonfiction/informational books to confirm what they had read in other books and to illustrate points she would bring out in discussion. For example: After a class discussion about what people wore during this particular time period, Mrs. T. told the children to look at some of the other books on the table to see what the people looked like and how they dressed during this time. Students often paired up to look through books. If one student found something interesting in a book he/she would share with others in the class.

During the course of the study students were informally interviewed on tape about books which they had currently read. One of the standard questions was "Was your book fiction or nonfiction?" Followed by, "How can you tell?" Of the nine children interviewed, six students were able to correctly tell if a book was fiction or nonfiction, but some of their reasons were shaky.

When asked about *Field Full of Horses* (Nonfiction/informational), one student said it was fiction because he had seen a bunch of horses like them and the pictures looked like it was a true story.

Another child read *Little Sure Shot* (Biography) and said he didn't think it was a real story because it didn't have real pictures, only illustrations. When I pursued this by asking how he might find out if the book was true or not, he did not know. He said the book was fiction because of the pictures.

The book, *Along the Santa Fe Trail* (Nonfiction/informational), was discussed.

Researcher: "Do you think it really happened?"

Student: "No...Well, yea."

Researcher: "Why do you think it really happened?"

Student: "I don't know . . . because there really was a Santa Fe Trail."

Researcher: "Do you think it is about a real person?"

Student: "Yes."

Researcher: "Is it fiction or nonfiction?"

Student: "I think nonfiction."

Researcher: "Why do you think it is nonfiction?"

Student: "Because it sounds true and it has words like 'I' in it."

Throughout the course of the study students were informally asked how they went about choosing a book. Answers were often vague or noncommittal. Some reasons given were (1) "Looked like a good book", (2) "I wanted to know more about . . .", (3) "I never read a book by Barbara Cooney before", (4) "I liked the cover.", (5) "I wanted a short book to finish this morning." Students did not comment about readability level; however, the teacher told a student to look on a page and if there were more than five words on the page he did not know, the book was probably too difficult for him to read.

While looking at the books on the table, one student said, "Here is the railroad book Mrs. T. was talking about. It's not to read." When asked why it wasn't to read he said it was a "look through" book. He then took the book to his seat and promptly found a map of the Transcontinental Railroad that he later transferred to the class map.

The map activity helped students pull factual information from the books. A boy said, "This is the best book!" and proceeded to summarize it. "This book really happened." And then he told where in Oklahoma the story took

place. He went to the atlas to find the places Oolaga and Seneca to place on the class map. This book was historical fiction.

Responses to literature often took the form of expository text. Children wrote dictionaries, wrote questions and answers found in the books on a wall chart, or sometimes just made lists of facts. After reading the book *A Field Full of Horses*, a girl made a list of tools you would need if you owned a horse.

Students chose a large percentage of nonfiction/informational books from the unit book choices. They read sixty-four books brought in specifically for this unit; fifty-six percent of these choices were nonfiction. Of the books students self-selected from the library, during the year, fifteen percent were nonfiction (See Appendix F).

In summary, book genre was a consideration only incidentally discussed in this classroom. Mrs. T. used nonfiction/informational books as the major content reading material in the classroom, and often linked fiction to nonfiction; however, there was no indication that the genre of informational/nonfiction books had been formally discussed with the students.

Students looked at books as books. They had gut feelings about the genre of a book, but did not always have solid reasoning to back it up. Of the books brought in the classroom to support the westward movement unit, students

chose nonfiction/informational books over fifty-percent of the time.

## Summary

This chapter presented the results of data analysis to answer the question, "How are nonfiction/informational books being used in a literature-based classroom?" The implementation section described the preparation, planning and library support that preceded actual instruction. Description of the integration of content areas, daily student interactions, and teacher instruction were detailed in the second section. Student self-assessment and teacher assessment was described in section three. Section four looked at specific interactions and reactions with the nonfiction/informational literature by teacher and students.

# CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Current theories of reading reflect the theoretical shift in the way researchers view the process of reading. Emphasis is currently on the interactive view of reading in which schema and background experience play a vital role (Rumelhart, 1989). As a result, education is reflecting a trend toward a more literature-based curriculum ( Brown & Tomlinson, 1993; Danielson & LaBonty, 1994; Hepler, 1989; Heibert & Colt, 1989; Norton, 1992; Taylor & Frye, 1989; Tunnel & Jacobs, 1988; Zarillo, 1989).

Within this movement there is a growing interest on the part of professionals in using the genre of nonfiction/informational trade books to support content area teaching (Billig, 1977; Carter & Abrahamson, 1991; Freeman & Person, 1992; Young & Vardell, 1993). Several books have been published in recent years that address this specific genre of literature and the benefits of its integration into the classroom curriculum (Carter & Abrahamson, 1990; Freeman & Person, 1992; Kobrin, 1988). Textbooks written for the study of children's literature include chapters on nonfiction literature (Brown & Tomlinson, 1993; Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1987; Norton, 1987). Journal articles recommend the use of nonfiction as read-aloud material, models for

writing, Reader's Theatre, and as a complement to content textbooks.

Although nonfiction/informational trade books are being recognized for the contribution they can make to the curriculum, there is little research to show how they are being integrated into the curriculum by classroom teachers.

The purpose of this study was to describe teacher/student interactions with nonfiction/informational trade books. Three questions served as points of focus: (1) "How are nonfiction/informational trade books being used in a literature-based classroom?", (2) How does the teacher present and share this literature?", and (3) How do the children react and interact with nonfiction literature?" To answer these questions the researcher became a participant observer in a third-grade literature-based classroom. The study took place for two and one-half weeks during the teaching of an entire thematic unit about the westward movement. Data were collected through fieldnotes, audiotapes, informal interviews with the teacher and students, photographs, student work. During the process, the participant observer reflected on and analyzed the incoming data by writing summaries and memos. Constant comparative methods of analysis were used in order to develop a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Analysis of data was addressed in four major sections: (1) implementation, (2) literature-based curricular

elements, (3) assessment, and (4) nonfiction. These findings are discussed in a later section.

## Procedures

A qualitative, naturalistic, ethnographic approach was used to study the interactions of the teacher and students with nonfiction/informational trade books within a literature-based classroom. Collection of the data began on April 5, 1994 and lasted through April 21, 1994, for two and one-half weeks. It was the intent of the researcher to observe a completed thematic unit of instruction. Key qualitative data-gathering techniques were used to collect data through observation, fieldnotes, audiotaping of class sessions, informal interview with students and the teacher, photographs, and collections of documents such as students' work samples, lesson plans, lists of books read, and checklists. Using the constant comparative method of building grounded theory (Bogdan and Biklin, 1992), data were analyzed and coded, looking for recurring events and activities. The data were merged with observer comments, summaries, and memos. The data were then physically sorted to validate the emerging patterns of observation. By gathering and grouping together pieces of evidence four major categories emerged.

In summary, the research approach was qualitative incorporating the characteristic elements of participant observation, collection of descriptive data, and a search

for recurring patterns through inductive analysis by the participant observer. This led to the generation of hypotheses concerning nonfiction/informational trade books in an elementary literature-based classroom.

## Implications

Finding a literature-based classroom in which to look at interactions with nonfiction/informational books was crucial to this study. It was presumed that students in a literature-based classroom would have access to more books of all kinds and that the teacher would incorporate books into teaching strategies. It was necessary to validate that this classroom was indeed literature-based in order to seek out interactions with nonfiction/informational books in particular.

It was difficult finding a truly literature-based classroom in which to conduct research. When the researcher was speaking with classroom teachers, they would lament that they would like to teach from this approach; however, their administration
would not support it with a workable time schedule or resources. Many teachers who said they were literature-based were, in fact, not.

This particular year Mrs. T. had only nine students in her classroom. Teaching in a rural school, in which there is only one grade per school, a teacher will at times have a low number of students. Last year this teacher had twenty

students in her classroom; her teaching methods were the same. For the purposes of research, fewer students made it easier to observe all students, rather than focus on one or two students to study in detail. Fewer students also facilitated the data gathering process.

## Implementation

### Objectives/Content

Mrs. T. was aware of the content objectives that she wanted the children to learn although she did not explicitly write them down. The semantic map served as her informal planning guide for the unit. Within the unit, objectives were addressed for specific content areas. For example, with the science mini-unit on the five senses the teacher wanted the students to know what the five senses were and be able to give examples of them. Students were tested over this knowledge with an objective test. Again, these objectives were not written down anywhere.

This teacher was aware of state curriculum requirements and made sure that they were covered throughout the year. She knew what she wanted the children to learn from the Westward Movement Unit and from the lessons inherent in that unit. She was drawing from years of teaching experience and because her school district did not require extensive written objectives, most of the planning was in her head. While internal planning alone seemed to work well for this experienced teacher, one wonders if an inexperienced teacher

could implement a curriculum with this type of planning. Writing explicit behavioral objectives at the beginning of the planning of the unit, and giving some description about process, would allow a novice teacher to keep on track and make evaluation of these objectives and accountability to state learner objectives easier.

Mrs. T. indicated that keeping student portfolios would be a good thing for her to do. It would greatly facilitate a novice teacher's documenting student progress and providing accountability to state and district objectives.

This school had no curriculum requirements beyond the Oklahoma Learner Objectives. After covering the state requirements the teacher had (within the mores of the community) complete academic freedom as far as content and methodology . Curriculum planning in schools that mandate curriculum above that of state requirements, or that mandate rigid curriculum elements to be included as part of daily lessons, would be more difficult. Individual school requirements and philosophy would impact the successful implementation of this approach in other settings.

Teacher Philosophy

Mrs. T. was an oasis in a desert. She was the only teacher in the school teaching from a literature-based approach. After twenty-five years of teaching from a traditional perspective, she changed her method of teaching to a holistic, literature-based approach. Informal

interviews led me to suspect that this philosophy was inherent within her while she taught from the traditional approach, but it was only after a colleague shared some holistic strategies and she attended a whole-language workshop, that she felt the confirmation to openly move towards teaching from this perspective. She indicated that she put off retirement because her change in philosophy made teaching more pleasurable to both her and her students. While this study reveals only one teacher's change in philosophy, it implies that the old adage "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" is not always true.

Administrative/School Support

Although Mrs. T.'s principal knew she was teaching from a literature-based approach and recognized her as a superior teacher, there was little effort on the part of the administration to provide curriculum support. Mrs. T. did not purchase textbooks and purchased only a few workbooks for her classroom, yet she was not given any extra money with which to buy literature, the basis of her instruction. This teacher was successful in implementing a literature-based approach only because she was willing to expend great sums of her own money to support it. While she was doing wonderful activities with literature in the classroom with limited resources, one wonders what could have been possible with administrative support. Teachers need and deserve continued support of the administration, with ongoing

training and resources, in order to be the kind of effective teacher that every child merits.

One way the administration could provide support is by offering workshops for teachers within the school district. Mrs. T. was recognized by the principal as being "one of the best teachers in the school." By providing workshops on the literature-based approach to teaching, the methods that have proven to be successful for "one of the best" teachers in the school could be shared with others. The administration could also provide support, in the form of partial tuition or pay incentives, for teachers to go to off campus workshops or take courses at a nearby university.

Another way administration could support teachers is to provide a professional library of books and journals relevant to their teaching areas. Having journals and books that reflect current theories and practice might provide an impetus for teachers to try some of these strategies and activities, or perhaps, result in discussion of new methodologies.

A third way administration could support teachers in developing a literature-based philosophy is to provide opportunities for teachers to observe successful literature-based classrooms, either in their own district, or in other districts. Observing successful programs would provide a model for change and lend support for those teachers in transition.

This school's library was minimal at best. Seven-hundred and fifty books for approximately sixty students, grades two through six, is hardly adequate for reading needs, much less sufficient to support a year's instruction using thematic units. Teachers and students need a fully stocked library. A trained librarian, with ongoing funding to keep the collection full and up-to-date to correlate with the curriculum, would be one of the best types of administrative support a school could provide.

Children read fifty-six percent of the nonfiction/informational books brought into the classroom for the Westward Movement Unit even when some of the books were clearly above third grade reading level. The chart showing that children self-selected only fifteen percent nonfiction/informational books to read from the library, at first glance, might suggest that children did not choose this genre of literature on their own. However, closer scrutiny revealed that only fifteen percent of the books in the library were nonfiction, and that the children read all the nonfiction/informational books that were available to them.

This study, and others, suggests that when children have more nonfiction/informational books available they will read them. Implications are that libraries need to provide a balanced collection of both fiction and nonfiction/informational books.

This study yields information of value to classroom teachers. Because classroom teachers do not typically read dissertations, the information found in this study needs to be shared in a format accessible to typical classroom teachers. A series of articles for a publication in journals such as *Instructor,* or *Teaching K-8* would make this information available to teachers in the field. Possible topics to be addressed in this series would be: curriculum planning in a literature-based classroom, how to use selection aids to choose books for thematic study, criteria for selecting good nonfiction/informational literature, and tips on using nonfiction/informational books in a literature-based classroom.

## Literature-Based Curriculum

A synthesis of research identified common elements found in literature-based reading programs: read-aloud, response to literature, individualized reading time, teacher-directed lessons, discussion of books, and integration of literature to all content areas. Data revealed that Mrs. T. incorporated all of these elements into her classroom.

Mrs. T. used literature as the main focus of her classroom instruction. Content objectives were taught mainly from trade books or basal stories. Textbooks were used as supplemental materials. Mrs. T. said she used the social studies textbooks as references for cities they read

about in trade books. For example: the class read "The Rice Bowl Pet," out of a fourth grade basal, and then went to the social studies book and read the chapter about San Francisco. Science books were used similarly. The children did work in math workbooks and map workbooks during the year. Mrs. T. said, that with the aid of the encyclopedia, she could draw almost all of the objectives she wanted to teach during the year out of the literature.

The fact that eighty-seven books were brought in to support the Westward Movement Unit changed the way the unit was taught from last year. When asked what books Mrs. T. used during this particular unit last year she looked in a box and pulled out six paperback books. They were: *The Pioneers*, by Marie & Douglas Gorsline; *Going West: Cowboys and Pioneers*, Young Discovery Library Series; *Ox Cart Man*, by Donald Hall; *Wagons West Off to Oregon*, by Catherine Chambers; *Aramenta's Paint Box*, by Karen Ackerman; and *If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon*, by Ellen Levine. Three of these books were fiction and three were nonfiction/informational. The last two were included, by the teacher, in this year's Westward Movement Unit. When asked why she did not use all of them this year she said she just didn't think about them. Mrs. T. had used an equal number of fiction and nonfiction books in last year's teaching of this unit; however, all the nonfiction books included were narrative prose.

Books on a variety of readability levels were included, by the researcher, for the Westward Movement Unit. The teacher was asked if she was put off by the fact that books clearly above the student's reading level were included in the unit books. She said no. Students used them for references and she encouraged them to look through them and just read parts they were interested in. She had a couple of students who could read any of the books. Students, during the course of the unit study, were observed using the nonfiction/informational books for reference, and in some cases reading excerpts from them. From observations and teacher interview, one could imply that books on a variety of reading levels should be included as literature to support a thematic unit. Including books of various reading levels would insure that children on varying levels of reading competence would have appropriate books to read and would help provide resources for an inquiry-based method of teaching.

These students were readers! Their excitement over books was evident when the books for the unit were brought in. The students marveled at the number of books and commented about how much money all those books would cost. On the last day of the study, when it was apparent the books were leaving along with the researcher, students exclaimed, "You're not taking our books!" They were obviously upset that they would not be able to continue to read all the

books. These comments showed that youngsters in Mrs. T.'s class valued books and were excited about reading.

Seven of the nine students, who participated in the Electronic Bookshelf program, read over one hundred books during the year. One student read forty-nine and another student, who did not attend this school all year, read thirty-one. Of the total eight-hundred and eighty-one books self-selected by the students from the library, only one-hundred thirty-five were nonfiction, accounting for fifteen percent of the total number of books read.

Children were given large blocks of time in which to read and respond to literature. Students were supported in their literacy by being allowed to work in pairs or small groups at will. Reading for meaning was identified as a classroom objective by the researcher and later confirmed by the teacher. This was confirmed again and again during the course of the study as children were asked to read for meaning and then share the information with peers in the form of response activities.

The integration of content areas into thematic units allowed students to acquire knowledge in relevant and meaningful contexts. Use of the student-made U. S. and world maps as a central focus throughout the year not only helped to integrate geography and social studies into the curriculum, but allowed students to synthesize instructional, fact-based information from historical

fiction. For example, after reading the fiction trade book, *Clipper Ship* by Thomas Lewis, a student marked the route of the clipper ship on the world map. Another student followed a story family's migration from North Carolina to the west by identifying landmarks on the U. S. map.

Whether this literature-based classroom environment motivated students to read, or if the children were already avid readers before entering this classroom, makes no difference. Even the students who were not proficient readers read consistently. Students were reading a variety of books and were making connections to content areas via this literature in a pleasurable and meaningful way.

## Assessment

Student self-assessment was continually stressed during the course of each school day. Students were encouraged to look over their work, to re-read what they had read, to read each other's work, and to reflect on what they had learned. This push towards independence was done with a gentle touch and consistant praise and confirmation, which prompted students to feel comfortable taking risks and promoted the camaraderie of the learning environment. By allowing students latitude to re-evaluate their own work before sharing it with others in the class, or turn it in for evaluation by the teacher, Mrs. T. was encouraging students to move toward independence. They were also able to develop a growing sense of their evolving competencies. Self-

evaluation was an inherent part of the classroom environment and was a major strength of this literature-based curriculum.

Data revealed that content objectives were also assessed informally by the teacher. These objectives were not written down in any fashion by the teacher; however, the teacher could articulate what she wanted students to learn from the unit. She said objectives for the unit were kept broad so that children could do whatever they wanted to do with them. As a teacher educator, this statement coming from a novice teacher would make me shudder; however, inferences can be made about the meaning of the statement based upon the teacher's experience. When asked to expand on that statement, Mrs. T. said that when the objectives are broad students are able to pursue subtopics of interest within the larger thematic unit.

Grades were taken for the content areas of language arts, reading, writing, social studies, science, and math from daily performance samples. Students were not assessed on a skill until it had been covered in class and they were told in advance that the piece that they were working on would be graded on that specific skill. Mrs. T. said she constructed objective tests for content assessment during the year and grades were taken from these tests. She said this year no student had made below eighty on any of the objective tests she had given.

Mrs. T. said she did not take grades or evaluate the Westward Movement Checklist that was given to the children at the beginning of the unit study. She said she didn't want to grade it. She wanted them to enjoy the unit and not worry about grades. This checklist was for the children to monitor their own progress toward learning about the westward movement. I was given all the checklists at the conclusion of the unit and every one had been filled completely. These third graders were able to self-monitor their own progress and make plans to complete various activities on the checksheet. Whether or not all third graders would be capable of self-monitoring their progress is questionable; however, teachers could give students checklists and move them towards independent learning through modeling and monitoring.

Map work was evaluated informally and formally. Students completed two map workbooks during the year. They learned relational map skills, such as north, south, east, west, etc., from these books and grades were taken on some of the pages. Locational skills were assessed informally by the teacher observing students identifying areas on the maps and listening to their discussions about the locations. Students learned the names of states and countries on the maps by using them. No grades were given for locational skills observed.

Students did learn! Any youngster could stand at the maps and discuss events that took place from east to west, based upon books that had been read and the documentation of geographical locations students had written in on the maps. Students used encyclopedias and dictionaries to look up information and words to study, they made up math story problems based upon information found in the literature, and they used language skills in the context of their writing.

Again, in this situation, the teacher's experience played a major role in her assessment techniques. Information about each student's strengths, weaknesses, and accomplishments during the year was in her head and she could articulate them; however, this information would not warrant the accountability required in most school districts. If one was looking for documentation to compare one student's knowledge with another's, or to show exact knowledge gained and how much information had be learned from the beginning of the unit to the end of the unit, the documentation was just not there. This lack of documentation would not help to diagnose a child who was having particular learning problems, advocate for a child who did not score well on the yearly achievement tests, or quiet a disgruntled parent who felt his/her child was not making adequate progress.

A portfolio, compiled for each child, would serve to help document these areas of subjectivity. Checklists could

be constructed for any curriculum area to show growth over time or number of observations of incidence for a particular skill. Anecdotal notes could be jotted down on adhesive labels or on post-it-notes, and later transferred to individual portfolios, to serve as documentation of observations and interactions. Test scores and daily performance samples would help to validate observations. Mrs. T. was already involving the students in the writing process and self-assessment, which is a major piece of portfolio assessment, but documentation of these skills also need to be included in a portfolio.

Portfolio assessment would provide the documentation needed to plan instructional objectives, record students' performance in specific areas, advocate for children who do not test well on standardized tests, and provide concrete information to use in conferences with parents and school administrators.

## Nonfiction

Mrs. T. used nonfiction/informational trade books as a portion of materials to support the curriculum. She purchased class sets of nonfiction/informational trade books and used them as the primary texts for reading. Textbooks were used supplementally. During the Westward Movement Unit two informational trade books were read by the entire class, *My Five Senses* and *If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon*. Students were encouraged to connect information in the

fiction trade books they were reading to the nonfiction selections. This was demonstrated when the teacher asked students to pull examples of the five senses from the trade books they were reading about the westward movement.

Mrs. T. modeled the making of connections with fiction and nonfiction for the children. While reading aloud *The Hundred Dresses,* a fiction book, she referred the students to the nonfiction books about the westward movement to look for examples of the way people dressed during this period in time. Another way she connected fiction to nonfiction was to refer to the maps, or asked students too, to point out a place or route that was discussed in a book.

Nonfiction resources other than trade books were used in the classroom too. During the study, Mrs. T. used a supplemental newspaper as reading material and she allowed students to watch *Reading Rainbow*, an educational program which highlights children's literature. The class also used reference materials, such as almanacs, atlases, dictionaries, and encyclopedias.

Mrs. T. indicated that, although she tried to choose a balanced number of fiction and nonfiction selections to use for whole class reading, she probably had more fiction. This was documented by the teacher's reading list of books read by the entire class for the year in which twenty-six of forty-one total books were fiction. All of the nonfiction books on the list were narrative prose. Of the six books

read aloud by the teacher during the school year only one was nonfiction and that was a biography, with a narrative story, much like fiction. There was a similar trend in the teacher's core reading list for the class. Very few of those books were examples of expository prose.

Mrs. T. made reference to the term nonfiction only once during the study. ". . .You haven't chosen all the nonfiction books yet. If you do you will learn a lot. I won't require you to read every word . . . "
While students chose the fiction and biographies to read in their entirety, often the nonfiction/informational books were used as references, or to confirm information found in other books. For example, while looking at the books on the table, one young man said, "Here is the railroad book Mrs. T. was talking about. It's not to read." When asked by the researcher why it was not to read, he replied that it was a "look through" book. He then took the book to his seat and found a map showing the route of the transcontinental railroad, which he later transferred to the U. S. map. Another time the teacher referred students to the nonfiction/informational books on the table to look at the way settlers dressed.

Books were not formally addressed by the teacher as either fiction or nonfiction during the course of the study; however, she did comment about parts of the historical

fiction books being true. The idea that events in books really happened was more implicitly modeled by the discussion and labeling of town, landmarks, and routes on the maps. Conversely, there was no mention of what was "made-up" in the stories. Mrs. T. consistently helped students pull factual elements out of the historical fiction literature by using the maps; however, she did not point out the parts of the same books that were obviously fiction and could not have happened. In order to teach children to be critical readers distinctions should be taught about fiction and nonfiction as early as possible.

When asked the criteria for the self-selection of books to read, students were vague and noncommittal. Their comments were "it looked good", "I wanted to know more about . . .", "I never read a book by . . .", "I liked the cover", or "I wanted a short book I could read this morning". Students selected books in light of content only when they were either implicitly or explicitly directed to them by the teacher. It seemed that students self-selected books to read based on their personal preferences rather than content driven or genre driven reasons.

Students were asked in informal interviews whether books they had read were fiction or nonfiction. Six of the nine students interviewed correctly identified the genre of their book, but gave unreliable reasons for their choices.

These data support the idea that although third graders read and recognized nonfiction information in trade books, they may not have the sophistication, albeit due to the lack of instruction, to understand or care about the difference. This supports Sebesta and Iverson (1975) who wrote that children and publishers are not put off by the definition controversy concerning fiction and nonfiction and that nonfiction is a major part of the reading diet of many children. Children will read nonfiction if it is available.

Third graders are taught introductory lessons on the Dewey Decimal System and are capable of using a card catalog file. Children should be taught important elements of the classification system using real books and real card catalogs, rather than teaching this skill with fill-in-the-blank worksheets. If they can attain these skills, I would assume that they are cognitively able to understand differences in fiction and nonfiction genres of literature if they are so instructed.

In trying to simplify the fiction/nonfiction issue, it seems teachers have succeeded in making it more difficult. One problem may be that teachers really don't know what to teach children about these distinctions. A study by Nilson and Donelson (1985) shows that not only do children not know about the distinction between fiction and nonficition, teachers don't either. Teachers need to address the fiction/nonfiction issue with students in ways other than

teaching fiction is true and nonfiction is false. This type of information negates critical reading. Students become passive readers instead of asking if parts of the story could really have happened.

There are some skills teachers can teach to facilitate understanding about fiction/nonfiction genre distinctions. Teaching that fiction is written in a story format and nonfiction is not a story may be enough information to present to third graders at first. Then finer distinctions can be discussed in relation to real stories and literature as children encounter them. If nonfiction/informational books, as well as fiction, are used on a daily basis in the classroom, there will be opportunities to discuss these finer points. Teaching key words that denote what voice books are written in could become a point of class discussion. Another element to teach youngsters to look at is the spine of a book, or inside cover, to see how the book is cataloged. Reflecting about whether certain parts of books could really happen, and then referring to other books about the same topic, in order to validate the information, would help students along the road to becoming critical readers.

Students responded to literature in fourteen different ways. All of these responses had been modeled by the teacher during the year and completed as a class activity before students were allowed to self-select them. Lists of

possible response activities were displayed on the classroom walls. The teacher would also accept any other type of response activity that was not on the list.

Data revealed that there was little difference in responses to fiction and nonfiction when students were allowed to self-select. Responses from fiction books totaled thirty-one. Responses from nonfiction books, with teacher-directed responses factored out, were thirty.

Teacher-directed response activities were heavily weighted towards nonfiction. The teacher-directed responses were the result of the nonfiction/informational books used in integrated content lessons for social studies and science. These response activities, directed by the teacher, often were in the form of expository writing. Students were asked to respond to nonfiction/informational books with expository responses, such as, lists of facts, questions and answers, description poems, and wall charts; however, most of the models provided for the children were of narrative fiction. Children should be provided models of both expository and narrative literature if they are asked to respond with both forms of writing.

Students' favorite response activities with both nonfiction/informational books and fiction were letters and written/drawn summaries. These data imply that when children are allowed to self-select responses, they use the same type of response activities for both genres of

literature. Teachers should teach varied responses to literature with both fiction and nonfiction/informational literature.

All response choices presented by the teacher were written forms. Recognizing that children have multiple intelligences (Lazear, 1994a; Lazear, 1994b) and providing response choices in all areas, such as verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spacial, bodily/kinesthetic, and musical rhythmic, would allow students to respond to literature through a wide range of activities. Children should be allowed to use their strengths and enhance skills in areas of weaknesses by responding to literature in a variety of ways.

## Summary

While Mrs. T. did use some nonfiction/informational books and materials in her classroom, data revealed that she leaned toward fiction. Most of the nonfiction used in the classroom was narrative, much like fiction. She did not directly teach distinctions between the literature to the students, and only addressed it implicitly within content lessons. Students were asked to fill out a Student Conference Record for each book they read. This form implicitly favored fiction by the inclusion of the statement "Tell me something about the story so far." If students were required to use this form all year they would be forced to find a "story" in all literature.

Mrs. T. had received no training about nonfiction in her preservice college courses and lacked the knowledge of criteria for selecting good nonfiction/informational books. She did not have access to selection aids in order to make selections of nonfiction/informational books to support her thematic units. Administrative support, in the form of a well-stocked library and a qualified librarian with funds to keep an updated and balanced collection, would have been an asset to Mrs. T.'s curriculum.

While Mrs. T.'s class was definitely benefitting from a warm, supportive environment, holistic methodology, and wonderful activities in a literature-based classroom, one can only wonder at the difference knowledge about nonfiction/informational books and administrative support could have made.

## Discussion

The need for descriptive studies of actual practice in literature-based classrooms has been expressed by educators and researchers (Simons, 1988; Pearson, 1989; Zarillo, 1989). Research is also needed to describe teacher/student interactions with nonfiction/informational trade books within the literature-based classroom (Herbrig, 1980)

By providing descriptions of one successful, isolated, literature-based classroom within the context of a traditional school, perhaps other teachers will be able to recognize that it is possible to incorporate literature into

the curriculum without total school support and encouragement. It is the teacher's personal philosophy that has the greatest influence in the classroom. Perhaps the description of actual classroom practice will provide a model and encourage veteran teachers in transition toward a literature-based approach to continue their efforts.

This study provides evidence of "what is" in one literature-based classroom. By providing the grounded theory that describes the nature of instruction in a literature-based classroom, and more specifically the interactions with nonfiction/informational books within this classroom, the research community is enriched. Perhaps this study will provide a basis for more research in this area.

The manner in which nonfiction/informational books are used in one elementary classroom can lead to a better knowledge of the contributions made by this genre of literature to content curriculum. By sharing the way one teacher presented and shared this literature, and the way students reacted and interacted to nonfiction/informational books, teachers may begin to increase their understandings of the value and use of these books in the classroom.

In summary, the present study informs practitioners how one teacher was able to teach from a literature-based approach with little administrative support. Through the description of actual practice a model of implementation can be formed that will provide vicarious experiences for other

teachers to draw from in their quest to incorporate nonfiction/informational books into content curriculum.

## Recommendations for Further Study

Future research is needed to establish classroom practice of the use of nonfiction/informational books within a literature-based elementary curriculum. Are nonfiction/informational books being used in other elementary classrooms? If they are, how are they being used? Given proper instruction in the differences between fiction and nonfiction, are third grade students able to distinguish between the two genres? Is it necessary for students to recognize the difference between fiction and nonfiction in order to get maximum benefit from the literature? If students knew the difference between fiction and nonfiction would they respond differently to each genre? If students were given a wider range of choices of response activities, other than written, would they choose to do them?

Studies looking at the use of and student/teacher interactions with nonfiction/informational literature in upper elementary grades and high school are also needed.

Investigation of the instructional role of nonfiction/informational trade books could increase understandings of their relationship to pupil achievement and help determine the relationship of these books to other teaching materials.

Research determining if the inclusion of nonfiction/informational literature in mandatory children's literature courses for preservice teachers would lead to the use of more nonfiction/informational literature in actual classroom practice could prove useful.

# APPENDIX A

## LETTER

Dear Parents,

I am conducting a study in association with the University of North Texas that will describe the use of informational trade books in an elementary classroom. During the Month of April, I will be observing in the classroom. During this time I would like to audiotape, keep written notes of observations and conversations, and collect samples of student work and other classroom papers.

ALL INFORMATION GATHERED WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. YOUR CHILD'S NAME WILL NOT BE ASSOCIATED WITH ANY OF THE INFORMATION COLLECTED.

This study will further the knowledge educators have about using nonfiction literature in the elementary school curriculum.

Sincerely,

Connie Briggs

I give my permission for my child to take part in this study. I have read the description of the study and I understand it. I understand that NAMES WILL NOT BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE RESULTS AND THAT ALL INFORMATION WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my child's participation in this study at any time.

Date _____ Child's Name _____

Parent or Guardian's Signature _____

# APPENDIX B

# BOOKLISTS

# WESTWARD MOVEMENT UNIT BOOKLIST


*Adler, D. (1993). *A picture book of sitting bull.* NY: Holiday House.

*Arnold, C. (1992). *The ancient cliff dwellers of mesa verde.* New York: Clarion Books.

*Ashbranner, B. (1984). *To live in two worlds.* NY: Dodd, Mead & Co.

Bandes, H. (1993). *Sleepy river.* NY: Philomel Books.

Bates, K. (1993). *America the beautiful.* NY: Macmillan.

Bernhard, R. (1993). *Spotted eagle and black crow. NY:* Holiday House.

Bernhard, R. (1993). *How the snowshoe hare rescued the sun.* NY: Holiday House.

Bierhorst, J. (1993). *The woman who fell from the sky.* NY: William Morrow & Co.

*Blumberg, R. (1987). *The incredible journey of lewis and clark.* NY: Scholastic.

*Blumberg, R. (1989). *The great American gold rush.* NY: Bradbury Press.

Brenner, B. (1978). *Wagon wheels.* NY: Harper Trophy.

Bruchac, J. & London, J. (1992). *Thirteen moons on turtle's back.* NY: Philomel Books.

Bulla, C. R. (1977). *The secret valley.* NY: Harper Trophy.

*Christian, M. B. (1992). *Hats off to John Stetson.* NY: Macmillan.

*Christian, M. B. (1993). *Who'd believe John Colter?* NY: Macmillan.

Cohn, A. L. (1993). *From sea to shining sea.* NY: Scholastic.

Cohen, C. L. (1985). *Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind Crockett.* NY: Mulberry.

Conrad, P. (1985). *Prairie songs.* NY: Trumpet.

_____. (1989). *My Daniel.* NY: Scholastic.

*_____. (1991). *Prairie visions.* NY: HarperCollins.

Cooney, B. (1994). *Only Opal.* NY: Philomel.

dePaola, T. (1988). *The legend of the Indian paintbrush.* NY: Scholastic.

Dewey, A. (1990). *The narrow escapes of Davy Crockett.* NY: Mulberry Book.

*Elish, D. (1993). *The transcontinential railroad.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*Fleishman, P. (1992). *Townsend's warbler.* NY: HarperCollins/Charlotte Zolotow.

*Finsand, J. (1983). *The town that moved.* NY: Dell/ Yearling.

*Fisher, L. (1990). *The Oregon trail.* NY: Holiday House.

Fontes, R. & Korman, J. (1992). *Calamity Jane at Ft. Sanders.* NY: Disney Press.

Fontes, R. & Korman, J. (1992). *Davy Crockett and the highwaymen.* NY: Disney Press.

*Freedman, R. (1980). *Immigrant kids.* NY: Dutton

*Freedman, R. (1983). *Children of the wild west.* NY: Scholastic.

*Freedman, R. (1988). *Buffalo hunt.* NY: Holiday House.

*Freeman, R. (1992). *An Indian winter.* NY: Scholastic.

*Gibbons, G. (1992). *The great St. Lawrence Seaway.* NY: Morrow Jr. Books.

*Greenlaw, M. J. (1993). *Ranch dressing.* NY: Dutton Books.

Grossman, B. (1993). *Cowboy Ed.* NY: HarperCollins/ A Laura Geringer Book.

*Hansard, P. (1993). *A field full of horses.* Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

*Herda, D. J. (1993). *Historical America the north central states.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____ (1993). *Historical America the northwestern states.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____ (1993). *Historical American the southeastern states*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____ (1993). *Historical America the south central states*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____ (1993). *Historical America the southwestern states*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____ (1993). *Historical America the northeastern states*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*Hoobler, D. & Hoobler, T. (1992). *The trail on which they wept*. NY: Silver Burdett.

*Ingoglia, G. (1992). *Johnny Appleseed and the planting of the west*. NY: Disney Press.

*Lasky, K. & Knight, M. (1993). *Searching for Laura Ingalls: A readers's journey*. NY: Macmillan.

Levinson, N. (1988). *Clara and the bookwagon*. NY: Harper & Row.

*_____. (1992). *Snowshoe Thompson*. NY: HarperCollins.

*Lewis, T. (1978). *Clipper ship*. NY: Harper Trophy.

*Lightfoot, D. J. (1992). *Trail fever: The life of a Texas cowboy*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

*Lucas, E. (1993). *The Cherokees*. Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

Lyon, G. (1992). *Who came down that road*. NY: Orchard.

_____. (1993). *Dreamplace*. NY: Orchard.

MacBride, R. ( 1993). *Little house on rocky ridge*. NY: HarperCollins.

*McGovern, A. (1974). . . . *If you lived with the Sioux Indians*. NY: Scholastic.

*McNeese, T. (1993). *West by steamboat*. NY: Crestwood House.

*_____. (1993). *Conestogas and stagecoaches*. NY: Crestwood House.

*Meltzer, M. (1993). *Gold: The true story of why people search for it, mine it, trade it, steal it, mint it, hoard it, shape it, wear it, fight and kill for it*. NY: HarperCollins.

*Miller, R. (1991). *Reflections of a black cowboy.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Silver Burdett.

*Noonan, J. (1993). *Lewis and Clark.* NY: Crestwood House.

*O'Neill, L. (1993). *Wounded knee: The death of a dream.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

Politi, L. (1993). *Three stalks of corn.* NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

*Ransom, C. (1994). *Between two worlds. NY:* Scholastic.

Roop, P. & Roop, C. (1992). *Ahyoka and the talking leaves.* NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

*Rounds, G. (1967). *The treeless plains.* NY: Holiday House.

Rounds, G. (1991). *Cowboys.* NY: Holiday House.

*Russell, M. (1993). *Along the Santa Fe trail.* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman & Co.

Sanders, S. (1989). *Aurora means dawn.* NY: Bradbury Press.

Sandin, J. (1989). *The long way westward.* NY: Harper Trophy.

San Souci, R. & Pinkney B. (1993). *Cut from the same cloth: American women of myth, legend, and tall tale.* NY: Philomel.

Schecter, E. (1992). *The warrior maiden.* NY: Bantam Little Rooster Books.

Shefelman, J. (1993). *A Mare for Young Wolf.* NY: Random House.

*Smith, C. (1992). *The Legendary wild west.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____. (1992). *Bridging the continent.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____. (1992). *Exploring the frontier.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____. (1992). *The Conquest of the west.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____. (1992). *Native Americans of the west.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

*_____. (1992). *The riches of the west.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook Press.

Sneve, V. (1989). *Dancing teepees.* NY: Holiday House.

*_____. (1993). *The Navajos.* NY: Holiday House.

*_____. (1993). *The Sioux.* NY: Holiday House.

*Spinner, S. (1993). *Little sure shot: The story of Annie Oakley.* NY: Random House.

*Stanley, J. (1992). *Children of the dustbowl.* NY: Trumpet.

*Steele, P. (1992). *Little bighorn.* NY: Macmillan.

Stevens, J. (1993). *Coyote steals the blanket.* NY: Holiday House.

Turner, A. (1992). *Katie's trunk.* New York: Macmillan.

Van Laan, N. (1993). *A Blackfoot legend buffalo dance.* Boston: Little Brown.

Van Leeuwen, J. (1992). *Going west.* NY: Dial Books.

Weidt, M. (1992). *Wild Bill Hickok.* NY: Lothrop, Lee, & Shepard.

Williams, D. (1993). *Grandma Essie's covered wagon.* NY: Alfred Knopf.

*Nonfiction/informational book as defined in study

## 1993-94 TEACHER'S READING LIST

| | TITLE OF BOOK | SOURCE |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Knots on a Counting Rope | Library Book |
| 2 | Annie and the Old Ones | Basal, Fiesta-HM |
| 3 | Hopi Indians* | Library Book |
| 4 | Rain Forest* | Big Book-Scholastic |
| 5 | What Are Jungles* | Library Book |
| 6 | Rain Forest Secrets* | Library Book |
| 7 | Dance of the Animals | Basal, Weavers-HM |
| 8 | Let Me Tell You About Arthur | Basal, Panorama-HM |
| 9 | My Trip With Dad | Basal, Ginn |
| 10 | Trouble at Beaver Dam | Library Book |
| 11 | Paul Bunyan* | Library Book |
| 12 | The Wednesday Surprise | Library Book |
| 13 | Billy's Flag | Basal |
| 14 | Mary of Mile 18 | Basal |
| 15 | Robin and the Sled Dog Race | Basal |
| 16 | Whatever Happened to C. Columbus* | Libary Book |
| 17 | Yagua Days (Puerto Rico)* | Basal |
| 18 | The Very First Last | Basal |
| 19 | Burning of the Rice Field | Basal |
| 20 | The Secret Three | Library Book |
| 21 | The Titanic Lost and Found* | Library Book |
| 22 | Squanto* | Library Book |
| 23 | If You Sailed/ Pilgrims* | Libary Book |
| 24 | If You Were a Pilgrim* | Library Book |
| 25 | Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Girl* | Library Book |
| 26 | The Skeleton Inside You* | Library Book |
| 27 | Magic School Bus Inside You* | Library Book |
| 28 | Felicity | Library Book |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 29 | George Washington* | Library Book |
| 30 | Buttons for Gen. Washington | Library Book |
| 31 | Aaron and the Green Mt. Boys | Library Book |
| 32 | George, the Drummer Boy | Library Book |
| 33 | Deborah Sampson* | Library Book |
| 34 | Trapped in Time | Library Book |
| 35 | Cabin Faced West | Library Book |
| 36 | Rice Bowl Pet | Basal |
| 37 | Trip to the Mayor* | Basal |
| 38 | Secret in the Barrel | Library Book |
| 39 | Wagon Train* | Library Book |
| 40 | Five Senses* | Library Book |
| 41 | If You Traveled in a Covered Wagon* | Library Book |

*Nonfiction/Informational Books as Defined in Study

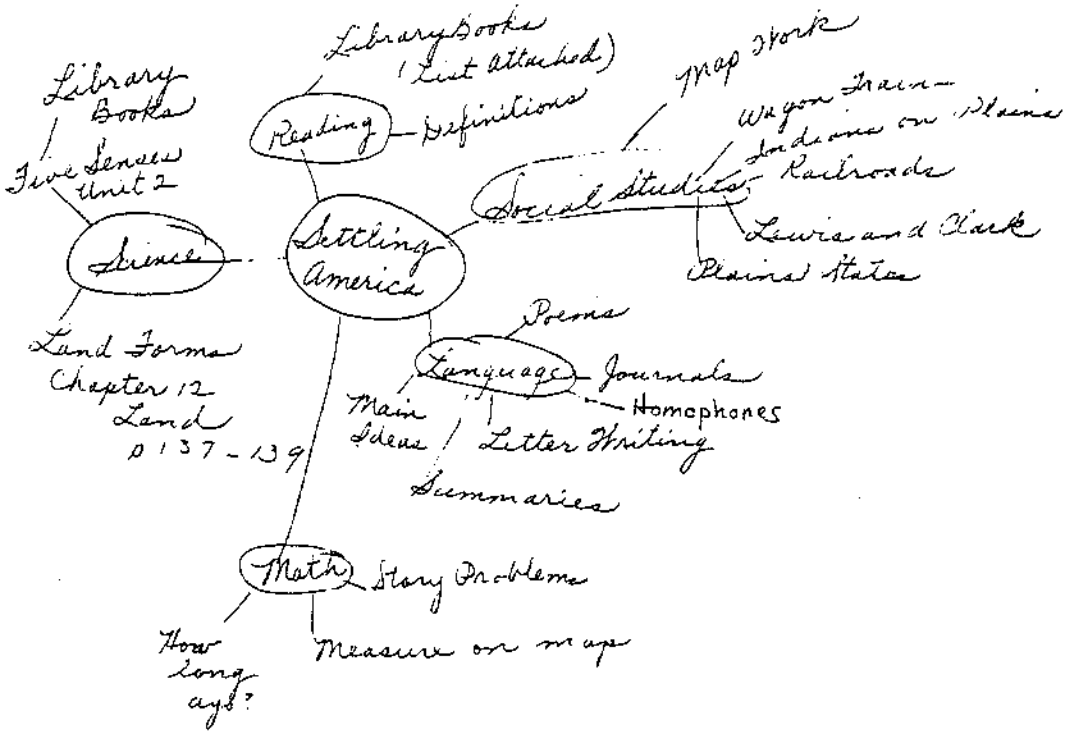
**BOOKS READ ALOUD BY THE TEACHER**

**1993-94**

| | TITLE OF BOOK | FICTION/NONFICTION |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Summer of the Monkeys | Fiction |
| 2 | Harriet Tubman | Nonfiction |
| 3 | Sign of the Beaver | Fiction |
| 4 | Secret in the Barrel | Fiction |
| 5 | The Blind Colt | Fiction |
| 6 | The Hundred Dresses | Fiction |

# APPENDIX C

## LESSON PLAN


Library Books (List attached)
Library Books
Five Senses Unit 2
Reading
Definitions
map work
Wagon Train
Indians on Plains
Railroads
Social Studies
Lewis and Clark
Plains States
Science
Settling America
Land Forms
Chapter 12
Land
p 137 - 139
Poems
Language
Journals
Homophones
Main Ideas
Letter Writing
Summaries
Math
Story Problems
How long ago?
Measure on map

# APPENDIX D

# CHECKLISTS

# WESTWARD MOVEMENT CHECKSHEET

## READING

1. **Read four (4) books.** Do a reading activity with each book. Reading activities: journal entry as one of the characters, write a letter, write a summary of book, write and draw a summary or chart.

| TITLE OF BOOKS | ACTIVITY |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

2. **Read one (1) chapter book. (One that takes you longer than one day to read.)**

TITLE OF BOOK

_____

3. **Put one (1) word on chart for each book.**

WORDS USED

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

## MATH

1. Use dates in two of your books to find out how long ago each book took place.

| TITLE OF BOOK | DATE IN BOOK | HOW LONG AGO |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |

2. Write four (4) story problems using facts in book. (Make a check mark in the following blanks after finishing each story problem.)

_____ 1st story problem

_____ 2nd story problem

_____ 3rd story problem

_____ 4th story problem

_____ 5th story problem

_____3. Make a graph using a book.

## SCIENCE

_____1. Learn the five senses and what organ of the body is involved in each one.

_____2. Look for ways characters are using the five senses.

_____3. Read library books about at least one (1) sense.

_____4. Do Unit 2 in science textbook.

## LANGUAGE

_____1. Write a letter.

_____2. Write a summary.

_____3. Review homophones: your/you're, they're/their/there.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

_____1. Put something on the map.

2. Look for different kinds of transportation in stories.

KINDS OF TRANSPORATION

3. Look for facts about going west in library books.

FACTS

# Student Conference Record for Reading

Date: April 6 1994

Student's Name: Amanda

What is the title of the book you are reading?

Cowboys

Who wrote it? Glen Rounds

Have you read other books by this author? NO but my teacher is reading one

Why did you choose this book? Because it Looked like a good Book. Because it had a picture of a horse on it. And I like horses

Tell me something about the story so far.

A rancher has the cowboys get up and go out and get the bulls and cows and put them in the cage. And they go and wet for the supper

What would you like to do when you finish this book? (Options: write a report, draw a poster, give an oral report to the class, write a letter to the author, etc.)

Draw a poster

Would you like to read another book by this same author? Why?

Yes. I like how he tells the story.

Teacher Comments:

# APPENDIX E

# RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

RESPONSES TO LITERATURE

| KINDS OF RESPONSES | FROM FICTION BOOKS | FROM NONFICTION BOOKS | SELF-SELECTED/ TEACHER-DIRECTED* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Letter | 10 | 6 | SS |
| Book Jacket | 3 | 2 | SS |
| Dictionary | 0 | 2 | SS |
| Play | 0 | 1 | SS |
| Poem | 0 | 10 | TD |
| Chart | 4 | 10 | SS and TD |
| Diary/Journal Entry | 2 | 5 | SS |
| Written/Drawn Summary | 10 | 12 | SS and TD |
| Question/ Answers | 0 | 9 | TD |
| Retelling | 1 | 2 | SS |
| List of Facts | 1 | 4 | SS |
| Five Senses | 0 | 11 | TD |
| Picture | 0 | 1 | SS |
| Math Journal | ? | ? | TD |
| TOTALS | 31 | 75 | 116** |

* Self-selected = SS Teacher-directed = TD

** Also included in total 9 Math Journal Entries (Can't tell genre)

# APPENDIX F

# READING RECORDS

## STUDENT SELF-SELECTED LIBRARY BOOKS READ

Students

| | #1 | #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8 | #9 | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NF | 3 | 19 | 22 | 19 | 14 | 4 | 16 | 12 | 12 | 135 |
| F | 28 | 89 | 83 | 85 | 88 | 45 | 138 | 100 | 118 | 746 |
| T | 31 | 108 | 105 | 104 | 102 | 49 | 154 | 112 | 147 | 881 |

NF = Nonfiction/informational books

F = Fiction

T = Total Number 15% Nonfiction Read

## WESTWARD MOVEMENT UNIT BOOKS READ

Students

| | #1 | #2 | #3 | #4 | #5 | #6 | #7 | #8 | #9 | T |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NF | 3 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 36 |
| F | 5 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 28 |
| T | 8 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 5 | 7 | 64 |

NF = Nonfiction/informational books

F = Fiction

T = Total Number 56% Nonfiction Read

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