A DESCRIPTIVE EVALUATION OF THE READING EXPERIENCES OF CERTAIN CHILDREN

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THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

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Denison, Texas

August, 1941

99689
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to discover through the use of the descriptive evaluation technique information about children's reading which may be of value as suggestions for classroom teachers who teach reading in the intermediate level. It is hoped that through the use of this technique the relation of the reading level of the individual children in a fourth and fifth grade group to the reading level of the material the children would read if left to their own choice in its selection may be determined. Consideration will also be given to trends which indicate whether the interests of the individual children were varied or confined to one particular subject and the relation, if any, of varied or single interests to the reading level of children and the reading level of the material chosen. In addition, an attempt will be made to determine (1) the most common reading interests in the individual cases which were studied, (2) whether the teacher could influence the interests of these children, (3) whether the general make-up of the book influenced the children's choices, and (4) the influence of illustrations upon the children's reading.
Fifteen children in the fourth grade and seventeen children in the fifth grade were the subjects of the experiment. These children were attending the summer school at Sam Houston School, Denton, Texas, in the summer of 1941.

With the possible exception of the fact that most of these children were attending summer school for non-credit work, these children comprised an average fourth and fifth grade group coming to summer school from all parts of the city.

The children were given a free reading period of thirty minutes a day, five days a week, for six weeks with the exception that a major portion of the fifth grade group had this time extended an additional two weeks after they had moved to the Demonstration School of North Texas State Teachers College for the second half of the summer school. Data were collected during the reading period by means of observers.

Observer 1, a student teacher in the fourth grade with no previous teaching experience, observed in the fourth grade group.

Observer 2, a teacher with two years experience, was a student teacher in the fifth grade and observed in that group.

Observer 3 had two years teaching experience, was a student teacher in the fifth grade, and observed in both the fourth and fifth grade groups each day.
Observer 4 had two years teaching experience, observed in both the fourth and fifth grade groups each day, and was in charge of all experimental work.

Three observers worked with each group of children. Notes were taken each day on the books the children read, examined, talked about, and asked for. All other behavior which was regarded as significant was recorded.

Observers 1, 2, and 3 had no further duties than to ask the individual children questions in order to check their comprehension, to check the children's ability to read orally, and to record all significant behavior of the individual children.

Before starting the reading period the observers met and discussed carefully what they were to do. It was decided that, in order to avoid opinionated records as much as possible, the observers would not necessarily take notes on the same children each day.

The individual children were sometimes asked to read quietly to an observer a short selection from the book they had at the time, and the difficulty or ease which they experienced from this type of reading was recorded. Overt actions which might be attributed to a child's experiencing difficulty with reading were noted, such as vocalization, calling on an observer or friend for aid with words, extraneous movements of hands and feet, and time needed to read a story or a portion thereof.
The books the children asked for, their absorption in reading, their anxiety to get back an unfinished book the following period, their spontaneous telling of bits of stories or information to an observer or to companions, their recommendations of books to other children, their close examination and discussion of illustrations, their reluctance to stop reading at the close of the period, and their discussion of stories were recorded as indices of interests.

In order to check further the interest of a child in a specific book which he had started, situations were set up such as placing the book where it would be difficult for the child to find or leaving it in the bookshelves in order to see whether he would ask for it. The resulting behavior of the child was recorded.

Requests for certain books or certain types of books were sometimes intentionally ignored in an attempt to discover whether the interest was intense enough for the child to repeat the request. When a child showed a definite interest trend, some effort was made to shift that interest to something else by suggesting other books, telling a part of a story in an interesting manner, raising questions which could be answered by reading a certain book, and by reading parts of books to the child. If this interest persisted, books relating to this particular interest were provided in
varying degrees of difficulty, in so far as this was possible, in order to determine the grade level of the material he would choose in his field of interest.

The influence of illustrations upon the way the child read and upon what he read was checked by observing closely whether he apparently used the illustrations to supplement his reading, whether he depended largely upon the illustrations to get the content, and whether the illustrations seemed to influence his choice of books. In addition to this the influence the general make-up of the books seemed to have upon the children was noted. This included the size of the book, illustrations on the cover, size of the title, the attractiveness of the cover, and the size of the print.

The influence that discussion of books and children's reports on books read seemed to have upon the children's desire to read those books was noted in so far as this was possible.

A check upon the children's comprehension of the stories they read was obtained by listening to bits of the stories or bits of information told spontaneously to other children or to an observer, by questioning the children verbally about the books they read, by asking the children to tell the stories to an observer, by listening to reports which the children made to the class at least once a week, and by
listening to the children's discussion of books or stories they had read.

Some effort was made to determine the source of a decided interest by questioning the children as to their past experiences in order to determine whether these past experiences seemed to show any relation to their interests and by encouraging the children to talk about stories and bits of information in order to determine whether they would relate to a past experience in connection with the story or bit of information.

Books of various types and on many subjects, ranging in difficulty from first grade material to adult level, were placed on the tables in the library, and an attempt was made to present a range in difficulty within as many fields as possible. These books were usually arranged with the title cover up, no books being placed on top of other books except in cases where it was deemed expedient to check the desire of a child to get back an unfinished book. In these instances the books were sometimes placed under larger books on a table removed from the place where the children who were reading them usually sat. In order to determine whether the arrangement of the books showed any noticeable influence on the children's choices, the books were sometimes stacked in the center of one of the tables, and the desire of a child to finish a book was sometimes checked by leaving the
unfinished book in the library shelves in order to see whether he would ask for it.

In addition to the range in difficulty a range was presented in the type of books in regard to literature, ranging from "funny books" to good literature. In quality and attractiveness the books ranged from the cheap ten cent editions to the expensive editions which would be considered very attractive from the adult point of view. A decided range was also presented in both the quality and number of the illustrations in the books.

Many remedial reading programs have had one basic aim: to provide an abundance of interesting reading material on the level of the children's ability.

An examination of the prefaces of a large number of children's readers and teachers' manuals for readers show that many of them have some common claims. A very common claim is interesting content, and another is literary merit of the stories. A less common claim is that the material is undergraded in order that the child will be able to have a fair degree of success in reading.

The purpose of this study is not to attack the type of remedial reading program mentioned above. Nor is it to attack the position implied in the prefaces of the readers. It is to discover if there is need for further research in the field of interests as related to reading material, as it
may be possible that interest does not inhere in the subject matter. The past experiences of the reader may influence the child's reading interests. This study will make no attempt to establish a position in regard to these points but will try to discover whether such possibilities exist.

This study will also attempt to determine the literary merit—as the term is commonly accepted—of the material these children choose when following their interests.

There is a possibility that children, when given access to reading material of various levels, will choose material of about their level in reading ability. This study will attempt to determine the extent to which this is true.
CHAPTER II

EXPLORATORY PHASE

During the first week of the study an effort was made to become acquainted with the individual children. An effort was also made to determine their interests, discover their reading habits, determine their reading level, and to obtain any other information about the children which might be relevant to the study.

Books of varying levels of difficulty were provided in many fields. These books were placed on the different tables in the room, but nothing was told the children which might influence their choice of books. The children were watched closely in order to determine the type of books for which they showed the greatest preference.

The fifth grade children had from 9:15 to 9:45 in the morning as their reading period, and the fourth grade had from 9:50 to 10:20 as their reading period. The individual children in both of these groups were asked what type of books they would like to read, but most of them were very indefinite in their answers.

During the first week the fifth grade group neither read nor examined many books. Most of the children would
pretend to be reading upon the approach of an observer, but as soon as the observer moved away, they would return to day-dreaming or some similar passive state. A few of the children were interested in reading from the very first day. Two or three days passed before most of the children realized that they might change the book which they took at the first of the period for another book. On the third day one child remarked, "You mean we can change books." He seemed quite surprised to find out that they could.

At the first of the week most of the books were picked up at random; the children apparently made no choice. By the end of the week, however, most of the children were rather carefully selecting their books even though they only examined them later.

The condition was quite different in the fourth grade as from the first most of these children examined one book after another. The first day Patsy and Marie read with absorption throughout the period. After Margaret read To Market We Go for a short time, she changed to Topsy Turvy, the Clown and remained absorbed in this book during the remainder of the period. Becky quickly read Peggy and Peter then changed to The Cat in Grandfather's House. After reading a few pages in this book, she exchanged it for The Magic Horse and later volunteered the information that she
really liked this book. Betty did not do anything until Becky finished *Peggy and Peter* and handed it to her. She spent the remainder of the period reading this book, finishing it just at the close of the period. Practically all of the other children examined one book after another, reading very little. On the whole the examinations were very cursory.

The condition existing during the first day in the fourth grade group remained about the same during the first week except that the restlessness of the children grew more pronounced toward the latter part of the week. In an effort to determine whether this was due to the difficulty of the material, more easy reading material was brought in on various subjects, but this seemed only to accentuate the restlessness. With a few exceptions the individuals in the group tended to pick up a book, thumb through it aimlessly, then exchange it for another one.

A more intense effort was made to find out what interests the children had; books were provided in these interest fields, but the condition grew steadily worse.

**Fourth Grade Students**

At the end of the week the following information had been obtained about the children in the fourth grade:

Becky has a reading grade level of 4.1, and during this week she read on a level far below this point. She is not
very interested in reading and will not read long at a time. Her chief interest is in handiwork, but she does not care to read anything about it. She has no clearly defined reading interests.

Betty is very immature for this grade. She has a reading grade level of 3.1, but she reads only the easiest of materials and calls on the observers for much help with words, although she reads well orally and puts much expression into her reading. Her chief interest is in easy versions of Biblical stories.

Patsy has a reading grade level of 3.4. She dislikes reading and does not want the observers to know how poorly she reads. She feels quite inferior in this respect. She has no clearly defined reading interests.

Marie has a reading grade level of 5.6. She is quite interested in reading and likes to read about almost anything although she likes animals stories particularly well.

Francis has a reading grade level of 3.5. He professes an interest only in cowboy stories, but he appears to be interested in animal stories as well. He spends practically all of his time examining the illustrations in books. He reads second grade material with some difficulty.

Jack has a reading grade level of 3.4. He does not want to read and spends his time casually thumbing through
books. He experiences much difficulty reading very easy material orally.

Glenn M. has a reading grade level of 3.9. He appears to be fairly interested in reading but does not have any clearly defined interests.

Emory has a reading grade level of 3.6. He does not read anything during the reading period but examines the "cowboy" books. He says that these are the only kind he likes.

Margaret has a reading grade level of 3.8. She seems fairly interested in reading and does not have any clearly defined reading interests. She apparently reads books below her level in reading ability.

Betty M. has a reading grade level of 3.2. She seems very immature for this grade. Betty shows no apparent interest in any kind of book, picking them up at random and casually turning through them.

Donald has a reading grade level of 3.6. Although he professes an interest in cowboy stories only, he appears to have more reading interest than this one. At times he becomes rather absorbed in reading, but often he does no reading.

Douglas has a reading grade level of 3.0. He has read nothing since he came into the reading room. He is interested
only in "cowboy" books, and he merely examines these. He cannot read first grade material with ease.

Glenn W. has a reading grade level of 3.1. He appears interested in books but does not read any, spending most of his time looking carefully at the illustrations. He, too, experiences great difficulty in reading first grade material. He has a very clearly defined interest in books about animals.

Neal has a reading grade level of 3.0. He does not appear to be much interested in the books although he makes very cursory examinations of many of them. Neal cannot read first grade material fluently and never reads unless he is asked by an observer to read orally.

Inez has a reading grade level of 3.5. She enjoys reading and seems to have many reading interests.

Fifth Grade Students

At the end of the first week the observers had obtained certain information about the children in the fifth grade group which it was hoped would aid them in working with the children. A summary of this information is given here in order to introduce the reader to the individual children in this group:

Charles C. has a reading grade level of 5.2. He appears to be quite interested in reading, and his reading interests are varied.

Beverly has a reading grade level of 5.1. She is intensely interested in reading and spends much of her time outside of the reading period following this interest. She takes books to the playground with her, and before school
opens in the morning she usually can be seen sitting on the steps reading a book. She professes an interest in fairy stories and is reading all the Oz books she can obtain.

Marylynn has a reading grade level of 4.4. She is a very nervous child and cannot remain still for a very long period. She often appears to be quite interested in a book, then suddenly stops reading it, and never reads in it again. She often sits gazing into space with a book open before her, and upon the approach of an observer, she will pretend to be quite absorbed in the book.

George has a reading grade level of 5.1. He has a decided interest in "cowboy" stories. He seizes a book as soon as he enters the library and starts reading it, remaining absorbed throughout the period.

Tom R. has a reading grade level of 3.8. He is not interested in reading and does not read during the period although he casually examines many of the books. Tom is a Mexican child and is well liked by the boys. There is usually some disagreement each morning about whom Tom is to sit by. He reads easy material with difficulty.

Ronnie has a reading grade level of 4.2. He seems to enjoy reading and usually remains absorbed throughout the period. Although he professes a strong interest in "cowboy" stories, this is not evident from the books he reads.
Edwin has a reading grade level of 3.4. He appears to be interested in books of various kinds, but he does very little reading. He spends most of his time examining the illustrations in books.

Walter has a reading grade level of 4.1. He reads most of the time he is in the reading room, but he does not appear interested and seems to read because he thinks it is expected of him. He reads very easy books, such as The Singing Farmer, and appears to be practicing an uninteresting skill. He reads rather fluently orally.

Doris has a reading grade level of 5.3, but she reads material far below this point in difficulty. She seems to enjoy reading very much.

Dorothy has a reading grade level of 3.5. She does not seem to be very interested in books or in reading.

Harold has a reading grade level of 4.5. He does not appear interested in books or in reading. His teachers say that he is not interested in anything.

Ruth has a reading grade level of 3.8. She does very little reading and spends most of her time looking at pictures. She professes an interest only in fairy stories.

Tom N. has a reading grade level of 6.1. He appears interested in many fields and reads books of varying levels of difficulty. He can read fluently any material in the reading room, but he often reads very easy books.
Charles N. is Tom's twin and has a reading grade level of 5.9. His case is very similar to Tom's.
CHAPTER III

ADULT DIRECTED PHASE

Utilizing the information obtained from observing and talking with the children, new books were selected at the end of the first week for use in the reading room. Of the books which were already in the reading room only those for which there were specific requests were kept. The new books were selected within the fields of the children's interests insofar as these had been determined. Observer 4 read most of the books which he had not previously read and familiarized himself with the content of the remainder.

When the groups met the following Tuesday, Observer 4 discussed with some of the individual children the books which they were examining, attempting in each case to raise a question, the answer to which could be found in the book. Although the discussion was directed in each case toward one individual, several of the children usually listened and sometimes participated in the discussion.

Adult Direction in the Fifth Grade

The discussion of books with the individual children seemed to have a decided effect in the fifth grade. There were only two boys in the particular group with which Observer 4 started working who had not already got a book and
started reading. George had told this observer several times that the only type of book he liked was "cowboy stories," and this was the only type he had read up to that date. He always came in, found his book, turned to his place, and remained absorbed throughout the period. He came in today, found *In the Saddle with Uncle Bill*, a book he had been reading for two days, turned to his place, and started reading. When Observer 4 started telling Tom R. about *A Day with Jambi*, George stopped reading and listened attentively while the observer talked to Tom R. Upon Observer 4's attempting to get Tom R. to want to fini out what the pet elephant did to Jambi at the water hole, George begged Tom R. to let him see the book, which he did. George held *In the Saddle with Uncle Bill* in his lap until he found out what happened at the water hole and turned to Observer 4 and told him about it. He then put *In the Saddle with Uncle Bill* on the table and continued to read *A Day with Jambi* the remainder of the period.

George was absent the next day, but on the day following he rushed into the room and found his book, turned immediately to his place and started reading, paying no attention to what went on around him. He read with absorption throughout the period and finished the book in the first few minutes of the period the following day.

When the class reported on books they had read, George
reported on A Day with Jambi. He told the story with a great deal of enjoyment. When he recalled amusing incidents, he giggled with pleasure; and when he related exciting incidents, he became quite excited and talked so fast he jumbled his words. He told the story in great detail.

After relinquishing A Day with Jambi to George, Tom R. asked Observer 4 to help him find another book; whereupon the observer showed him Ferdinand, a story with which Tom was slightly familiar. In discussing the book with Tom the observer found that he formerly lived in Mexico and knew a great deal about how bull fights are conducted there although he had never seen one; so the observer attempted to raise the question, "What do they do at a bull fight in Spain?" Tom read the book the remainder of the period, paying very careful attention to the pictures. He would read a page or two then turn quickly through the pages examining the illustrations. When he found a particular illustration, he would examine it carefully. In a short time he would repeat this procedure.

When Tom R. came to the library the following day, Walter had Ferdinand. Tom persuaded Walter to let him finish the book, which he did in the first few minutes of the period. After Tom finished Ferdinand, Walter read it, and after Walter finished it, Glenn M. read it eight times.
When the children saw that Observer 4 was familiar with the books, they began to ask him questions about the different books. Harold, who never reads during this period, or at any other time during the school day as nearly as could be determined, asked Observer 4 if he could find him something about the United States Flag. Upon questioning Harold the observer found that as this was Flag Week the children had been discussing the origin of the United States Flag in class, and some questions had been raised in regard to this. Observer 4 told Harold that he would find the story of our first flag in John Martin’s Big Book, and Harold went to the different tables looking for the book. He returned later and told Observer 4 that Marylynn had the book but was not reading it. The observer found that Marylynn was reading something else but was keeping John Martin’s Big Book to read later; so the observer persuaded her to let Harold have the book, promising her that Harold would return it as soon as he finished one story in it.

Harold turned through the book until he found the story and then started reading. Observer 4 asked him to read some of the story orally and found that he experienced much difficulty in reading. After Harold had stumbled through two sentences, he was told to continue his silent reading. This he did but with much audible vocalization and
lip reading. He used his finger as a pointer and spelled out some of the words audibly. After he had been reading for some time, the principal of the school came in and sat near him. Upon seeing what Harold was reading, the principal asked him some questions about the story and Harold gave evidence of a good understanding of it. He was unable to answer two of the questions, stating that he had not read that far yet. He finished the story, which was only two pages in length, near the end of the period and asked Observer 4 to help him find another book. Observer 4 told him a little about Ali, the Camel and left him wondering whether Ali's young master ever found him again after he, Ali, had run away. Harold asked that the book be reserved for him the following day.

Three books relating to Mexico or to Mexican children were placed before Tom R. on the day he was to finish Ferdinand, both of which were more difficult than Ferdinand. When Tom finished his book, he examined two of the books relating to Mexico, but he gave them only a very cursory examination. After Tom examined the two books relating to Mexico, he asked Observer 4 to help him find a book. Upon being asked what type of book he would like, he stated that he wanted a "cowboy" book. The observer found instead a dog story; discussed the book a short time with Tom, and raised two questions, the answers to which could be found near the end of the book. Tom started reading immediately,
giving evidence that the book was somewhat difficult for him. He used his finger to hold the line on which he was reading and vocalized excessively although not audibly. He also regressed frequently, sometimes several lines, and re-read carefully. As with Ferdinand, Tom would suddenly stop reading, and holding his finger upon his place, he would turn through several pages, glancing at the illustrations. When he would find a particular illustration, he would study it intently. After observing this behavior for some time, Observer 4 asked Tom why he did this. Tom replied, "I want to see what happens next."

Tom R. read Wag and Woogie for four periods. He volunteered the information that it was "a really good book." On the fifth day, which was Saturday, he was absent. On the following Tuesday Observer 4 placed the book under a larger book, and when Tom came in he immediately began to look for it and persisted until he found it. His interest, however, did not seem as intense as it had previously been, for he spent much time watching what was going on around him. He finished the book near the end of the period.

After George finished A Day with Jambi, he saw The Pet Elephant and seized it as soon as he read the title. He read the book in two periods and did not discuss the book with any of the children during the reading period, which is not unusual for him. For three days after George finished
the book no child did more than casually turn through it. After several of the children in the fifth grade group complained that there was nothing good to read in the room, Observer 4 told the first part of *The Pet Elephant* to the class as a whole and left them to wonder what happened when the boy and girl in the story went to the circus to buy an elephant although they had only $2.85. There was quite a clamor for the book, but the children were told that they would have to work out some system of rotating the book as all of them could not read it at the same time. Five children read the book. Several of the poorer readers examined the book, which was not illustrated, but none of them gave it more than a cursory examination.

**Adult Direction in the Fourth Grade**

Observer 4's discussion of the books with the individual children in the fourth grade group started a great deal of discussion of the books among the children. Although Douglas is one of the poorest readers in this group, he seemed to be more familiar with a greater number of books than any of the other children. He told Francis about *Smoky*, using the pictures as an aid in telling the story. Francis examined the illustrations in this book for two days, but as it was too difficult for him, he did not read it.
Neal, Douglas, Glen W., and Jack were extremely interested in what Observer 4 told Neal about some of the animals in *Who's Who in the Zoo*. Each found the book too difficult to read, but before it was taken back to the library all of these boys had examined it carefully.

Jack asked if there were any other books about animals in the room, and Observer 4 found *Let's Go Outdoors* and gave it to him. Jack casually looked at the pictures until he came to the several pages devoted to sow bugs with full page illustrations. He told Observer 4 about playing with sow bugs on his way to school that morning and then took the book near the window and stood there, apart from the group, until he had read all the information regarding sow bugs. After reading this section of the book, he then examined the remaining illustrations hurriedly and returned the book to the table.

Glen W., who is a very poor reader and cannot read first grade material fluently, also asked for more books about animals. Observer 4 told him the names of several books that either contained animal stories or information about animals. Of these books Glenn selected *On Jungle Trails*, which is not profusely illustrated. He kept this book for four days, examining the pictures and picking out a very few words on the pages opposite the pictures. Glen W. would sometimes study a picture intensely for as long as five
minutes, examining every detail in the picture. During the
time he had the book, he spontaneously told Observer 4 how
Frank Buck caught tigers, monkeys, and elephants and told
how a mother elephant cared for her young. Although his
narration was somewhat lacking in detail, it showed remark-
able insight into the story. The book was hidden twice from
Glenn by Observer 4. Once Glenn searched until he found it;
the other time he asked where it was.

Each day Glenn would turn to about the same place he
had left off the previous day and start examining the pic-
tures and picking out a few words on the pages opposite
the pictures. When he had worked through the book in this
manner, he went back through and gave the pictures a more
hasty examination.

Glenn asked Observer 4 to get some more jungle books;
therefore several books about animals were brought the
following day and stacked with all the other books on a
table near the door. When Glenn came in, he asked Observer 4
if he had brought any books about jungles, and the observer
told him that he would find some among the other books. Glenn
paid no attention to titles but tried to find the books by
opening them and looking at the illustrations. He soon found
Kangaroo Twins and started looking at the illustrations but
did not seem much interested in the book and was unable to
tell Observer 4 much about it. He gave the pictures only a
cursory examination and told the observer that he was only looking at the pictures.

In a few minutes Glenn exchanged *Kangaroo Twins* for *Animals I Like* and took this book off to himself to examine the pictures, apparently reading nothing. Observer 4 asked him to read some orally but found that he could not read the book. When Glenn finished examining the pictures, he told the observer about the book, which has no continuity in the story or in the pictures. Glenn's description was not very closely connected with the reading material in the book.

Observer 4 showed Glenn *Ella the Elephant*, and Glenn immediately became interested. He examined the pictures carefully and picked out a few words on the pages opposite the illustrations. He did not seem to go from left to right and down the page, instead he apparently picked out a few words at random from the page. When he had finished the book, he told Observer 4 about the book. He had a fair, general idea of the story, but his summary was lacking in detail.

Before the end of the week most of the fourth grade group were as restless as before. In trying to find a solution to this difficulty, it was decided that, as they were kept sitting quietly in a listening attitude from thirty to forty-five minutes in the period just preceding the reading
period, a change in the time of the reading period might influence their reading. The period was changed to eight forty-five in the morning, but there was no apparent change in the children's reading habits that could be attributed to the change in the time of the reading period.

Publisher's Descriptions

Observer 4 read the publisher's descriptions of several books to a number of the children in each group. These descriptions had been pasted on the inside cover of the books by the librarian. In no instance did the children read the books. Some of them examined the books for a short time and discarded them. Two of these books were *The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* and *Buttons*. Among those to whom these descriptions were read were Marylynn, Tom N., George, and Ruth in the fifth grade and Glenn W., Jack, and Neal in the fourth grade. Later another effort was made to interest the children in these two books, and the results of this effort will be related later in the study.
CHAPTER IV

UNDIRECTED READING PHASE

Until this time an effort had been made to use books which could be classified as to difficulty on some acceptable graded reading lists, but in attempting to provide books within the children's interest fields, more books which could not be classified on these lists had been provided than those which could be classified. Many of the children would manifest no interest in any books other than cheap ten cent editions of doubtful literary merit. The fourth grade group was at this time very restless, and although their interest could apparently be stimulated for a short time, this interest could not be sustained long, and they would soon become as restless as before. The fifth grade was not as extreme in this respect, but some of the children in this group were very restless. Douglas, Emory, and Francis in the fourth grade group were demanding "cops and robbers" stories, and in casting about for this type of story it was found that "Big Little Books" and "funny books" offered the best source for this type of story. It was decided that this type of literature should be introduced into the study.
"Big Little Books"

A number of new books were brought to the reading room among which were twenty "Big Little Books." These "Big Little Books" were placed at random on the tables among the other books. When the children first discovered them, there were many exclamations of delight, and each child tried to get several "Big Little Books." As the number was limited, the children had to be cautioned not to get more than one to a child, or there would not be enough books for each child to have one. Even after this observation was made, the children would try to hold several while they made a decision as to the one they wanted to keep. This behavior was equally true in each group, and no other type of book was opened the first day.

Both grades rather sharply divided themselves into four groups the first day: those who hastily examined the illustrations, those who carefully examined the illustrations, those who examined the illustrations and read the captions, and those who read the books and examined the illustrations.

There were only three children in the fourth grade group who hastily examined the illustrations. The greatest number either carefully examined the illustrations or combined reading the captions with this examination of the illustrations. Only two children read the books as well as examined the
illustrations. After reading for two days Walter, one of these two children, remarked aloud, although addressing no one in particular, "I believe I'll just read under the pictures." Becky, who also stopped reading about the same time Walter did, upon being asked why she stopped reading, told the observer, "I just got tired of reading it, and this is easier." When Becky was reading she examined the illustrations several pages ahead of the page on which she was reading.

Except in the case of the three boys who gave the books only a hasty examination, the interest in "Big Little Books" did not apparently abate during the six days they were in the room. New books were brought in twice, but they went unnoticed. The three boys who made only a hasty examination of the "Big Little Books" made cursory examinations of some of these books, but they returned to the "Big Little Books" and re-examined some of them. One of these boys stated to no one in particular, "I've done read every book in here." Upon being asked by an observer how many of the books he had actually read, he grinned and replied, "None."

Nearly the same condition in regard to "Big Little Books" existed in the fifth grade except that after the books had been in the room for five days, three of the girls who were reading at first started again to read the books. These three girls, Beverly, Doris, and Marylynn are among the best readers in the group.
The "Big Little Books" were left in the book room twice, on the second and the fifth day after being introduced. Each time this was done the children came in and immediately began to search for them. Each time they approached Observer 4 in a body and wanted to know where the "Big Little Books" were. Upon being told that they had been forgotten and left in the book room, they followed Observer 4 in a body to the book room and clamored for their books.

Regardless of the manner in which the children examined or read the "Big Little Books," most of the children would want an unfinished book back the following day. They would turn to about the same place they had left off the preceding day and continue either to look at or read the book.

Without discussing the matter among themselves, three of the four observers noted that of the children who did not actually read the books the poorest readers were the ones who got the most content from the "Big Little Books."

"Funny Books"

On the sixth day after the "Big Little Books" were introduced Marylynn brought two "funny books" to the reading room. She let two of the children have the books. Two other children begged those to whom Marylynn had given the books to let them read with them, and the four kept the books during the entire period, reading them and examining the illustrations.
The following day Douglas asked if he might go to the third grade room for some "funny books" he had there. Upon his departure four other boys asked if they might be excused. Observer 4 told them that they might and stepped to the door to watch them. They formed a line at the water fountain and dawdled there until Douglas appeared with the "funny books;" whereupon they rushed down the hall to meet him and get one of the books. All the other children wanted "funny books," and the observer promised to bring some the following day.

Twenty "funny books" were brought the next day and the "Big Little Books" were left in the library shelves. They were never mentioned by the children again. The "funny books" were used and in a bad state of repair with many pages missing, yet all the children seized one and started reading or examining it.

The following is an excerpt from the notes of one of the observers taken on the day the "funny books" were introduced to the fourth grade group:

"A number of "funny books" were placed on the table at the right of the door. There was a mad scramble for them and each child got one.
"Margaret, Patsy, and Inez are reading while Douglas, Glenn, Neal, and John are only looking at the pictures.
"Emory is looking at the pictures very carefully and supplementing this with some reading.
"Neal and Glenn are discussing their books.
"Emory finished his book and got another one.
"Neal is telling the story in his book to John. He is making the whole thing up and is a long way from telling the content of the book. He is confusing the
"Sandman" with the "Green Hornet," which indicated that he has not read a word, for the name "Sandman" appears in almost every paragraph.

"The group as a whole is more settled and absorbed than it has ever been. Jack, Francis Jo, Neal, and Glenn are discussing their books, commenting on the illustrations, and laughing about them. All the other children are sitting with their heads over their books, apparently very absorbed.

"Douglas finished his book, rushed over to another table, got another book, came right back and sat down, and became absorbed immediately."

"Francis Jo left the room but took his book with him."

"Margaret asked for a "Superman" book."

"Doyle Marie, although she reads some of the stories, finished the books hurriedly. She has read and examined three already and is now standing at another table reading another one."

"The Big Little Books were not brought in, but no one appears to have missed them, and no one appears to notice the other books on the tables."

"After 25 minutes John does not appear too interested. His attention is beginning to shift."

"I asked Glenn to tell me about the story he was reading. This particular story has a clearly defined plot. He was unable to do so and said he was "just looking." The action in the story is fairly clear, but the story is quite fantastic."

When Douglas entered the library the following day, he started gathering up several "funny books," and upon noticing an observer watching him, he remarked to the observer, "I believe I'll take some of these to our table."

The interest in the "funny books" was apparently even more intense in the fifth grade, and more of the children read the books. This interest did not abate in most cases during the four days the used "funny books" were in the room.
The greatest interest was in the most fantastic stories, such as "The Green Mask," "Superman," "The Sandman," "The Flame," and "Submarine."

On Tuesday of the following week twenty new "funny books" were brought into the library. Interest was at a high pitch, and the children had to be told not to keep but one funny book at a time, for some of them, especially those who only examined the books, tried to keep four or five books in their laps in addition to the book they were reading or examining.

More children read the new "funny books" than the usual ones with a gradual lessening in the number actually reading toward the latter part of the week. Although some of the children did not read at all, and others read only a little, most of the children remained quite interested in the books. From the time the first "funny books" were brought into the room until all of them were taken out, new books were brought into the library frequently and placed on the tables, but in only a few instances did any of the children examine them unless something was done to stimulate them to do so.

The children seemed more interested in the extremely fantastic stories than in those which were within the realm of possibility, and in only one instance did a child clearly exhibit a preference for the traditional "funny book" of the older comic strip type. Most of the children who read
"funny books" read only the fantastic stories and only examined the pictures in the other types of stories. Those who only looked at the illustrations were unable to tell the observers as much about the fantastic stories as they were able to tell about the realistic type of story.

Reading to Children

Most of the children seemed so interested in the "funny books" and were so absorbed in reading or examining them that Observer 4 decided to read an interesting story to the group in order to determine whether their attention could be shifted from the "funny books" for a short time. On the second day after the new "funny books" were brought to the library Observer 4 read The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins to each group. In each group the children were told that those who wished to listen might do so, but those who did not might go on with their reading. When the observer first started reading, only a few of the children listened to him. As he continued to read, however, more children put down their books to listen. In each group several children came to him and stood beside and behind him in order to see the illustrations. With the exception of one girl every child in the fifth grade finally put down his book and listened. This girl, Beverly, apparently divided her attention between the story which was being read and the illustrations in the
"funny book" she had in her hands, for, although she continued to look at the "funny book" as long as the observer read, she laughed at every amusing incident in the story the observer was reading.

Within a very short time after the observer started reading to the fourth grade group, all but two of the children gave their attention to the story which was being read. One of these two, Francis, tried to divide his attention between a "funny book" and the observer's story, but he finally put down the "funny book" and went over to stand near the observer. The only evidence Margaret gave of listening to the story was to turn her chair around so she could face the observer who was reading.

When the observer had read to where Bartholomew went into the dungeon to have his head cut off, he stopped reading and placed the book on a table. In both groups the children clamored for him to finish the story, but they were told that if they wished to know what happened, they must read the remainder of the book themselves.

There was a mad scramble for the book in the fourth grade group, and several of the children took the book to a table where they looked at and discussed the illustrations and worked out the end of the story. After they had done this, most of the children individually examined the illustrations, but no child read the book.
In the fifth grade group Marylynn seized the book and read some in it that day but spent most of the time begging an observer to read the book to her.

The Fourth of July holidays intervened, and when the children were released the following Tuesday to go to the library, George ran ahead of the group and told Observer 4, whom he met on the stairs, "I'm going to get The 500 Hats." He found the book and read it, meeting no objection from Marylynn. When he had finished the book, he told the other children at his table about the story. All of these children examined the illustrations, but none read the story.

Lessening Interest in "Funny Books"

Although there was a gradual decrease in the number of children who actually read the "funny books," interest in these books remained at rather a high pitch throughout the time they were left in the reading room. There were, however, three children in the fourth grade who became tired of the "funny books."

Betty stopped looking at "funny books" and read Little Koala Bear but took several days in doing so and did not appear much interested in the book. After reading this book, she alternated between examining the "funny books" and the other books in the library.
After the first day Emory gave the "funny books" only a cursory examination and soon had seen most of them. Observer 4 tried to interest him in several books but without success. Emory steadfastly held that he was only interested in "cowboy stories" and had read all of them that were in the room. Observer 4 asked Emory if he would read a new cowboy book if one were brought. He replied, "Yes, if it's no more 'n that thick," indicating with his fingers a book about an inch thick. The Boys' Book of Cowboys was brought the next day and Emory examined the pictures in it for two days. On the third day he turned to the first page, and using his finger as a pointer for each word, he slowly read about half of the first page. He then turned to Observer 4 and said, "Say, this ain't no cowboy book." After Observer 4 explained that in the first chapter the boy and girl who were the chief characters in the story were in the city and went from there to a ranch in the West, Emory turned to Chapter III and again started reading as before. He soon stopped reading and discarded the book, saying that he was waiting for The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins.

On the day before Observer 4 read The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins to the fourth grade group Glenn W. remarked to no one in particular, "I believe I'll get me a book. I'm tired of funny books." He then went to Observer 4 and asked him to help in the selection of a book. Observer 4
read Glenn the first few pages of **Buttons**, which has only a short sentence or two on each page, and talked to him about some of the full page illustrations. Upon being left to himself with the book, Glenn only looked at the illustrations. Observer 4 asked him to read orally from the book and found that he had much difficulty in doing so. The observer then helped Glenn with his reading through two pages and again left him to read the book silently. Glenn continued to read the book but came to the observer for much help with words. When he would get a sentence worked out, he would re-read it to the observer without being asked to do so, sometimes interrupting the observer’s work with another child. When the period was over, Glenn asked if he might have the book back the following day.

Glenn came in late the next day and found **Buttons**, but Observer 4 was reading *The 300 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* to the class; so he did not open the book until the observer had stopped reading. When Observer 4 stopped reading, Glenn opened the book to the first page and read the part of the book he had already been over the previous day and looked at the illustrations. When the period ended, he asked for the book back the following Tuesday as the Fourth of July holidays were to intervene.

On the following Tuesday, although four days had elapsed
since he had been in the library, Glenn searched for Buttons, which Observer 4 had placed on a table across the room from where Glenn usually sat. When he found the book, he started at the first of the book and examined all the illustrations until he reached the place he had stopped reading. He then moved across the table and seated himself near Observer 4, telling him the story as far as he had read. The story was told in great detail, and when he had finished telling it, Glenn started reading again and did not ask for as much help as he previously had. When he finished the book, he told the observer the remainder of the story. He spent the ten remaining minutes of the period standing at a table examining Little Koala Bear, although he did not appear to read any of it.

Reading First Grade Material to Fifth Grade Children

Both the fourth and the fifth grade enjoyed Observer 4's reading of The 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins so much that numerous requests were made in each grade for the observer to read something else. As Glenn enjoyed Buttons so much, Observer 4 decided to read part of this book to the fifth grade group in order to see if a story written on such a low level of difficulty from the standpoint of both words and content would appeal to this group; so he read them the first few pages in this book.

When the observer announced that he would read Buttons, all the children, with the exception of Charles C., were
reading or looking at "funny books." Charles C. was looking at the illustrations in a "Big Little Book" which had been given him by a friend. Although they were told to continue their reading if they wished, all the children but Beverly put their books down as soon as the observer told them he would read to them. Several went to the observer and stood beside and behind him as he read in order to see the illustrations. The observer showed the illustrations to the group as he read, for these make up by far the major portion of the book. After raising the question "Whom do you suppose won the fight?" the observer stopped reading. Several of the children asked for the book, but it was given to Dorothy Jean. Dorothy Jean took a comparatively long time to read the book as she started at the first and re-read all the observer had previously read and very carefully examined all the illustrations.

When Ruth, who was one of the children who wanted Buttons, did not get the book, she asked Observer 4 to help her find another one. The observer showed her Chester and told her what the story was about. Upon opening the book Ruth remarked, "The words are too little," referring to the easy words. She decided, however, to read the book anyway. When Dorothy Jean finished Buttons and gave it to Ruth, she placed Buttons in her lap and said she would finish Chester first. She later spontaneously told Observer 4 about
Chester and told Tom R. about the story. She seemed greatly to enjoy telling the story. At the end of the period she asked for both the books back the following day, and upon being told that she could not reserve both, she seemed quite disappointed.

Ruth, who was the first person to enter the room the next day, quickly found Buttons, placed the book under her arm, and continued to search until she found Chester. She remained standing until she finished the few remaining pages; then she sat down and read Buttons, supplementing her reading by examining the pictures.

When Dorothy Jean finished Buttons, she asked Observer 4 to help her find another book, and he told her a little about Hercules, which she read for a short time and then changed for a "funny book." She did not look at the "funny book" long before she returned to Hercules. At the end of the period she told Observer 4 she wanted Hercules back and said, "It's really good." The next day she finished the book.
CHAPTER V

READING FOR INFORMATION PHASE

A program was planned for the children which had a three-fold purpose: (1) to draw the children's interest away from "funny books" and center it on science reading material, (2) to gather data on the way the children read informational literature, and (3) to investigate further the grade level of the material the children would read.

These children had not been confronted with a reading situation where their chief purpose was to secure information from books of an informational nature, although they had often read several different types of books in order to find answers to questions raised by the observer. Not only was this true, but with only three exceptions the children had well established preferences for "funny books."

With the exception of the "funny books" all the books which were in the reading room were removed and replaced with forty-six books relating to different phases of science, ranging in difficulty from second to sixth grade level in reading difficulty.

Both the fourth and fifth grade children were taken fishing, and in addition they were taken on an excursion through
the woods which resulted in their bringing back many different kinds of leaves, several queer specimen of rock, a young robin which was unable to fly, two tortoises, one copperhead snake, several frogs, two mussels, and several kinds of insects.

The fourth and fifth grades were taken as one group to the science museum of North Texas State Teachers College, where they saw a varied array of specimens.

All the specimens which were collected on the field trip were brought to the reading room, and when the fourth grade came into the library, they displayed much interest in the animals. Observer 4 raised a number of questions both in regard to the animals and the other specimens which had been collected. The children gave evidence of a great desire to know the answers to the questions, but they did not seem to want to try to find out the answers themselves even after the observer called their attention to the science books on the tables and told them the kind of material they contained. Instead of reading to find out the answers the children tried to coax the observer into telling them. Practically all the children returned to examining and reading "funny books" after spending most of the period handling and examining the animals.

Glenn W. was an exception in the fourth grade group, but his behavior was not apparently due either to an interest in the specimens or to anything the observer said or did.
It was apparently due instead to the success he experienced in reading *Buttons*. After examining the animals, Glenn thumbed through the science books until he found *Through the Year* and then seated himself next to Observer 4. He opened the book to the first page, looked at it for a short time, then turned to the observer, read the first line and asked, "Is that right?" Upon being told that it was, he studied the book for another short period and again turned to the observer and repeated the same question. Upon being told that he had read the sentence correctly, he again repeated the performance. Then he suddenly and with much excitement exclaimed, "I can read this book!" He seemed quite pleased with himself and continued to read the book throughout the remainder of the period. Although Glenn is an exceptionally mild and polite boy, he was quite rude when Neal tried to tell him about the "funny book" he was looking at, saying, "Leave me alone. I want to read." At the end of the period he asked that the book be reserved for him the next day. He had read the first nine pages in the book.

Glenn came in the next day, found *Through the Year*, and turned immediately to the place he had left off the preceding day. When Jack W. came in he looked at Glenn and said, "Look at Glenn reading an old second grade book." Glenn looked blankly at Observer 4 who said in a matter of fact voice,
"Yes, I read it yesterday." Glenn dropped his eyes to his book and went right on with his reading. He continued to read throughout the period, and when it was over, he had read thirteen pages. During the period he asked for help with words twice. Once he went to another table to read Observer 4 a sentence about a chipmunk carrying seed in its cheeks, which he thought was quite interesting. He asked for the book back the following day, but the class went on a picnic, and he did not get an opportunity to read. When he returned, he saw Observer 4 in the hall and asked him if he might take "my book" home to read.

The fifth grade seemed even more interested in the animals and in the questions which Observer 4 raised in regard to these animals than the fourth grade, but they did not seem to be interested enough to try to find out about them and instead tried to get Observer 4 to tell them about the animals. Soon all were reading or looking at "funny books."

The effort put forth by Observer 4 in trying to change the children's interest to the science material has been underemphasized in the description. Because of a preconceived opinion, however, he made a decided effort to bring about this change.

The next day all the "funny books" were removed from the room, and only science books were left on the tables. When
the fourth grade group came into the library, most of the children were quite disappointed. Several of the children said that if they could not have "funny books" they would not read. They were told that if they did not care to read it would be all right, but they were requested not to disturb those who were reading.

Soon all the children had a book, but discussion of the books took up most of the period in most cases. Some of the boys found an unlabeled picture of a pangolin in a book and asked Observer 4 what it was. After determining that there was no information relating to the pangolin in the book, he told them what it was and how it would lie down in front of an army of marching ants, open its scales and let the apertures fill with ants, close the scales thereby trapping the ants, immerse itself in a waterhole, reopen its scales, and then leisurely eat the floating ants. When he had finished, he told them that there was a story about a pangolin in Frank Buck's On Jungle Trails, and several of the children begged him to bring the book to the library. The observer went into the book room and found two copies of the book. When he returned with them, several children begged for the books, but they were given to Francis and Douglas. These boys were unable to read the books, but they examined the illustrations very carefully during the remainder of the period.
The fifth grade group was more upset than the fourth grade about the removal of the "funny books." They begged, pled with, cajoled, and threatened Observer 4 in an attempt to get the "funny books" back. Observer 4 merely smiled and teased them about their actions. By raising such questions as "Where are a grasshopper's ears?" in as dramatic a manner as he could, Observer 4 soon had most of the children interested. Edwin spent the remainder of the period trying to find the answer to the above question in Straight Wings. He read very little but elicited the help of other observers. He was unsuccessful in discovering the answer to the question but resolved to find out the following day.

On a visit to the science museum the previous day the children had seen a gila monster. One of the children recalled seeing this reptile and asked Observer 4 about it; whereupon Observer 4 raised the question of what a person could do to prevent a gila monster from poisoning him after he had been bitten and while the gila monster was still hanging on with his fangs imbedded in the person's flesh. The observer also mentioned the fact that some information about gila monsters could be found in Animals in the Sun. Charles N. found and read the two pages devoted to gila monsters, examined the illustrations in the book, and exchanged it for Ditmar's Book of Living Reptiles.
Animals in the Sun tells of the necessity for the gila monster to turn over on its back in order to let the poison drain from the fangs located in the lower jaw into the wound created by the fangs. Charles N., upon being asked by Observer 4 if he had found the answer to the question, reasoned that if a person would only hold the gila monster and prevent it from turning over, the reptile would be unable to let the poison drain into the wound.

Observer 4 opened Ditmar's Snakes of the World and turned through the pages. Several children gathered around him asking questions about the illustrations. The observer tried to answer enough of these questions to arouse as much interest as possible without satisfying the children's curiosity. He raised the question, "How could a snake poison a person if he never got within twelve feet of him?" He then told the children that this happened to Frank Buck and that Buck told about it in On Jungle Trails. Several children rushed for the books, but George got one and Ronnie and Tom N. the other. The three seated themselves at the table with Observer 4 and tried to find the portion of the book which answered the question. The observer showed them the chapter which contained the story, but the children insisted on knowing the specific pages on which the story was related. The observer showed them the paragraph that began the story, and they
started reading. All three appeared quite interested. Tom N., who was reading with Ronnie, was the faster reader and could hardly wait for Ronnie to finish one page and turn over to the next. At the close of the period, Tom N. and George remained in the room reading the story until Observer 4 forced them to leave, ten minutes after the close of the period.

The next day George and Tom N. made Ronnie wait until they finished the story before either would relinquish their book to him. Tom N. finished first and gave his book to Ronnie who finished the story before the end of the period. No further questions were raised, and all the children, including Tom N. and George, spent the remainder of the period looking at and discussing illustrations in the books.
CHAPTER VI

THE FINAL EVALUATION PHASE

At the close of the first six weeks of the summer school the children at Sam Houston School were moved to the Demonstration School of North Texas State Teachers College for the remaining six weeks of the summer session. After the children were moved to the new school, the experiment was conducted only in the fifth grade.

Tom N., Charles N., Tom R., and George withdrew from school, and there were three new children who entered the group. A short description of each of these three children follows:

Robert has a reading grade level of 3.3. He dislikes reading but seems to enjoy the illustrations in books. He does not read when placed in situations where it would seem quite desirable to do so from his point of view. Upon receiving a written invitation to a birthday party from one of the children, he asked questions about it until he received all the necessary information, although he was told several times during the course of the questioning that the information he was asking for was contained in the note. Upon being asked to read the note to an observer, he read it easily.

Shirley has a reading grade level of 5.5. She enjoys
reading very much if the material is very easy and reads a large number of books of varied types. She has no clearly defined interests.

James has a reading grade level of 3.2. He neither enjoys reading nor books. His teacher states that he appears to have but little interest in anything other than handiwork. He seems fairly adept at gaining information from a book without reading it. After the first week he withdrew from school because of an illness which was apparent from the time he entered.

**Trend Toward Very Easy Material**

For the first two days after moving to the Demonstration School the children were very restless and read very little. In an attempt to interest the children Observer 4 told them a little about *The Silver Dollar*, *Runaway Balboa*, *Raffy, Flippy and Skippy*, *The Dog Cantbark*, *Andy and the Lion*, and *Horton Hatches the Egg* and in each case raised a question, the answer to which could be found in the book. The children were quite responsive and in most cases were quite interested in finding the answers to the questions.

The questions were all raised in a manner similar to the following:

James was given a short summary of the first part of *Runaway Balboa* and the observer ended by
saying, "And I don't suppose he ever got loose from the jungle roots." James seized the book and said, "I'm gonna find out."

Robert was told of "Raffy's" desire to become the fastest runner in the jungle and how he outran "Longhorn." When the word "Honkebeest" was used, Robert wanted to know what a "Honkebeest" was, but the observer said that he did not know. Robert did not wait to hear more of the story but said, "I'll see," and took the book.

Walter asked for help in finding a book and Observer 4 showed him The Silver Dollar. After telling Walter the first part of the story the observer asked, "How do you suppose he got a hat, a bandana, a pair of spurs, a pair of chaps, and a pair of boots and still had his silver dollar?" Walter offered a solution, but he was told that it was not the correct one; whereupon he said, "Well, I'll find out."

In most cases the children found the answers to the questions by examining the illustrations, which in all but two cases seemed to satisfy them. In two instances where the answers to the questions were not to be found in the pictures, the children, after inventing an answer or two which was not correct, gave up and did not read the books.
Two of the books about which questions were raised which the children read were *Horton Hatches the Egg* and *Andy and the Lion*. Observer 4 told the first part of *Horton Hatches the Egg* to five boys who were having difficulty in finding a book. When he raised the question as to what hatched from the egg Horton was sitting on, all five of the boys begged for the book. Charles C. got the book and took it to his seat. The four remaining boys, Walter, Edwin, Harold, and Ronnie begged the observer to tell them what happened. Upon his refusal to do so three of the boys went to where Charles was sitting and looked over his shoulder as he examined the illustrations. Harold remained with the observer after the others left and pleaded, "Please tell me what hatched." Upon the observer's refusal to do so he joined the others at Charles' desk. Charles turned through the book examining the illustrations, and the four boys gathered around him in order that they might also see the illustrations. When he came to the illustration which answered the question the observer raised, all of them exclaimed something about it. Charles remarked, "I'm going to read it now." Whereupon the other four left him and either looked for books or picked one up at random from the table.

Charles read the book carefully, and by the end of the period Ronnie and Walter had also read it, and Harold had
almost finished it. Edwin only examined the pictures more carefully. Harold finished the book the next day, and several other children read it. Robert and James examined the illustrations.

Approximately this same procedure was followed in introducing Andy and the Lion to four other children. Three of the four read the book, but they did not follow the same procedure that the group did with Horton Hatches the Egg. These children used the pictures to supplement their reading and did not examine the pictures ahead of their reading. Andy and the Lion is about first grade reading material, but before it was returned to the library over half of the children in the group read it.

Edwin was going to try to find out how "Skookum", the goat in Skookum and Sandy, saved his owner's life. He turned through the book examining the illustrations carefully, and after he had examined all of them he went to Observer 4 and said, "I can't find it." He told the observer that the book was too hard, but he wanted to know where the answer to the question could be found. The observer showed him the part of the book that contained the answer, and Edwin returned to his seat with the book. In a few minutes he again approached the observer with a puzzled expression on his face. He was not sure of what he had read. As the story is rather vague at this point the observer asked Edwin to read the
part orally, thinking that this might help to clear the matter. Edwin read with a great deal of difficulty and with much hesitation, and when he had finished, he still did not know how the goat saved the boy's life. The observer explained that it was the goat who gave Sandy the "big push" that got him from under the falling tree, thereby saving his life. Edwin was quite amused and wondered if the goat was really trying to save Sandy. He took the book to his desk and again tried to read it, but he soon stopped reading and exchanged Skookum and Sandy for another book.

Observer 4 told Marylynn the first part of Cats for the Tooseys and raised the question, "How do you suppose they got rid of the cats?" The answer to this question was not to be found in the pictures. Marylynn examined the illustrations carefully and then started reading at the first of the book. She apparently enjoyed the story and giggled often during the time she was reading it, but she did not read more than one-fourth of the book. When the children gave book reports the following Saturday, Marylynn reported on Cats for the Tooseys. She told the first part of the story in great detail, and this part was almost identical to the story in the book. The remainder of her report was also in detail, and it was this detail that made it apparent to one who was familiar with the book
that the latter part was Marylynn's fabrication. It followed the general trend of the story, but the detailed description was far from the story in the book, as was Marylynn's solution as to the way in which the Tooseys disposed of their cats.

The children as a whole were more settled than on the previous day as practically all of them were quite absorbed in examining and reading books for the first twenty minutes of the period, after which time a number of the children began to lost interest. It was noted that most of the children who were reading had books of a very low level of reading difficulty; therefore an additional number of books of this type were brought the following day.

Observer 4 told the children something about the books as they examined them, being careful to raise questions which could not be answered by looking at the illustrations.

More actual reading took place on this day than at any previous time as the following excerpt from an observer's notes indicates:

"Beverly is reading Why Can't I Fly and casually examining the pictures.
"Ronnie immediately got the book he was reading yesterday--Cats for the Tooseys--turned to his place and became absorbed in his reading, paying no attention to what went on around him.
"Marylynn is reading Babar and paying careful attention to the pictures. She looks at the picture first, reads the material on the page, and returns to the picture."
"Ruth is standing near me reading Herbert the Lion. "Dorothy Jane is continuing her reading of A Good House for a Mouse and takes a long time to turn a page. "Edwin is again looking at the pictures in Horton Hatches the Egg. "Beverly finished Why Can't I Fly and changed to Cock-A-Doodle-Do after asking me about the book. "Doris Jean is quite absorbed in Walter, the Lazy Mouse. She took the book on Charles' recommendation. "Shirley is enjoying Me Too. She is sitting next to Beverly, and when she reads something amusing, she turns to Beverly and laughingly tells her about it or reads the selection to her. "There are more people actually reading than there has ever been. "Ruth remained standing at the table reading Herbert the Lion until she finished the story. "Shirley finished Me Too and put it in her desk. She took The Meeklesome Mouse as soon as she saw the title and started reading. "All but three of the children appear to be actually reading. Walter is writing. Robert is looking at the illustrations in Raffy. Marylynn is looking at Horton Hatches the Egg. "Dorothy Jean finished her book and changed immediately to Herbert the Lion. "Ronnie finished Cats for the Tooseys, remarked that it 'sure was good,' and asked me about Wee Gillis. I raised the question, 'Where do you suppose he finally decided to live?' Ronnie took the book to his desk and started reading immediately, paying some attention to the pictures as he reads. "Harold is reading parts of Sliders and Creepers, chiefly those about snakes. "Beverly finished Cock-A-Doodle-Do and returned it to the table. She made no attempt to find a book but returned to her seat. When she sat down, Shirley gave her Me Too, and she immediately started reading. "Marylynn finished looking at Horton Hatches the Egg and got Abraham Lincoln. She is just looking at the pictures. Most of the children enjoy these pictures, but only Beverly has read the book. "Ronnie finished Wee Gillis and is re-reading Horton Hatches the Egg. "Dorothy finished Herbert the Lion and is now reading The Greedy Goat.
"Edwin finished The Story of Babar, and Ronnie dropped Horton Hatches the Egg and seized it. Charles persuaded Ronnie to let him read with him. They seem to enjoy the book immensely.

"Edwin is looking at Abraham Lincoln, and Marylynn is looking at the ceiling.

"Beverly finished Me Too and is now reading Penny Whistle, which Shirley just finished.

"After 25 minutes all the children are still reading with the exception of Marylynn, Edwin, and Walter.

"Edwin found Nicodemus and Petunia and is now reading.

"Robert, who went on an errand, has returned and is not reading.

"Beverly finished Penny Whistle and is looking at the illustrations in Runaway Balboa."

The children as a group seemed intensely interested in reading during the time the very easy books were left in the room. Most of the children read only the books of late first and early second grade difficulty and only looked at the pictures in the books of late second grade difficulty and above. This was also true in large part of the children of more advanced reading ability.

Shirley, who has a reading grade level of 5.5 actually read the following books during the three days the very easy books were left in the room: Story About Ping, Nicodemus and Petunia, Herbert the Lion, The Greedy Goat, A Good House for a Mouse, Andy and the Lion, Wee Gillis, Me Too, Tim Tadpole, Ask Mr. Bear, Why Can't I Fly, This Way to the Circus, The Meddlesome Mouse, and Horton Hatches the Egg.

She examined the illustrations in: Cats for the Tooseys, Runaway Balboa, Over in the Meadow, Creepers and

Beverly with a reading grade level of 5.1 actually read the following books during the three days the very easy books were left in the room: This Way to the Circus, Nicodemus and Petunia, Abraham Lincoln, Andy and the Lion, Herbert the Lion, Walter, the Lazy Mouse, Penny Whistle, Cock-A-Doodle-Do, The Greedy Goat, Me Too, Why Can't I Fly, Meeklesome Mouse, A Good House for a Mouse, Ask Mr. Bear, Tim Tadpole, Story About Ping, and Babar the Elephant.

She only examined the illustrations in: Runaway Balboa, Over in the Meadow, Creepers and Sliders, Wee Gillis, and Flippy and Skippy.

Beverly started reading Cats for the Tooseys and The Silver Dollar, but she did not finish either. While she was reading Walter, the Lazy Mouse she stopped several times to read an easier book, but she kept returning to Walter, the Lazy Mouse until she finished it.

No inducement was offered for the children to read books and no praise was given for their doing so. When the children did not read, no criticism was made of them.

Retest with Difficult Material

As it was possible that the move from Sam Houston School to the Demonstration School could have contributed to the
unrest and lack of interest at the first of the week, it was decided to again bring more difficult material into the room and remove the easy material.

The books brought the following Tuesday ranged in difficulty from rather difficult material for the second grade to rather difficult fifth and early sixth grade material. Most of the material was of late third and early fourth grade difficulty. The books were very similar in appearance to the less difficult material the children had been reading. They were chiefly large, thin books, profusely illustrated.

The notes of an observer illustrate what happened:

"The children appear to be intensely interested in the new books, although several wanted to know why all the others were taken back. Each child quickly found a book and took it to his seat."
"Within less than two minutes Charles, Ronnie and Robert exchanged their books. Charles came to me with Adventures of Little Bear and said, "Tell me something about this one." After I told him about the first adventure, he went to his seat and started reading and looking at the pictures."
"Dorothy Jean soon exchanged books. She now has Elephants."
"Robert changed books again and so did Edwin."
"Marylynn is still looking at the books on the table."
"Dorothy changed books again."
"Shirley has her book open but is not reading."
"Six minutes have elapsed since the beginning of the period."
"Ronnie has Tale of Two Bunnies and is reading, paying little attention to the pictures."
"Ruth has The Lonely Little Pig. I can not tell whether she is reading."
"Doris is reading Birthday of Obash after asking me about it."
"Robert went to the table and returned his book. This time he pulled a chair to the table and is sitting there looking at books.

"Shirley is doing everything but reading.

"Ruth exchanged The Lonesome Little Pig for Doris and the Trolls and is examining the pictures.

"Marilynn is sitting with her head lying on her desk.

"Dorothy Jean found Raggedy Andy and is looking at the pictures.

"Ruth and Doris are discussing Doris' bracelet.

"Ronnie, Beverly, and Harold appear to be the only children reading. Charles is out of the room.

"Shirley exchanged Getaway and Harry Janos for The Forest Pool, but she is only looking at the pictures.

"Beverly is reading Raggedy Ann Stories and says she really likes it.

"Harold is apparently quite absorbed in The Sheep and the Pig.

"Edwin changed to Mr. Tidy Paws and is looking at the pictures.

"Shirley exchanged books with Dorothy Jean. Both are only looking at the pictures.

"Robert is looking at the pictures in Elephants.

"Charles has returned and started reading.

"Ruth changed The Golden Basket and is reading some but is more interested in what goes on around her.

"Shirley is still looking at the pictures in Raggedy Andy Stories and samples some reading occasionally.

"Dorothy Jean exchanged The Lion and the Ox for Mr. Tidy Paws and is looking at the pictures.

"Robert just quit and is examining the rocks on another table.

"Edwin changed to At the Zoo and is examining the pictures.

"Harold finished The Sheep and the Pig, and Shirley got it.

"Dorothy Jean changed to Little Jack Rabbit; she is casually thumbing the book.

"Harold is looking at the pictures in The China Cow and asked me if he might take it home.

"Shirley is reading The Sheep and the Pig. It is very easy for her, and she quickly finishes a page.
"Dorothy Jean is looking at the pictures in The Hog Goes Downstream. Ruth has closed her book and is just looking around.

Harold started a story in the latter part of The China Cow.

Ronnie, Doris, Beverly, Harold, Charles, and Shirley are reading at the present.

Doris is apparently not very interested in her story. She reads a few lines then watches the children for a while.

Shirley quickly read The Sheep and the Pig and is looking at the pictures in Plouf, the Wild Duck.

Edwin and Doris are laughing at the illustrations in Raggedy Andy Stories.

Dorothy Jean is looking at the pictures in The Sheep and the Pig.

Marylynn is sitting with her book closed, doing nothing.

Dorothy Jean put up The Sheep and the Pig and is now just "sitting" as is Robert.

Shirley exchanged Plouf, the Wild Duck for The Lonesome Little Pig.

Edwin is looking at the illustrations in Getaway and Harry Janos.

Charles, Ronnie, and Beverly are still quite absorbed in their reading.

The Sheep and the Pig was read completely by Harold and Shirley; nineteen of the 22 tales of Two Bunnies were read by Ronnie; Charles read rather persistently in Adventures of Little Bear; Beverly read Raggedy Ann Stories throughout the period and Doris read Birthday of Obash about one-half the period and spent the remainder of the time talking to Ruth and Edwin.

As far as I could tell no more than a few lines were read in any other book during the period."

These same books were left in the room the following day, and by the time one-half the period had passed, all but four children gave up all pretense of looking at books. Several gathered at a table at the front of the room and had a general discussion; some wrote on the blackboard; others
just walked around the room looking at maps, rocks, and other objects.

The four children who were reading after one-half of the period had elapsed were Harold, Doris, Shirley, and Beverly. Before the end of the period Doris became tired of Birthday of Obash and joined the group at the table at the front of the room. Shirley did not start Auntie until ten minutes after the period began. Prior to that she just examined the illustrations in several books. She enjoys Auntie and asked for it back the following day.

Beverly continued her reading of Raggedy Ann Stories from the preceding day throughout the period, and Harold did the same with The China Cow.

At the close of the period Beverly requested that Raggedy Ann Stories be reserved for her; Harold requested The China Cow; Shirley requested Auntie; and Doris requested Birthday of Obash. These books were kept in the reading room, but all the others were removed and replaced with very easy books, most of which were of late first grade difficulty; none were above late second grade level.

Retest with Very Easy Material

The next day there was a decided change in the children's behavior. When they saw the new books, the children were delighted. Each seized a book and most of them started
reading. With the exception of Robert, Marylynn, and Edwin most of the children read throughout the period.

When Observer 4 asked Robert to read Buttons orally, Robert experienced some difficulty in doing so. Upon being left to read the book silently, he soon gave it up and only read the lines under certain pictures for a while; then he quit reading entirely. He made no attempt to read another book, but when Observer 4 asked him about What to Do About Molly, he gave a very good summary of the book and volunteered the statement that he "sure liked it." Upon being asked if he had read it, he replied that he only looked at the pictures.

Marylynn read a little in Humpty Hobble but spent most of the period doing nothing.

Edwin spent the period carefully examining the illustrations in books. When Doris gave him Ming and Mehitable, she said, "Read it. You won't get any sense out of this one unless you read it." Edwin read about two pages; then he carefully examined the illustrations but made no further attempt to read.

After giving Edwin Ming and Mehitable Doris looked at the illustrations in The Jungle Picnic, which is all any of the children did with this book.

On the next day the children were quite eager to go to the library, which was a decided contrast to their attitude on the previous day.
With three exceptions the children were quite interested and absorbed in reading. Marylynn read some, but Robert and Edwin read nothing during the entire period. When Observer 4 told a child that "Humpty Hobble" could do something no other penguin in the world could do, Robert, who had been listening to the conversation, started telling about the story. The observer talked to him about it and found that he had a good general idea of the story. Unlike Edwin, Robert does not discuss books with other children.

Edwin spent the period examining the illustrations in books. He asked Observer 4 if he had remembered to bring Story About Ping for him today. Edwin started looking at the pictures in this book seven days ago, and it was taken from the reading room. Since that time, he has not missed a day asking for it. This morning he was sent to the library for it, and when he returned with the book, he sat down and examined the pictures carefully. As he checked the book out, he is going to take it home with him. Upon being sent from the room on an errand, he took the book with him.

Ronnie, one of the best readers, today read The Little Red Hen, Tale of Peter Rabbit, A Merry Mouse, What to Do About Molly, A Head for Happy, and finished An Airplane Ride. Harold started to get The China Cow again, but
Observer 4 told him a little about Elizabeth, a Cow Ghost, and he decided to read that instead. He soon finished this book and became quite absorbed in What to Do About Molly. Observer 4 casually picked up The Story of Babar, which has been read by everyone in the room but Harold and Robert, and commented on two or three incidents in the book as though he thought Harold had read the book. Harold exclaimed, "I haven't read that yet!" He took the book and started reading immediately. Harold asked for the book back at the end of the period and stated that it was the best book he had ever read.

Dorothy Jean and Harold remained in the room reading until they were asked to leave the second time.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

For the most part these children tended to read material far below their level of reading ability. This was especially true when the children were reading purely for enjoyment and was true in a lesser degree when the children were searching for the answer to specific questions or searching for bits of information.

Many times the illustrations in a book actually detracted from the children's desire to read the book. This was especially true when the illustrations clearly told the story. When the story was not clearly told in the pictures and the material contained in the book was not extremely easy to read, the children time and again depended upon the illustrations to gain the content of the book and either relied on their imagination to supply the rest of the story or supplemented their examination of the illustrations by picking out a few words on the pages opposite the illustrations.

In large part the children who had very few or single reading interests constituted the poorer readers of the group. Two of the best readers verbally held to single interests, but in their reading this verbalization did not
prove to be true as with a little direction they became interested in many subjects.

The most universal and apparently the strongest interest was in "funny books," especially those of the fantastic type. The second most common interest was in "Big Little Books." The third most common interest was in animals and animal stories. This interest however might be attributed to Observer 4's interest in this field. "Cowboy" stories were a common interest among the boys, while several of the girls and one or two boys exhibited an interest in fairy stories.

It was evident throughout the study that the observer in charge of the experimental work influenced the children's interests, and at the close of the experiment it was evident that many of the children had more varied reading interests than they had at the beginning.

With the exception of the "Big Little Books" thick books were not given much consideration by the children. Large, thin books with many illustrations and very small, thin books with many illustrations were the most popular books with the children. Preference was given also to those books which had only a few lines of print to each page.

Whether (1) the quality of the editions, (2) the quality of the illustrations, and (3) the condition of the book influenced the children's choices could not be determined.
When an interest was clearly established in a subject, the children apparently ignored all three of these factors in pursuing that interest.

By hoarding books, remaining in the reading room after they were told to leave, scheming ways to obtain "funny books," and other actions of similar nature the children indicated that they have a need which is not being met in the public schools. Whether "funny books" and "Big Little Books" are the answer to this need cannot be determined from the data obtained in this study. There is, however, a clear indication that further research is needed in determining the nature of this need and ways whereby it can best be met.

The effectiveness of reading material far below children's level of reading ability as a remedial technique was not determined by this study, but the data collected in this study indicate that there should be some research made on this problem.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for teachers to be thoroughly familiar with their material if they are to interest children in reading.

Probably the most important implication of this study is that through the use of the descriptive evaluation technique teachers may discover much useful information about the children with whom they are working.

It may be concluded from the findings in this study that
if enjoyment is a factor in children's continued interest in reading, material must be provided for children which is far below their level in reading ability.

The data in this study indicate that the score which children make on standardized tests may not give a valid indication of their ability to read, as the term is commonly used. This is especially true of those children who are somewhat retarded in reading and who have acquired other techniques of gaining information from a printed page.

The reactions of the children in this study indicate that teachers who have an ability to read well, an ability to tell stories and bits of stories in a dramatic manner, as well as an ability to raise questions in a like manner should prove more effective in raising and maintaining children's interest in reading.