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Literature based intervention with learning disabled students

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The University of Arizona, 1993

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**LITERATURE BASED INTERVENTION WITH
LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS**

by

Tamara Ann Christopherson

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

Literature-based reading instruction is a current method being used in elementary schools today. A growing body of research on such programs used within the regular education classroom suggests that such programs improve students' abilities to critically construct meaning. Yet, despite this movement, little has been documented on how such programs might affect learning disabled students mainstreamed in the regular education classroom for reading instruction.

The main focus of this study then, was to examine the strategies and possible teaching modifications that would be necessary for learning disabled students to participate in a literature-based reading program along with their regular education peers. Three learning disabled students within the researcher's fifth grade classroom were voluntary participants in this study and received the same reading instruction as their non-labeled classmates.

CHAPTER I THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Background of the Study

During six years of teaching fifth grade students, experience has shown that the development of fluent, comprehending readers is more complex than simply teaching a sequential set of skills. Yet basal textbooks, the most widely used method of teaching reading in America today, are written with the belief that reading happens through a process of acquiring a set of ordered, isolated skills. In the real-world of the classroom though, this is not always the case. Even with tight adherence to the schedules set forth in the basal, my students were still failing to become effective readers. Negative response by the students themselves, along with low scores on standardized tests, drove me in my search for a better way to teach reading. Today, and for the past five years, my sole method of reading instruction has been literature-based. This approach has allowed instruction to embrace all of the reading skills within the context of a whole story rather than in isolation. It has also created time for the complex social interactions necessary for readers to absorb and to understand the text; time which basal stories, with their structured environment and short length, did not provide. The results of this implementation of literature-based instruction within my classroom has yielded significant improvement both in attitudes toward reading and individual standardized test scores.

Supporting these personal observations, a growing body of academic research has been published which validateS the positive effects of such an approach within the regular classroom. However, despite this research, there have been few attempts to document whether or not literature-based instruction has any effect, positive or negative, on learning disabled students mainstreamed in regular classrooms. In my own classroom, district policy has always meant that those students with reading/learning disabilities have been removed and received remedial instruction in a resource setting. Since this remediation has

not incorporated a literature-base approach, it has been impossible to determine if such an approach would have any effect on these students reading abilities. The goal of this study then, is to observe and record learning disabled students strategies, language usage, and behaviors while receiving the same literature-based instruction as their non-labeled peers within the context of the regular education classroom.

Perspectives on Response

Response to literature is a topic which is widely discussed and subject to a variety of interpretations. The term itself encompasses a variety of reader behaviors which are interrelated in complex ways. Some of these are easily observable while others must be searched for in the ways and means respondents present their ideas and thoughts. In this section reader response theories which discuss the relationship between the reader, the text, and the group are examined followed by a look at non-traditional methods of response through student designed presentations.

Traditional approaches to response, mainly with adults, have focused on the readers' ability to "correctly" interpret the text (Richards, 1929). However, more recent studies have been based on Rosenblatt's (1938/1976) transactional theory approach to reading. Within this theory response focuses on the process of transaction between the reader and the text which results in interpretation. The text is not an object apart from the reader but rather an event, a lived-through process or experience, created by the reader. Rosenblatt emphasizes the importance of the personal, social, and cultural context which the individual reader brings with them that allows for the same text to be read yet interpretations be quite varied. This would lead to the rejection of the notion that there is a single "correct" reading of a literary work. Although the readers' experience is an internal and personal one, there is a sense in which it remains influenced by the structure of the text. Rosenblatt's transactional theory, by its insistence on both elements of the

transaction, places equal importance on the text as well as the reader in creating meaning. Holland (1975) also noted that the possibilities of a reader creating meaning with no connection to the text was probable, but in general, if the reader's reaction to the text wandered to far from the intent of the author's then the interrelationships within the text would begin to break down and have no unity. Thus the need for both the text and the reader are crucial. Bleich (1975) further extends Rosenblatt's transactional theory by placing an even stronger emphasis on the role of the reader. He contends that ultimately it is the reader that is responsible for the meaning which is constructed. The text is confined to the words written while the reader is the active participant who modifies and creates meaning based on their own backgrounds and understandings.

Another vital perspective on response which must be considered is that of the interpretive community in which learning takes place. Vygotsky (1978) contends that learning is a social event in which language plays an important role. He describes learning as occurring in the "zone of proximal development" or "the distance between the actual developmental level as described by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). This sociocultural theory thus implies that learning is a collaborative effort which contains the context, the meaning, and the support needed for individual learners to explore many options. Within this context of learning comes literature discussions. Students are responsible not only to the text they have read but to their own histories, beliefs, biases, prejudices, experiences, and hopes which interact with the text first, but then must consider the contributions made by other readers and negotiate these into their final conclusions and understandings. It is within this collaborative environment where differing opinions and views can be risked, shared, and revised that Vygotsky's optimal zone for learning can occur.

Response which emerges from the social and collaborative nature of discussion groups is often seen through the specific language or dialogue occurring in these groups. Peterson (1988) suggested how dialogue might function in literature discussion groups:

Dialogue... provides a natural and effective way for students to construct meaning. Reaching beyond a mere exchange of information and sharing of ideas, participants in dialogue seek to disclose "original meaning." They collaborate one-with-the-other to comprehend ideas, problems, events and feelings in light of their own background, experience and intent. Through heartfelt responding, partners in dialogue work to expand what they know of the world's meaning. (p. 1).

By looking closely at the exchange of specific dialogue as students are engaged in literature discussion groups, valuable information concerning the strategies and mental processes which occur in the search for meaning can be found. Research by Eeds and Wells (1989) examined the specific dialogue a group of fifth and sixth grade students were producing during literature discussions. Their data included transcriptions of audiotapes of the sessions from which emerged four major categories of talk: 1. Construction of simple meaning; 2. Personal involvement; 3. Inquiry or questioning to discover meaning; and 4. Critique's of what the student's liked and disliked. These categories emerged as a result of the talk and were not meant to be prescriptive in nature. Rather all talk, due to its nature takes on it's own set of categories given the text, the context of discussion, and the readers themselves. Peterson (1988) suggests that elements of literature will emerge naturally as the children and teacher talk about the books.

Response to literature has predominantly been defined by the dialogue which occurs as a result of reading. However, researchers have also looked at what children do as a result of, and during the reading of a text (Hickman, 1979; Hepler, 1982; Huck, 1989). These activities are valuable clues into children's response and abilities to critically construct meaning in the stories they are reading. Many children may lack the abilities to either write or orally express their literary response. These same children, however, may simply need alternative methods which go beyond writing and speaking that

allow them to express their understandings of what they have read. Hickman (1979) explored the idea of different means by which response could be generated. Some of her findings were: 1) listening behaviors, 2) contact with other books, 3) actions and drama, and 4) the creation and making of things. She found that the validity of these extension projects greatly depended upon the climate of the classroom which "permitted" or "facilitated" these types of response.

Response, then, can be found and interpreted in many different ways and aspects of a literature program. To focus on just one area would be to ignore other aspects which could contribute valuable information in understanding how individual readers construct meaning from text. In order to describe the response of the three students in this study a broad definition of response will be maintained in order to gain insights into individuals' abilities to create meaning from literature.

Learning Disabled Students Response to Literature

The field of learning disabilities has been greatly influenced by the philosophy of "slow it down and make it concrete" (Allington, 1991, p. 26) and the back to basics movement in regular education. Instruction has emerged based on the belief that reading is a process made up of component sub-skills which are hierarchical in nature. Under this model the most effective reader develops as mastery of each level is obtained and progresses on to more complex higher order thinking skills. With the passage of PL94-192, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, this philosophy, with its observable components, was applied to the mandatory individual education plan required for all special education students. The instructional response in traditional special education programs has been to remove these students from the context of their regular education classrooms to teach, in isolation, the skills these students were unable to learn in the larger context.

Research such as Hickman's (1983) calls for major instructional reform in the area of literacy in the regular classrooms. Inquiries are slowly addressing the same reforms needed in the instruction of our special education children. Gilles (1990) emphasizes the success special education students are beginning to experience in understanding the purpose of stories and the empowerment they feel as they see themselves as members of literate communities. Goatley (1991) addresses the question of special education student's response to a model of reading instruction consistent with the reforms occurring in classrooms using literature-based instruction where these students potentially were mainstreamed. She found "that not only are these students able to participate in such activities, but that they benefit from such instruction" (p. 12). Although these studies are few in number, their data support the growing body of research that is calling for change in our traditional methods of teaching reading both to regular and special education students. This study joins this search to discover just how learning disabled readers will, and can, join in with their regular education peers in a literature based reading program.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the considerable body of information which exists concerning response to literature the majority of it deals with non-learning disabled students. Elementary teachers need more comprehensive insights to help them plan workable and effective literature programs which will allow all students within their classrooms to be active participants. The goal of this study was to determine if children with learning disabilities could participate in literature discussion groups and critically create meaning from the same literature program as regular education classroom students.

Approach to the Study

Due to the nature of this study, the need for broad descriptions, and the complex inner relationships necessary in responding to literature, ethnographic techniques were used

to gather the majority of the data. Standardized scores taken from the Learning Disabilities Resource program and the Speech and Language program were also utilized as baseline information concerning each student's strengths and weaknesses in their learning strategies.

The ethnographic techniques employed in this study consisted of audio taped interviews, literature discussion groups, student extension projects, and teacher anecdotal records.

Purposes of the Study

The primary purpose of this investigation was to determine if Learning Disabled students could critically create meaning from literature if the context and materials used for instruction were the same as their regular education classmates. A number of questions were proposed as a preliminary frame for gathering and reflecting on the data:

1. What are the student's perceptions about reading, their reading strategies, and themselves as readers?.
2. To what extent do the students participate in literature discussions?
3. Is there evidence of the student's strategies to critically construct meaning from the literature in the language they use during literature discussions?
4. Are the student's abilities to critically construct meaning from the literature reflected in the student's choice of literature extension projects.

These questions reflect the partly exploratory nature of all ethnographic research. Throughout the study further questions emerged to give direction to the study. However, the ultimate objective was to identify those questions which would be the most productive for planning and implementing a literature instructional program for students with Learning Disabilities in a regular education classroom.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

A reasonable interpretation of the findings of this study depends upon recognition of the characteristics of ethnographic, qualitative research. Specific descriptions of actions are not intended to be generalized. The study involved three specific students. Although each student received the same instruction in the study, individual differences and learning needs were addressed, and adjusted for, during instructional time. The individual differences of each student make generalizations impossible. However, the intent of the study was to determine if these particular learning disabled students could learn in, and from, the same program offered to their non-labeled peers. If the study indicates that learning can occur then implications for instructional purposes in similar programs can be drawn.

In ethnographic research, total participant observers, like myself, seek to know the setting and response in depth and detail. However, all of my perspectives are personal ones. It is possible that other researchers would have different views and interpretations about some of the events reported in this study. Due to the fact that I was both a researcher and the classroom teacher responsible for thirty children it was impossible to report every response which might have had implications to this study. As a teacher I also adjusted and monitored instructional time with all of the students when feedback from these observations indicated that learning was not happening. Because I determined so much of what was to be studied academically and when and how it would be done, I feel that these decisions could of had some influence on the type of response given by these student's. Although observations were noted by resource teachers and a student teacher, who was part of the last half of the study, the final analysis reflects, basically, the perceptions of a single investigator.

Finally, factors such as interruptions during class time and individual willingness to participate during recorded periods may have had effects on the students' response but were not recorded.

Summary

Educational practices within the regular education classrooms today are under going considerable restructuring. Questions emerging from this process seek to understand the impact that these changes have on the role of special education and the services given to students who have been classified Learning Disabled. This study looked at the researcher's use of a literature based reading program, traditionally done with regular education students, and the impact that this program would have on three mainstreamed learning disabled students receiving the same instruction as their non-labeled peers.

CHAPTER II METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Setting of the Study

This study took place within the researcher's fifth grade classroom in a school located in the southwestern United States. At the beginning of the study there were 30 students in my classroom, twenty-six of whom remained for reading instruction. The four which did not remain were students who received their core instructional time in special resource rooms. By the end of the study the class number had risen to 33 with twenty-eight students participating in this literature program.

At the beginning of the school year the majority of these students had limited exposure to a literature-based reading program. The instructional goal for the first nine weeks of school, therefore, was primarily aimed at convincing these students that reading whole books was not only possible but a rewarding experience. Reading materials were chosen based on integrated thematic units of study. Student's were given a wide choice of literature, both fiction and non-fiction, to choose from concerning the theme of the unit. Connections between reading, social studies, and science were made through writing and extension projects which allowed the students to explore topics based on their own personal interests. Language development was the primary goal in every reading and writing activity. Students constantly worked with and were exposed to words and their usage in the context of their readings. An instructional core time from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p. m. each day allowed for the rotation of reading and writing groups to work on projects both independently and in small groups.

Role of the Investigator

In all ethnography the researcher becomes a part of the population being studied. In this study I was a complete participant in my involvement as both the teacher and the researcher. My responsibilities included instructional preparation and delivery, recording

my own response and teaching style, as well as collecting specific data and observations on the three students involved in this study.

Time Frame and Organization

In order to explore the realms of response half of the school year was chosen as the formal data collecting period. This period of collection began at the start of the second quarter and ended with the third quarter of the school year. The first quarter of the year was used for informal observations and selection of the students who would be involved in this study. Parent conferences and approval forms were collected during this time. Standardized testing by the special education resource teachers were also reviewed and updated during this initial stage.

Anecdotal records, primarily based on the reading instructional period, were recorded weekly by myself. Observations were also recorded in other subject areas if they were related to reading and offered insight into the student's strategies for creating meaning from literature. Observations made by the Special Education Resource teacher, Speech and Language teacher, Chapter One aide, and a university student teacher were also collected and used in the final analysis.

In order to determine if student dialogue during the literature discussion groups reflected any abilities to critically create meaning, formal tape recordings of the student's reading and discussing were made. Three short stories read by the students and teacher in this study were made without the involvement of the regular education students. Exclusion of the regular education students from the reading and discussion of these short stories was done to determine if any significant differences in behaviors or dialogue that might occur with the three learning disabled students' if the other students' weren't present. Three other formal recordings were made with both the learning disabled students and their peers discussing the books they read.

Types of Documentation

Student Interviews

To address my first question about the kinds of reading strategies each student utilized, students were interviewed individually at the beginning of the study. Each boy was asked a series of questions adapted from the Burke Reading Inventory. These interviews were taped, transcribed, and used in the final analysis. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in the appendices.

Literature Discussion Groups

The majority of data collected for my second and third research question, to what extent do the learning disabled students' participate in the literature discussions and whether or not their dialogue would reflect critical construction of meaning, came from the transcripts of specific literature discussion groups. From these transcripts the language used by each student was analyzed to find reoccurring patterns of strategies the students were using to construct meaning. These patterns were placed in categories based on the kind of talk that occurred. Following are the categories that emerged from these transcripts: Conversation Maintenance, Retellings, Character Development, Interpretations, and Intertextuality: Literature Connections and Personal Connections.

Each literature group discussion began with broad questions related to the story or, chapter read, such as "What was the chapter about?" in order to clarify questions or understandings of the text read. The direction of the discussions then focused on the individual reactions of the students to the text read. Specific directional questions were asked by the instructor to focus students on the story elements enabling them to make connections between the story, the characters, and their own lives. A copy of one of these discussions can be found in the appendices.

Audio Documentation

Audiotapes were made of the interviews and discussion groups with a cassette recorder. These tapes were dated and transcribed and used in the final analysis along with anecdotal records and extension projects.

Student Extension Projects

At the end of two stories read during this study students were asked to create projects that extended their interpretations of the stories. Initially examples and types of extension projects were discussed to familiarize students with the range of possibilities available when creating an extension. The actual projects were then decided upon by the students themselves. They were allowed to work on their projects individually or in small groups. Projects were either physically collected or recorded in anecdotal records. The goal of this documentation was to determine if the students' choice, and quality of work, further reflected the student's ability to construct meaning in ways he might not have been able to during oral or written discussions.

Anecdotal Documentation

Descriptive notes were kept in a weekly log recording observations of events, language usage, and any other related activities which might reflect student's involvement with literature. Condensed accounts of these observations were taken initially and were later expanded into more complete versions of what occurred.

Student's Chosen for Case Study

Three fifth grade students in my classroom identified with learning disabilities participated in this study. The names of the children have been changed for protective purposes. Cumulative records and standardized test scores were used to establish baseline academic abilities and progress for each student. Using this information and anecdotal

observations adaptations throughout the instructional day were done in order for these students to be successful in all of their academics.

Jeff

History

Jeff came to the school this study took place in on September 9, 1990, and entered a combination forth/fifth grade classroom. Information obtained from James' school cumulative file showed that he lived with his mother, her boyfriend, and a new two year old step-sister. James' mother and father are divorced and he only sees his Dad two or three times a year. Information provided by his mother state that James' health and developmental history was normal, however, Jeff had a difficult time adjusting to his parent's divorce. He is very verbal about his dislike of his mother's choice of boyfriends. She feels that Jeff should have been retained in the third grade due to his difficulties with school work and was glad that he was being evaluated for special education services. Jeff has never been retained, recently passed all hearing/vision screening, and has no evidence of being educationally disadvantaged.

Initial Referral, Scores, and Learning Disabilities Resource Placement

Jeff was referred by his regular classroom teacher to the Special Education team on January 8, 1991, due to his poor performance in reading, math, and written language. It was agreed by the team, the classroom teacher, and the parent to give Jeff a full battery of tests. Jeff was given the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children-R (WISC-R), the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-R (WJ-R), Draw-A-Person (DAP), and the Beery Test of Visual Motor Integration (VMI).

The assessment results of the WISC-R indicate that Jeff's cognitive abilities were in the average range. His Full Scale IQ score was 101. This finding was also supported by a standard score of 102 that Jeff received on the Broad Cognitive Ability test on the WJ-R.

The achievement portion of the WJ-R was administered to assess James' level of academic functioning. On the broad basic skill tests Jeff standard score in math was 102, and his knowledge score was 98. Jeff also received a standard score of 94 on his broad reading skill test. Although this reading score indicates that Jeff is functioning in the average range individual scores on the Letter-Word Identification and Passage Comprehension sub-tests indicated Jeff's grade equivalent scores were 3.1 and 3.9 supporting classroom observations that Jeff was having difficulty with curriculum at the fourth grade level. These scores, along with his average cognitive abilities at the time of test were not low enough to qualify Jeff for the learning disabilities program. His broad written language score of 85, however, was notably depressed compared to his cognitive abilities and did place him in the learning disabilities resource program.

The VMI was utilized in order to assess James' style of visual motor integration. Results indicated that James' capabilities were consistent with his average cognitive abilities.

The DAP was administered in order to assess Jeff's style of self presentation. Results indicated that Jeff sees life as difficult but has a good image of himself.

Anecdotal Records

Observations in the classroom, began on August 23, 1991. Initial observations indicated that Jeff is very social and well liked by his peers but does not have particularly close relationships with any of them. During class activities Jeff often preferred to be by himself rather than in a group and was reluctant to join a group unless asked personally by

another student. At recess time Jeff often played with younger students in other classrooms rather than his own peer group.

In class during large group instruction, if the topic was of interest to him, Jeff appeared to be involved and stayed on task. He would listen attentively to both instructional and peer interactions as well as freely offer his opinions and thoughts without direct prompting from the teacher. This behavior was particularly noted during times when stories were read aloud from picture books which went along with the theme that was being studied. One particular book read aloud, *Miss Rumphius*, by Barbara Cooney (1982) inspired a unique and humorous response from Jeff. The message of the book was one person's response to making our world a better place. Using the theme of the the book I asked the students to think of something they could or would like to do to make their world a better place. Jeff's immediate verbal response was to quote the last line of the book "But I do not know yet what that can be" and then he grinned. He made the connection between the main character as a child and himself as a child who did not yet know what she/he would do to make his world a better place. While reading aloud books by Chris Van Allsburg Jeff often remarked on how much he liked the use of suspense in these books. These comments, and others Jeff often made, were a reflection of his understanding of deeper concepts within the stories. He was not afraid to share them with the class when the text was read aloud.

His humorous response to *Miss Rumphius*, however, quickly disappeared when he was asked to generalize this story into his own life and put what he would do into writing. In a one-to-one conversation Jeff could tell me the story and even seemed to understand the importance of doing things which make our world and, people's lives, better. He was able to give several examples of things which have been done today in our own community that have made Tucson a better place. However, he could not put into writing what he had just

verbalized. His fear of transferring his thoughts, or answers, to paper completely paralyzed him. So strong was his fear that having myself or another do the writing while he dictated still did not free him to put his thoughts into writing. This fear affected him throughout this entire study making written response an almost impossible option. Therefore, much of Jeff's response come from his verbal response and later through picture drawing from which he was able to discuss important concepts and information quite easily and accurately.

Jeff was often involved in classroom and small group discussions but he was easily distracted. If the topic was not very interesting to him he would play with things at his desk and not contribute to the discussions at all. When away from his desk he would lay his head on a desk or lay down on the floor directing his attention away from the group and would repeatedly sigh. Attempts to engage Jeff would only result in momentary attention and repeated instructions or information before he could even give limited answers. Jeff's slower decoding skills also hindered the amount of discussion he would contribute. If he had been given sufficient time to read on his own, which was considerably longer than his classroom peers, or been able to listen to the stories from a peer or on tape he would contribute more. If he hadn't, he chose to remain silent during discussions.

Thad

History

Apart from Kindergarten and half of third grade Thad has always been a student in the school this study took place in. Information from Thomas' school file at the beginning of this study indicate that he lives with his mother and a 14-year old brother. According to his mother Thad sees his father infrequently, at the most two or three times a year. Review of medical and developmental information showed an early history of frequent ear infections and strep throat but, otherwise, development was normal. Thad passed both

vision and hearing screening for the current school year. Thad's mother reported that he has a "temper" and often gets into arguments with neighborhood children. He was seen for a few sessions of counseling the fall of 1990 to discuss alternative ways of dealing with his anger. There was no evidence of educational disadvantage.

Initial Referral, Scores, and Resource Placement

Thad was referred to the Special Education team by his regular education teacher in March of 1990 due to difficulties in reading and written language. He was tested using the same battery of tests that Jeff received.

Results of the WISC-R showed Thad's cognitive abilities to be in the average range with a full scale IQ score of 94. Results of the basic skill scores on the WJ-R indicated that Thad was stronger in his broad math abilities (86) and reading (87) compared to his written language score of 75. His written language score was significantly low enough to show a discrepancy between his average level of ability and his achievement thus qualifying him for placement in the learning disabilities resource program.

Thad was also tested with the CELF-R to further verify his written language discrepancy. This test yielded a standard score of 74 on the Receptive Language sub-test, a 72 on the Expressive Language sub-test, and a total language score of 71. Based on these results Thad also qualified for two hours a week of speech and language intervention.

The VMI was utilized in order to assess Thomas' style of visual motor integration. The results indicated that Thad's capabilities were consistent with his average cognitive abilities.

The DAP results suggested that Thad has a poor body image but that he is basically a trusting and extroverted person.

Anecdotal Records

Observations in the regular classroom, beginning August 23, 1991, showed Thad to be socially well liked by his peers. However, he got into arguments easily with students and has a difficult time letting go of his angry feelings. During instructional time if the lessons were well structured and the expectations well defined then Thad was able to stay on task. He was a willing participant in large group activities and contributes in smaller groups when the previous guidelines are in place. However, if the instruction was not tightly structured then Thad had a difficult time staying focused and was often disruptive to other students. He was easily distracted and was subject to mood swings which affected his ability to stay focused on a test for long periods of time. During reading Thad was often frustrated by his inability to decode words as quickly as his classroom peers. If he wasn't given more time to read than other students with more efficient decoding skills, or allowed to listen to the stories with either a reading partner or on tape, he would not read the materials. During discussions when he had not read the text he would try and join in the conversations by telling personal stories that appeared to be generated from what other students were sharing rather than any real connections to the stories being read.

Chris

History

During his five years of schooling Chris has been enrolled in five different schools, very few for an entire year. Chris spent Kindergarten and first grade at the school this study took place in. He was then retained and enrolled at another school in the same district, to redo first grade. His second grade year was spent at two other schools in the same district, neither of which were previous schools attended. He then returned to the first school he attended for the first half of his third grade year then moved to a different

district until the latter part of his fourth grade year when he returned to the school that this study took place in.

Chris lives with his mother and has three brothers and three sisters, five of which are still at home. Chris' parents were divorced when he was in the first grade. His mother reports that he was very emotional over the divorce and very fearful that something might happen to her. She reports that he has low self-esteem and is easily frustrated. Chris and his entire family have received counseling to deal with emotional problems but were not currently receiving any at the time of this study. Developmentally Chris had many ear infections as a small child but otherwise developed normally. Chris passed both vision and hearing tests for the current school year.

Initial, Referral, Scores, and Resource Placement

Chris was referred for special education evaluation by his third grade teacher at Los Ninos due to his academic failure. Chris was tested on January 8, 1990, with the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) and the Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery (WJ).

The results of the WISC-R showed Chris' Full Scale standard score to be 92 placing him in the average intelligence range. His Verbal Score was 85 and his Performance Score was 102.

The WJ showed severe deficits in all academic areas. His Reading standard score was 66, Math 74, and Written Language 74. Due to the significant discrepancy between his average intellectual functioning and his academic deficits Chris qualified for services in the learning disabled resource program.

Chris was also given the CELF-R to further support the need for written language intervention. His total standard score was 52, his receptive language score was 63, and

expressive language was 50. These results qualified Chris to receive two hours a week of speech and language intervention.

Since re-entering this school during the latter part of his fourth grade year, Chris received very little services due to his late enrollment and the early May release of the school district. However, at the beginning of this study Chris was given two sub-tests from the Woodcock-Johnson Revised tests of achievement, form A, to give a baseline score in reading for instructional purposes. The sub-test, Letter-Word Identification showed Chris' grade equivalent ability to be at 1.6. The sub-test, Passage Comprehension showed Chris' grade equivalent functioning to be at 1.3. Due to these low scores, and Chris' apparent frustration, the resource teacher chose to forego any further testing even though the WJ-R had a sub-test in Word Attack skills and Reading Vocabulary.

Anecdotal Records

Chris is a very withdrawn and introverted student. He does not participate in large or small group discussions willingly. He constantly plays with objects under his desk during discussion times and, if allowed to, draws pictures. He appears to get along with the other students in the class but doesn't interact with them unless required by the task at hand. On the playground he often plays with students not in his regular class or younger students. His handwriting is neat, legible print. However, due to multiple spelling errors the writing is incomprehensible. He appears to have his own strategies for spelling which make some sense to him if he reads it immediately after writing. If there is a time lapse before he reads back what he wrote, however, he is unable to tell what he wrote. When given an Informal Reading Inventory Chris showed strength in his ability to comprehend orally but could not decode words even at the pre-primer level. He does not attend to initial sounds in words but seems to use any letter he can identify when trying to sound out the word and then just guesses what it might be. He also does not use any of the context to

help him decode words. When asked what he really wanted to do this year in school Chris replied "I want to learn to read".

Data Analysis

Descriptive Data: Classroom Context

In order to understand and analyze all of the findings in this study it was necessary to pull together descriptive information about the context of the literature program. The purpose for collecting this data was two fold: first, to recreate the environment and all the influences it contained so that the reader might have a better understanding of what took place during the study; and second, to help clarify for the researcher what aspects of the program were truly beneficial to students with learning disabilities and what areas could be modified or changed for future programs of this nature.

The participation and involvement of other teachers, instructional aides, students, and a University of Arizona student teacher were also included to determine the influence these people and programs may have had on the students' instructional time.

Specific Stories and Chapter Books

A brief synopsis of the stories and books used will be presented here in order for the reader to understand the meaning and implications found within the comments and projects which the students created during this study.

Short Stories

Three short stories from the book, *All Living Things*, by Cynthia Rylant (1985) were chosen due to their short nature, readability, and their in-depth character and plot development. The objectives for using these stories were: First, the stories had enough in their contents to simulate the longer books being read in the classroom but could be read in a brief period of time. Second, these stories created a "mini" discussion group with the

learning disabled students without the influence of their regular education peers. And finally, the dialogue from these stories was used to identify specific strategies these students were using to create meaning. These stories and discussions were done at the beginning, middle, and end of the study.

The first story, "Slower than the Rest, is about a young boy named Leo, who although not called learning disabled, is having difficulties in school and is placed in a "special" class to learn. No matter how hard he seems to try he believes that he is always "slower than the rest" until one day he finds a turtle and brings it to school for his project and presentation on a forest animal. While listening to all the other students present their elaborate essays on their forest animal Leo gets frustrated at the lack of sensitivity he feels his classmates hold towards animals which are slower than others. When he steps in front of his class to present his project he doesn't carry a piece of paper but rather the turtle itself. He launches into his presentation by discussing the specific dangers of a forest fire on animals which are slow like his turtle. His speech is so well done that his classmates applaud him and his teacher is moved to tears. Later he is presented with a special award by the Principal at a school wide assembly for his outstanding speech. As Leo accepts his award and listens to the roar of the crowd applauding him Leo feels "fast" for the first time in his life and comes to grip with his own beliefs that being slow doesn't have to be negative.

The second story, "Safe", is a story of a young boy named Denny who has an enormous fear that Nuclear War will occur during his life time. This fear is fueled each time his mother, who is very active in campaigns to freeze nuclear production, discusses this issue with anyone who will listen. Denny and his mother go to visit his Uncle who lives on a farm. In Denny's mind he will be "safe" from nuclear war if he is away from the big city and is on his uncle's farm in the country. However, the fears continue to haunt

him as his mother and uncle continue to debate and discuss the possibilities of war ever occurring. To relieve his fears Denny begins to leave the house whenever these discussions begin and finds comfort and peace in the gentle cows which live on the farm.

In the final short story, "Stray", a young girl named Doris, is a lonely single child whose family is very poor. One day she discovers a stray dog and brings him home with her. The dog is her instant companion and joy. However, both of her parents warn her that they can not afford to keep a dog and it will have to go to the local dog pound if an owner doesn't claim it. Doris is devastated when eventually no owner claims the dog and the father takes it away. But, as in all of her short stories, Rylant (1985) doesn't let her stories end on a down beat. When it seems that all hope is lost for Doris to have the dog the father returns with the dog telling the mother that he couldn't leave the dog to die in such an awful place and Doris is allowed to keep the dog.

Two novels were read during the period of this study and three formal discussions which included both the students in this study and classroom peers were recorded and transcribed. The objective of these recordings was to look at the kinds of talk which occurred for the three learning disabled boys when non labeled peers discussed and interacted with them.

The two novels that were read were *A Castle In the Attic* by Elizabeth Winthrop (1985) and *In the House of Sixty Father's* by Meindert DeJong (1956). In the story *A Castle in the Attic*, Winthrop (1985) weaves a dual tale of realism and fantasy when ten year old William must face the challenge of life without his beloved nanny, Mrs. Phillips. William's parents have always worked full time at their jobs and left all the care taking of William to Mrs. Phillips. When Mrs. Phillips realizes that William, at age ten, is completely dependent on her for everything, including his confidence in himself, she decides to return to England to live with her brother. But William is determined to prevent

Mrs. Phillips from leaving. When several attempts at hiding sacred possessions of hers fails to change her mind, Mrs. Phillips gives William her parting gift. She gives him a toy castle complete with a small lead knight which has been in her family for generations. She tells William that he has the "heart and soul" of true chivalry like the Knights of the Round Table stories which the two of them had shared all his life. It is from Sir Simon, the toy Knight who, unknown to Mrs. Phillips, comes alive at William's touch that William will discover a way to keep his beloved nanny forever. Using a coin of Sir Simon's which has the power to shrink people to very small sizes William shrinks Mrs. Phillips and puts her in the castle. However, his plan back fires when Mrs. Phillips refuses to ever talk to William again until he returns her to her normal size. But William can't. The knight does not have the coin which allows for the reversal process. Only the wicked wizard, Alastor, who stole the knight's land and castle during the Medieval period has the power to do this. The only way to regain Mrs. Phillip's love and respect is for William to shrink himself which somehow magically transports them all to Sir Simon's Medieval time. They go a "quest" with Sir Simon to defeat Alastor. William defeats Alastor without any help from anyone and returns Mrs. Phillip and himself back to their own time. Through his experience William faces, and conquers, all of his fears and finds the confidence and courage in himself to live without the sole support of his nanny.

In the book *In the House of Sixty Fathers*, a young Chinese boy, Tein Poa and his family are caught in a war when Japan attacks during the beginning stages of World War II. The book begins with Tein Poa's family fleeing their village as enemy airplanes bomb and destroy their village. Miraculously they are able to save a Sampan, a floating house, and get it up river to a city which has not yet been destroyed. In this city the American Allies have an airbase where Tein Poa's parents go to find work by building runways for airplanes. On their first day at work Tein Poa is told to stay in the Sampan with his pet pig

until they return. During this time Tein Poa meets an American pilot who hires him to take him across the river in his Sampan. Tein Poa agrees to carry the airman across because he thinks the hundred yen he will receive will be more important to his parents than obeying their instructions. A storm has caused the river to flood and the airman and Tein Poa are lucky to make it back across the river. However, even the hundred yen does nothing to regain the trust Tein Poa loses in his father's eyes for not obeying his commands to stay in the sampan. The next day, to relieve his boredom, Tein Poa plays from within the Sampan with a herd of water buffalo which are in the water next to him. Without knowing it, all of his running around loosens the ropes which tied the Sampan to the bank. While he is taking a nap the Sampan breaks loose and Tein Poa is swept down river, back into Japanese territory. The rest of the story is filled with fear and tension as Tein Poa, with only the companion of his pig, tries to find his parents in a war torn country. He encounters famine and death all around him. The only thing that keeps him going is the hope of finding his family. It is during one of the many times that he is hiding from the Japanese soldiers that Tein Poa sees an American airplane shot down and helps rescue the pilot. Tein Poa discovers that the airman is the one he had helped in the Sampan. Together, the wounded soldier, and Tein Poa struggle to survive and reach friendly territories. Although their languages are an insurmountable barrier the need for sheer survival and companionship bridge the gap and the two become fast friends. Once the two are rescued Tein Poa discovers that the city his parents had been in has been taken by the Japanese. He has no idea if his parents are alive or dead. Even more frightening is the mass of people which fled the city in every direction. Tein Poa's chances of ever finding them grow dimmer as he watches the final refugees flee the city without a sign of his family. Tein Poa, with all hope of ever finding his parents gone, is on the verge of accepting the offer to be adopted by the 60 airmen who live at the base where his pilot

friend lives. But he has one last idea. If the airman can take him up in his airplane maybe he could spot his family from the air. Miraculously, when all hope is almost gone again, Tein Poa spots his mother in a gang of women working on an airstrip and is reunited with his family. The book is filled with the tension and fear that come when innocent people are forced to live under war time conditions and compassionately follows the courage and endless hope that one small boy has in overcoming what seem such unsurmountable odds.

Categories of response

In order to determine if the language used by the students reflected their ability to critically create meaning, each transcript was coded by the kinds of talk that appeared. Initially I tried to use the same categories of talk that Eeds and Wells (1989) used in their study. However, I found that I was forcing the dialogue in my transcripts to try and fit categories that didn't reflect what was really happening in the groups. I discovered that the kinds of talk, and the categorization of it, had to emerge from the specific literature discussions and the dialogue created in each. Six major categories, or strategies the student's were using, repeatedly emerged across all of the transcripts. Following are the categories and descriptive statements which define them.

1. Retellings. During the discussions, generally at the beginning, time was often spent retelling, or summarizing, the story to be sure that the students were ready to discuss at deeper levels. Comments that were retelling, summarizing, or sharing favorite parts of the story were coded under this category.

2. Character Development. Under this category comments which established the characters and their roles in the stories, feelings and thoughts the characters were experiencing, and how they changed over time within the stories were recorded. Comments in this category were also coded for whether or not the students used the text to support their comments and observations.

3. Story Elements: Comments that were made either directly or indirectly which referred to story elements such as mood, tone, tensions, settings, plots, and themes were categorized under story elements.

4. Inferences. Under this category I placed comments which seemed to require interpretation on the part of the students. Evidence that predictions were being made and/or conclusions being drawn whether from implicit understanding or directly stated in the text were also part of this category.

5. Intertextuality:. This category included comments which directly or indirectly helped the students create meaning of the new story by referring to other books, characters, and experiences they may have had prior to the readings and discussions. For the sake of clarity in discussing this category two sub-categories will be looked at individually. The first sub-category, Literature Connections, will look at students' use of themes and connections from other literature they have read. The second sub-category, Personal Connections, will look at the choice of personal experiences each student chooses to refer to in attempting to connect the themes of the stories to their own lives.

Summary

Three learning disabled students within the researcher's classroom were chosen to participate in the same literature-based reading program offered in their regular education classroom. Specific documentation and adaptations were set up to record these student's response to determine if they could successfully create meaning from and with the same materials their regular education peers were. Categories of specific strategies used to create meaning were generated from the dialogue used during literature discussions. These categories, along with anecdotal records and student created extension projects that also reflected individual interpretations were used together to determine if and how these students created meaning.

CHAPTER III DESCRIPTIVE DATA

The Classroom Teacher

Personal Beliefs and Expectations

As an elementary teacher my beliefs and expectations for children are constantly growing and changing. However, any change has been based on the firm belief that all students can, and do, learn and that as the instructor I can create the conditions in which learning occurs. A vital condition to insure that maximum learning occurs is through the exposure to, and use, of language with children. Given the opportunities to explore and experience language through a variety of means within the classroom allows children the opportunity to become critical thinkers and decision makers needed in today's changing society.

In creating an environment which encourages language development my instructional delivery system has been through integrated thematic units of study. By using a central theme, experience with language occurs throughout the day in all curriculum areas. Through reading, writing, experimenting, talking about, and listening my students are exposed to a variety of means and ways in which to gain a wide background of information concerning a central topic. In this environment learning is as much a social event as it is an individual one. Teaching thematically breaks from the traditional teacher lecture/test style delivery system by giving children the freedom to explore and learn from many different points of view. Both students and instructors collaborate using each other's strengths and experiences to create purposeful and meaningful learning. Student's individual learning rates and styles can better be accommodated as instruction builds on previously learned information and allows the time and interaction necessary to assimilate the new.

Role as Participant and Observer

The requirements of a classroom teacher grow increasingly demanding as class size and the need for more individualized instruction increase. For the twenty-eight students who received reading instruction in my classroom it was my responsibility to plan, implement, monitor, and adjust for all instructional materials, co-ordinate schedules with resource and extra-curricula specialists, and arrange daily schedules to accommodate planned and unplanned interruptions. In this regard my participation in and during the reading instructional period of the day was total. Because my involvement in the classroom made it impossible to record everything in great detail it became routine for me to carry a notebook around throughout the day in order to make brief notations of events as they occurred. These notations would later become the prompts which allowed me to reconstruct the events in expanded versions.

This dual role, however, as both teacher and researcher did not come easily. Initially the constant analysis of whether or not my teaching was causing or creating the students' "response" was of great concern to me. Was their response a reflection of internal learning on their part or a result of direct prompting from myself knowing, from the researcher's perspective, how I wanted them to answer? From the teaching aspect I was planning for, and teaching to, 28 students and not just three. Because of this the group as a whole had to be considered in terms of choice and availability of reading materials which would also fit into the theme which directed the course of each study. As a result the choice of reading materials were not always at the independent, or instructional, reading levels of the students in this study. When observations of the individual boys in this study indicated that they were not comprehending the story, adaptations were made to accommodate their individual needs.

Instructional Goals

Thematic Instruction

Teaching thematically is the integration of activities and curriculum around a central theme or idea. All instruction, information, and materials are created or gathered to fit the theme. Because children learn at different rates and utilize different modalities of learning thematic instruction enables children to succeed and build upon levels of achievement at their own rate through the exposure and use of multi-leveled instructional materials.

One of the goals of the thematic units during the time of this study was to saturate my students with a subject through all of their curriculum. The themes chosen for study focused mainly on ancient cultures and lasted anywhere from six to nine weeks. Specific themes explored during the time of this study dealt with the Medieval and Ancient China periods. These themes, and the events which occurred within them, gave my students the opportunities to gain a wide background of information and awareness of cultural aspects that all related to, and contributed to, the students' interpretation of the stories.

Aesthetic Transactions

One of the initial objectives of this literature program was to provide all students with a sense of belief that they could be part of, contribute to, and enjoy reading whole books. The books used during the thematic units were chosen based on two objectives. The first was to find books which would fit the theme and be appealing to students in the fifth grade, and second, that the plots within the novels would present literary elements completely. Once these objectives were met the primary goal of instruction focused on the reader's attention to what s/he was experiencing through the reading-event.

This experience, or aesthetic response (Rosenblatt 1938/1978), enables students to attend both to what the verbal signs on the the page represent as well as the qualitative

overtones of images, ideas, situations, and characters which are evoked through the guidance of the text in the minds of the reader while reading. Readers not just passive receivers of information nor are they merely distant spectators of the printed word but rather they are active participants in the creation of meaning. As the students read the novels in this study they drew on their own past experiences of language and life and what they were learning in the thematic unit in order to create meaning.

Using their own reactions and the context of the story my students were able to explore their own interpretations as well as those of other members in the discussion groups. Within the context of the discussion group each student's interpretation was valued leaving room for broad interpretations rather than one single answer.

Student Teacher involvement

Towards the middle of the study a University of Arizona student teacher became an active participant in this study. Concerns and questions involving my role as both the teacher and the researcher continued to surface throughout the study. To what extent were the two roles affecting the types of response I was getting from the three students in the study? Was I giving them cues and signals to respond to that might not otherwise be given if I was not also researching those response? To help answer these questions the student teacher, who had been trained at the University in both the philosophy and practice of literature-based reading, became a discussion leader/participant. Many informal discussions, which included the students in the study, were tape recorded and transcribed to give comparative data to discussions done with these students and myself. Her expertise and observations provided me with valuable insights that helped me look more objectively at my classroom structure and procedures. She recorded observations of student behaviors during times of instruction as well as when students were working on extension projects. As her responsibilities as a student teacher began to take over more and more of the

classroom instructional time I was able to concentrate more on my own observations of the behaviors and language of the students in the study.

Resource Intervention

Learning Disabled Resource Teacher

The learning disabled resource teacher and I worked in collaboration during the initial stages of this study. The resource teacher, during the time of this study, was responsible for the learning disabled students in this study during the afternoon hours of the day only. During the morning she was involved in a self-contained resource classroom that did not involve these students. Because the reading done by the students involved in this study was done during the morning hours she was unable to participate either in my classroom or by pulling the learning disabled students out of the room to help them individually. Because of these conflicts in scheduling the resource teacher and myself decided that the learning disabled students in this study would receive all of their instruction within my classroom. They received no further intervention or help than what could be provided within the regular classroom schedule and setting.

Speech and Language Specialist

During the time of this study, a half time Speech and Language Specialist collaborated and worked with me in my classroom. Two of the students directly involved in this study, as well as others, were on her specific case list. Because of her limited time, and our joint philosophy that instruction should remain within the context of the classroom, and that all students could benefit from her program she came to my class on Monday's and Tuesday's for forty minutes. Her objectives and goals augmented thematic units being studied in the class. Through the use of creative games and projects she exposed my students to the diversity of language use both through speech and in written word. These

sessions allowed my students time to explore and use language through creative drama, written expression, and verbally practice and understand vocabulary used in their daily readings. Her lessons were a vital step in helping all of my students become critical readers and writers.

Chapter One Aide

Due to a large number of students at this school whose academic performance falls severely below the national norm, money from the Federally funded Chapter One program is allotted each school year. With these monies one full time Chapter One Facilitator and part time aides are hired to work with these students. My classroom shares a four hour chapter one aide with one other teacher. Her responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the individualized tutoring of each identified chapter one student assigned to our classrooms. On a daily basis she is required to read with these students and help tutor in any other areas that the student is having difficulties. The three students in this study were all identified as chapter one students and benefited from her help throughout each day.

Literature Events

Literature Groups

The literature groups in my classroom have evolved over the last five years out of a growing observation of the power literature has, and can have, in the lives of my students. My initial move away from the basal readers to novel or whole book instruction did little more than basalize longer stories. By developing questions and answer sheets, similar to those found in basal textbooks, for my students to use as they read the stories I essentially made my interpretation of the story become the only interpretation. However, as I became more aware of the potential that the stories themselves could teach my students about literary elements, my approach began to change. Instead of reading and answering paper

and pencil questions, my students began charting story elements as they read and the story unfolded. These elements were consistent from book to book as students identified and charted: The main events of each chapter, character development over time, initiating problems, character attempts or response to the problems, results of the attempts, and characters internal response. Initially, with each book the charting was directed by myself asking leading questions with volunteers giving information. The answers to these questions then filled in the charts with information that directly correspond to the literary elements within the story being read. These charts were always displayed in large form in the classroom so that the events from previous chapters or stories could be reviewed and used in further analyses by both the students and the teacher.

During these interactions I began to realize how perceptive my students were and how well they used the interaction between each other to develop new insights. But, as in all large group interactions, only those with the loudest voice or less intimidated students, were the ones doing any of the talking. To help get a better picture of what was happening in the minds of each of my students I began having them write in response journals. After each reading students were to write down any thoughts, feelings, or perceptions they had while reading. These journals allowed me the unique time to interact with each student as we questioned each other about aspects of the story that the student was experiencing or failing to experience. What I discovered most of all from these journals was the power of the reader themselves. My student's reactions, compared to my own, were often very different. I began to understand and value individual reader's background and language abilities and the unique perspective each had in expanding or changing my own. Using their own response to the stories the students were able to identify and chart literary elements. The final interpretation then was not a single view but rather a negotiation between the text, the reader, and the group as a whole. My students were able to create

meaning and personalize that meaning as they applied their own histories and images to the print they read.

In previous years my classroom read the books which I chose to accompany the thematic unit. This meant that everyone read the same book. At the beginning of this year, however, my students were given more choice. It was hoped that if the students were actively involved in the selection of what they wanted to read then the motivation to complete the readings would naturally occur. This worked well in providing groups which were smaller in number but there was less time for me to interact with the students both as a participant and as a model reader. This proved costly in respects to those students who needed lots of initial instruction and guided practice. As a result I chose a single book for the class to read as a whole every other unit of study during the year. On the alternating units students were given a choice of at least two to three titles which fit with the theme and had a range of readability.

The format of the literature groups was the same whether the students were all reading the same book or different ones. For the sake of discussion I will describe what the group as a whole looked like during the reading of one book with the understanding that these same events occurred in smaller groups when more than one book was being read. Each instructional or discussion period began with the teacher directing attention to any literary events which had previously been identified and charted in order to review and stimulate students thinking. If it was the initial discussion of a book a review of the elements themselves was used as a pre-reading strategy to focus students on what to look for and think about as they read. Once the review was done students were asked as a group to orally summarize the events of the chapter and any new literary elements identified were charted. As the students summarized they also used their response logs to help them discuss any impressions or thoughts they had as they read the chapters. This was an open

time for students to share how the stories were affecting them, a time of reflection upon what others thought, and a time when clarification of the story or vocabulary could surface and be dealt with.

Once students had exhausted their discussions they went on to read the next chapter or section of the story and write their response in their journals. Initially in this program I chose to read aloud the first few chapters of each book. The objective of this read aloud time was two fold. First, I read aloud as a direct model for the students to show how to read and identify the literary elements. As I read, I would stop and, working together as a group, we would pick out the literary examples the author was using. We would then reflect on how the words and interactions in the stories were making us feel and what images came to mind. The students then discussed connections between the text and their own internal response as they listened which later would be the foundation for their journal entries and smaller group discussions. Besides being a model reader and thinker for the students I also read aloud the first few chapters of every book to "hook" the students. Experience had proven over and over to me that many books do not get read by children because they aren't willing to invest enough time into them to make personal connections. Reading aloud to my students gave them time to make personal and literary connections and eliminated the need to motivate them to finish the books as they were motivated by the desire to simply find out what would happen in the stories. The students became their own motivators as they challenged and encouraged each other in their group discussions.

Extensions, Follow-ups, and Assignments

Throughout the study I sought to develop and extend my students' comprehension and appreciation of the literature by incorporating a wide variety of ways they could respond to it. I found that written and verbal expression were not always the best forms for judging how much my students were learning from the books they read. For many

students the written expression was forced and artificial and for others verbal expression in a group setting, no matter how small, was to intimidating. For these students, as well as all the others, being able to express and expand their understanding through the creation of games, songs, poetry, drama, and art gave them a sense of ownership to the story in ways which could not have otherwise been expressed. As the year progressed so did the choices the students made. Choices became increasingly more involved, complex, and original. I watched the quietest of all my learners go from drawing simplistic pictures of a favorite scene in the book to being involved in the production and presentation of a rap song performed in front of all their peers. There were no limits to what the students could create as long as they presented key elements of the book and could be shared with the whole class.

Literature Related Events

Reading and the instruction of it, in reality, was never a one time event during the day but rather happened throughout the entire day. The following literature related events were part of the students daily schedule. Although these events were not the main focus of this study they were powerful parts of the literature rich environment my students were involved in.

Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) Time

Since much of the student's reading was a consequence of my choice of time and books I structured the daily schedule to include a time when students could have total freedom in their choice of reading materials. At the beginning of each day students were given twenty minutes to read from anything they chose. The only requirement during this time, other than actually reading, was to record the date and what was read on a daily reading log taped to the top of each desk. As these sheets became full they were placed in individual files as a record of the child's independent reading. New ones were then placed

on the desk tops. This activity was the responsibility of the child with an occasional check by the teacher to be sure that the recording was happening. They were then used as part of a portfolio assessment plan to evaluate the student's level and abilities in all areas of reading.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud to my students served a variety of purposes. The first was to give students an opportunity to listen to a wide selection of genre. My primary goal in reading aloud to my students was not for assessment purposes but rather for enjoyment and exposure. I wanted my students to hear good literature and be able to respond to it as freely as they chose.

Because the students were already reading a chapter book which went with the thematic unit of study I chose to read sets of shorter cultural books that related to the theme. These books exposed my students to many aspects of the of the daily life and writings of the specific culture and people they came from allowing them to expand their understanding of the chapter books and time periods they were studying. Through these books my students gained more global perspectives on other cultures in comparison to their own.

When the cultural books were exhausted my selections to read aloud still followed a theme. These themes included author studies, variations and different versions of the same folk tale, humorous books, poetry, and books which related to science and math. These stories became the spring board from which many informal discussions took place about the use of literary elements and their effect upon the reader.

Reading/Writing Connection

Reading aloud and discussing the literary elements within books not only allowed my students the opportunities to hear good literature but it also gave them excellent models

for writing their own narratives. My writing program this year was based on a program called "Show Me" that was developed by the Bay Area Writing Project. In this program children learn to write narrative stories based on a set of strategies that teaches them to write descriptively. As students listened to stories read aloud to them they began to identify and name the strategies which authors used to create mental pictures in their minds. Students began experimenting with these strategies by expanding "telling sentences" such as: "The pizza was good" to a "show me" sentence: "The pizza made my taste buds jump for joy bite after bite". Through the examples in their readings and their own experimentations these simple sentences soon developed into paragraphs and eventually whole stories.

Reading Efferently and Related Writings

Although this study is primarily looking at the aesthetic response and the creation of meaning from narrative stories, my students were also involved in projects which required them to read from what Rosenblatt terms an efferent stance rather than aesthetically. To read efferently the students had to establish specific purposes for reading a text prior to reading. Instead of reading for enjoyment and letting the text guide their response they had to read for specific information that could be taken away from the book and used in another form. The information was often obtained and used on a test designed to evaluate what the student had learned from the readings. The other form, however, was in research reports. Students needed to learn how to read and extract information from non-fiction books which could then be written into informational reports.

Other opportunities, although not daily, were important parts of my students' overall education as well. On a weekly schedule my students received a 45 minute instructional time in our computer lab. During this time students extended their learning using a wide variety of instructional games that both challenged and stimulated their interest. One hour a week went to our Science Lab where they explored and created with

materials not otherwise available in the classroom. One large project this year was the creation of a garden center where each class was given plots of land to plant and harvest their choice of vegetation. The main goal of the science lab instruction was to orient the students to the scientific process. From this exposure each student was required to create an individual science project which was later judged in a fair which included all of the fourth and fifth graders projects. Another special program that came to our classroom bi-weekly was the D.A.R.E. program presented by the Pima County Sheriff's Department. This program helped my students become aware of the dangers of drug use. Students were given the opportunity to interact with the police officer teaching the program who became a trusted friend to each of the students. Exposure to eight weeks of group self-esteem and co-operative learning sessions were also presented by the school counselor both at the beginning of the school year and at the end. As fifth graders these students also have the opportunity to participate in an annual musical production. This year's play was *Mary Poppin's*. Several of my students were cast in lead roles while many of the others are in supportive roles or working on the play in other capacities.

The Classroom Context

During the period of this study my classroom consisted of students who came from an ethnically diverse population. These children live in an economically depressed rural area of Tucson with 95% of my current classroom receiving free or reduced lunch. Although, traditionally, turn over rate of students in my classroom has been high, only three of the original students left and three new entered during the duration of this study. Of my total class three students went to an extended learning disabilities classroom and two went to a bilingual classroom to receive instruction in reading, mathematics, and writing during the morning. These five students, however, returned to my classroom in the afternoons for their social studies and science instruction. The learning disabled students in

this study who qualified for resource intervention remained with me all day and received academic help through the teamed efforts of myself and the resource teachers.

In an attempt to present a clear picture of what shaped the environment in my classroom, several things are worth noting about the class as a whole. First, the range of academic abilities within this particular group of students ranged from pre-primer levels in reading and writing to students who's most recent standardized test scores indicated capabilities of an eighth grade student. The majority of academic abilities fell in the average range being anywhere from one year behind to one year ahead of the current curriculum demands. Motivation and attitudes toward school and related work were, in general, very low and poor. Passive/aggressive behavior was often noted in many children in their refusal to do any class work outside of the school day. Parental support for the majority of the class was positive but limited due to demanding work schedules that conflicted with either school hours or the evening hours when students may have needed support in doing work outside of class time. Other daily management problems of concern that may have effected the response of my students were other students making noise causing distractions, wasting time, or individual problems which flared up between students that disrupted daily routines. Apart from a few individual students, however, the class in general worked together to cooperate during instructional time and activities which allowed learning to occur for all of the participants.

Description of an Average Day

The response events which reflected the students interaction with literature were part of the ongoing programs and daily procedures of the classroom. The following narrative describes what a typical day would encompass. Included, besides the reading instructional time, are all of the daily activities that interacted together to help build a literature rich learning environment.

Although the instructional day does not begin until 9:00 a.m. students begin arriving on the grounds as early as 8:15 a.m. Breakfast is available and served in the cafeteria to all students who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. After eating students are allowed to play on the grounds as they await the beginning bell.

Upon entering the classroom students are expected to turn in any homework assigned from the day before to a series of boxes located in the front of the room. Students then participate in a school wide singing of the national anthem directed by a recording which is transmitted to each classroom over the P. A. system. After the pledge students sit quietly in their seats as they listen to the daily announcements while the teacher completes attendance records. Once the announcements are over 20 minutes are given to silent reading. Students are allowed to choose whatever materials they wish to read during this time and record on a daily log their choice and amount read. These logs are then used as an indicator of what and how much each student independently chooses to read.

The classroom arrangement, for the majority of the year had students sitting in groups of four to six. This arrangement allowed for a larger space to be available in the front of the room where group activities could occur. The groupings also helped facilitate an atmosphere of co-operation and community among those at each table. The outside wall of the room which is opposite the entrance door has two long thin vertical windows at each corner and two slightly larger horizontal ones which follow along the ceiling of the room. The windows are not large enough and set too deep in the wall to see outside but add natural light to the room creating a warm and inviting climate. Two major bookshelves in the room house books used exclusively by the students. One shelf is full of various copies of text books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries. The other shelf contains novels and narrative books which include a wide range of genre. Children are allowed to borrow and use any of these books. In the left hand corner of the room, beside one of the windows, is a large

table with chairs, a small instructional board mounted on the wall, and a listening center complete with tape recorder and earphones to include up to eight people. In the corner parallel with the listening table is a kidney shaped table which doubles as a small group instructional table as well as the teachers desk. In the front center of the room is a small table with an overhead projector which shines on a large white screen that pulls down from the ceiling. Most large group instruction occurs from this overhead projector. Behind the projector, on the counter is a television monitor. This monitor is interconnected with a centrally located satellite dish and VCR. Also on the shelf and connected both with a Macintosh computer and the t.v. monitor is a laser disk player. All of this equipment is used for instructional purposes but not always on a daily basis. The walls of the classroom are full of student and teacher created writings and projects which reflect the current thematic unit of study.

At approximately 9:30 a.m. the formal instructional day begins with the teacher reading aloud to the students. These readings include a variety of genre, authors, and plots. The objective of these large group discussions is two fold. First, they act as a model to teach students what is expected of them when they meet later in their smaller literature discussion groups. Students are encouraged to share their aesthetic response to the stories and then explore any questions or observations they made to the particular authors style or language. Second, these large group discussions give students the chance to hear and experience written language that is an expert writing model for their own writing. After these readings the students move into a writing period that, when possible' is directly related to what was read aloud. The main objective of the writing time is to engage students in activities which reflect both expressive composition and purposeful projects such as letters or research papers. From approximately 10:00 a.m. to 10:45 students are engaged in mathematic instruction given by another teacher. After returning

from a 15 minute break at 11:00 a.m. students spend a full hour in literature groups. Literature groups are formed by book and student choice. During this hour each group rotates from reading the daily assignment, generally the next chapter in the book, to writing in response journals, to discussions about the previously read materials. Students were given a variety of choices in how they accomplished the daily reading assignment. They could read the selections independently, with a partner or small group, or on occasion listen to the teacher, aide, or student teacher read them aloud. Students also had the opportunity to listen to each of the books on tape recordings available in the listening center. Homework assignments were given to read the daily selection aloud to a parent or adult if their wasn't enough time in the school day to accomplish the readings. On the average each group met and discussed the book they were reading with the teacher two or three times a week. When groups finished a particular book they developed extension projects based on group or individual interpretations to present to the whole class.

At 12:00 p. m. students and teacher went to separate lunch breaks for forty minutes. Upon arriving back to class students settled back into 45 minutes of Social Studies or Science instruction. This instruction always began with the teacher reading aloud fiction or non-fiction books which tied into the Social Studies or Science thematic study. During these read alouds students gained specific information about the ancient cultures that most of the instructional themes revolved around. Student's then went to a Specialist class which, depending upon the day of the week, meant Music, Physical Education, Library, or Art. Each of these specialist classes also carried the instructional theme and gave my students experiences in the arts and music of the ancient cultures they were studying. When the students returned to the classroom at 2:20 p.m. they were again read aloud to from a class chosen novel that also fit the theme of study. At 2:40 all but eight students left for the remainder of the day for band or orchestra instruction. The eight

that remained in the classroom were either tutored by myself for reading or math instruction or worked on individual study related projects. Students were dismissed from school at 3:15 p.m.

Summary

The goal of this study was to determine if learning disabled student's could critically create meaning from the same literature program and materials used in the regular classroom. Through the utilization of teacher beliefs and thematic teaching an environment was created which allowed students opportunities to interact with books throughout the entire instructional day. Special intervention for the three learning disabled students involved in the study came through the collaboration of the regular education, learning disabled, and speech and language teachers within the classroom setting. A University of Arizona student teacher and a part time Chapter One aide were also involved with these students in both instructional and tutorial roles. In order for the reader to understand the context of this program, a description of a typical day was included to show how all of the literature/related events worked together as a whole in helping these students create meaning along with their peers.

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO CREATE MEANING

The main question of this study looked at the strategies and adaptations that would be necessary for learning disabled students to successfully create meaning from literature within the context of the regular education classroom. This section presents the results of the analysis of the various data collected during the study. The results of the individual interviews, taped and transcribed discussions with and without non-labeled peers, and examples of student's choice of extension projects to the literature were used to explore and respond to each of the research questions posed in chapter one which were:

1. What are the students' perceptions about reading, their reading strategies, and themselves as readers?
2. To what extent do the students participate in literature discussions?
3. Is there evidence of the student's strategies to critically construct meaning from the literature in the language they use during literature discussions?
4. Are the student's abilities to critically construct meaning from the literature reflected in the student's choice of literature extension projects.

Interviews

The first research question addresses individual students' beliefs about himself and reading. This question is discussed using data from the pre-study interview and anecdotal observations throughout the study.

In his interview, Jeff, appeared to maintain a neutral attitude towards reading. He doesn't particularly dislike it, but he also doesn't actively pursue it on his own. He only reads if he has to, such as when required for classroom assignments or homework, or if his younger sister brings him a book and wants him to read it to her. He said he likes to read but only if the books are "not too hard or too easy" and if he has a lot of time to read them. Observations throughout the study verified this belief. The harder the materials were for Jeff to read on his own the more time he needed. When that time was not

available he just wouldn't read. Time, readability, and required reading seemed to be the key factors that Jeff used to decide whether to actually read. Apart from these factors Jeff saw no real purpose or reason for reading.

Despite Jeff's lack of interest in reading for pleasure he enjoys going to the school library and uses the pictures on the fronts and backs of books to determine if they would be worth checking out. Picture books which deal with nature or animals were his first choice. His second choice included funny or scary books and, again, he used the covers of the books to determine his choice. When books didn't have any pictures he said he "just flips through the pages and just reads a little on it" to see if he would like it or not. Jeff said he tries to read the books he does check out but, again, if he doesn't have enough time then he ends up not reading them and returns them to the library.

Jeff was given a hypothetical situation in which he was required to choose one of two books, a fiction book, *Sounder*, (Armstrong, 1969) and a copy of his fifth grade social studies text book, *Ancient Cultures*, to read and explain why he chose it. He chose the fiction book and seemed to understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction at a functional level. He could identify that the fiction book was a story and the other one was not but could be used to find out specific information about "old things". When asked why he would like reading *Sounder* he used the picture on the front to say that he "liked dogs" and possibly the story would be about one.

Jeff's concept of a good reader was someone who "reads a lot" and "reads fast". His idea of someone reading a lot were students who chose to read even though they weren't required to. Students who did not have difficulties with decoding seemed to be his definition of what a "fast" reader was. He sees himself as "kind of a good reader" because he could read, maybe not as fast as others, but he could read. He said he enjoys reading good books but was unable to identify any "good" books which he had read. Aside from

what he is required to read concerning school and an occasional book to his younger sister, the only other reading materials Jeff read with any consistency were the comics from newspapers which his mother occasionally brought home.

Thad was very willing and eager to be interviewed. His attitude towards reading, in general, seemed to be positive. He said that he liked to read and that he reads at home. However, he could not think of any book he had read on his own outside of those required for school. He then described a story to me which he claimed to have read that seemed to contain a lot of details inappropriate for a child Thad's age. He said this was a book he had checked out from the adult section of the public library. Repeated observations and behaviors of Thad, however, have shown that he likes to invent stories. He often uses these stories to gain attention from either myself, other adults, or students in the class. However, Thad's mother does take him to the public library on a fairly consistent basis. He would often bring in copies of the books we were reading in the class which he had checked out from the library.

When Thad goes to the library, whether at the public one or the one at school, he says he likes to check "out traps and snakes and sometimes Garfield books." When selecting books, Thad uses the pictures on the front covers to predict if the story would be one he would like. He says he likes "action" and "adventure" and that "a good book is when like that (when) they're partying and throwing fights or something" on the cover referring to comic books such as *Garfield*.

Thad understands the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. When given the choice between *Souder* and his social studies book Thad chose the book *Souder* over his social studies book because it's "just a story" and "It might be funnier". He referred to the social studies book as having "all kinds of articles on different pages" but could not think of a reason why he would want to read it by himself.

Thad views himself as an average reader but one that could improve. A good reader to Thad was someone who "reads all the time" and "sounds out the words when he needs to know a word". Even though Thad identified a strategy for decoding unknown words he said that he usually just skips words that he doesn't know rather than trying to sound them out. He also felt that a good reader was someone who would "probably read it (story) over and over" if they weren't comprehending something in the story. Again he claimed he could identify a strategy for comprehension but claimed to never use this technique. His goal for the school year was to "read fast and get better".

Other reading materials Thad is aware of, and could identify as having actually read, were the sports section of the newspaper and "stuff" on the walls, referring to our classroom. He said that he really likes to read "about football and baseball but "mostly baseball because that's what I like the best" but couldn't identify specific book names..

Thad enjoyed bringing comic books to school to read during D.E.A.R. time. However, Thad did not choose to read independently at school unless he was specifically directed. If he finished work early, his choice of activity was first to draw.

At the time that Chris, the third student in the study, was interviewed he was extremely negative about reading. His initial positive outlook of wanting to read, which he shared with me at the beginning of the school year, was not evident in this interview. Although the reasons for Chris' change in attitude were not readily apparent I had observed that Chris was a very angry child. When he felt threatened or hopeless he simply gave up and would not attempt anything new. Discussions and observations with, and on, Chris after this interview led me to believe that part of his anger was due to frustration at not being able to learn to read immediately. He wanted a quick fix since reading appeared to be so easy for other students. He was very unwilling to put the time and patience into working at it. By the time of this interview he had concluded that this year would be no

different than previous years and he again would not learn to read even though he was receiving a lot of individual attention and tutoring in class.

Valuable information was gained in this interview with Chris, however, despite his negative attitude. He not only believed he couldn't read but he used examples from his own reading attempts and struggles in the classroom to back up what he believed. He pointed out instances when he couldn't read three and four letter words without assistance when reading aloud in a group and was painfully aware that the others didn't need the same kind of help. But despite his struggle with reading aloud he declared very adamantly that "If I was able to read I'd like it. But I don't like it because it's too hard for me and it takes too much time when I read."

Chris never actively chooses to read on his own. He will only read when he is required by school or if his mother makes him read to her. He has had some exposure to the public library, mostly through friends who have taken him, but he only checks out books with pictures which have little or no text in them. When he goes to the library at school he looks for "easy books". His latest choice of books were a picture book on football and a longer chapter book on Frankenstein. However, when asked why he checked out the Frankenstein book if he didn't like to read he said the librarian had told the class they had to have a "reading book". He did not believe checking out and reading about football was really "reading" because there were too many pictures. When given the choice between *Sounder* and his social studies text he chose the social studies text because it had pictures and the other didn't.

Chris' only reading strategy that he attempts to use to decode unknown words was to try and sound them out. When he couldn't he just skip them. He believes a good reader is someone who "practices" a lot and can read quickly without any decoding problems.

Chris does not read anything independently unless some one makes him. He chooses to draw pictures rather than read any chance he gets.

Summary of Interviews

Patterns across all three interviews reveal that these three boys believe a good reader consists of being a fast decoder. Since they did not see themselves as being able to do this they believed they were not good readers. If the words in a book took too long to decode they would simply not read it. Instead they all chose books with pictures as a way of trying to understand a book versus books with written text only.

Literature Group Discussions

The second and third research questions (see p. 48) deal with the specific behaviors and language used by the students during literature discussions. Categorical analyses of the language from six tape recorded and transcribed literature discussions and anecdotal records were the source of data used to address these questions. Six major categories of strategies the students were using to create meaning emerged from the dialogue in these transcripts.

The categories that emerged, however, are not hierarchical or linear; but are descriptive. Thus, large sections of discussion may appear to be addressing a specific category, but due to the nature of talk, examples often exemplify more than one category. Each category will be considered separately, however, in an attempt to present clear examples of students use specific strategies to create meaning.

Retellings

During the reading of the chapter books the students in my class met together on a daily basis, in small groups, to discuss chapters read. Because the stories themselves were in the process of being revealed to the students as they read, these discussions often began

with a retelling or summary of the events prior to deeper discussions. In the following example the students were recreating chapter nine and ten in the book *A Castle In the Attic*:

T: Let's talk about what happened in chapter nine and ten.

J: Oh, the guy called Dad was wrapping ribbon around the um the castle to make a moat.

C: The father, the little boy goes, "Father it's the only project you've done with me that you've finished."

E: Then the Dad was saying, what about the cupboards and stuff like that cause I finished some of those and about the little dog traveler and he made it half the way when Mrs. Phillips said she was allergic to dogs.

Jeff, Chris, and Ellen, a classmate began the discussion by retelling the interaction between the main character, William, and his father. Each remark builds on the previous one establishing not only the events but also the relationship between William and his father.

As this discussion continued the Retellings became intermixed with predictions and interpretations of the events:

T: So after he talks with his father where does William go?

A: He goes to the castle and he tells the knight to hurry up and get it over with, you know, shrunk over with before he changed his mind so he could talk to Mrs. Phillips without her turning away (from him).

TH: Sir Simon was walking in by the thing and he looked at the riddle again and he said they are forgetting the squire and they needed him (William) for the squire.

J: Yeah. I've got the whole thing figured out by the riddle.

T: But, why does he have to be shrunk?

E: He would so he could talk to Mrs. Phillips without (her) turning away (from and refusing to talk to him).

T: Is that the only reason?

C: No. To find the token, the other half of the token to make em... the token they have right now it can shrink but the other token, the one they don't have, it they need it to go to make it bigger and stuff.

TH: And the token, he needs the other token to make Mrs. Phillips bigger and Sir Simon so that they can be big. So Mrs. Phillips can go to England where she was suppose to go and they'll know uh William will be able to be with their (his) mom and dad.

E: So he (William) can get Mrs. Phillips to talk to him and to tell her the reason why he did it and so he can put the keys together and make people or shrink people then make them bigger into their own time.

T: O.k. But why did they look at the riddle again?

TH: Only Sir Simon did because when he was going into it (Castle) he turned around and looked at the castle doors and he just read the riddle again and he needed a squire.

J: And they need the squire so the lady, they had the lady and the Lord, Mrs. Phillips and Sir Simon (begins to read the riddle right from the book) "the Lord his sword doth test then the squire shall cross the draw bridge and they will be ready for the quest."

In the discussion which came from the short story "Stray" the three LD students did not have the influence of their classroom peers to help reestablish the events of the story. However, as the following example will show, they were able not only to recreate the events but included their own understandings of the story:

TH: I think the story the story was about a dog that is abandoned and the girl she finds him in the road and she takes him to her house and it's snowing and all that and she couldn't go to school and so therefore she was doing the sidewalks so they could walk and then she took she seen the dog and took it in and her Dad couldn't go to work because he the snow and uhm so they kept him the dog for about nine weeks and then after that the sun started coming up and he (father) took him back took him back to the dog pound and he didn't let him stay in the dog pound he brought the dog back home and the girl got to keep him.

C: I feel kinda happy cause when the dog (girl) got attached to the dog slowly by slowly and at the end (of the story) like when the guys took him to the pound she was crying or something and then she woke up and then she went out there (into the kitchen where her parents were) and they didn't even hear her to tell her that they weren't taking the dog in (to the pound) it was kinda like a surprise because right when she was leaving he said "are you going to feed that dog or not?" and she got to keep the dog after all.

J: I think that uhm what happened for me was that in this book first the dog was out in the cold and then he was in the basement (of the little girl who found him) and she he only came up when the girl uhm invited and he was a good dog cause he didn't bark at the neighbors or do any howling and uhm then he (the father) had to take him to the pound and that's when the little girl got attached to it and they had to

take him to the pound and then they took him back cause because the dog would have died."

Character Development

To understand the characters in each of the stories the discussions predominantly focused on what the main characters were feeling and how they reacted in different situations. By reestablishing the events in the stories the students were able to discuss the characters as they emerged and changed. In the following example, discussion of the story "Slower than the Rest" began with how Leo, the main character felt when he found the turtle. The talk then progressed to how these feelings and events changed Leo's character over the course of the story:

T: How is Leo feeling right now?

J: Happy.

C: Happy.

TH: Happy that he found the turtle.

T: How was he feeling before?

C: Sad. He's never had a pet before. He's really slow at everything and that they separated him from all of his other classmates and put him into a different room where all the other kids are slow like him.

TH: Cause he's slow.

J: He's just real slow and he's bored to death.

T: What kind of a person would you say Leo is?

TH: He's like the turtle.

C: He was ten years old.

TH: He was like Alan (character in the book *Stormy* by Jim Kjelgaard (1959) that TH was currently reading in the classroom), he liked animals. He cared for them and all that.

J: He likes to take care of em (animals).

T: How does he change in the story? Does he (Leo) change?

J: He goes slow to fast.

T: Does he?

TH: Yeah. It said at the end "and Leo felt fast" ooh - and he felt fast.

C: Yeah. Maybe he's going to be put in a different room because he (was) so slow and at the end like he felt fast. It leaves you hanging like it might he might like starts to catch up and gets ready and starts to go a little faster then he use to.

T: Does the story tell us that his school work gets fast in the end?

All: No

J: (It says) That he feels better.

TH: Yeah he feels better than he did.

C: He was in a bad mood at first but after he got the award he felt better when he held the turtle and stuff.

During the discussion of the story "Safe" the three boys misinterpreted Nuclear Freeze to mean Nuclear War. Yet despite this misunderstanding, the students in the following example were able to discuss the key emotions of the main character, Denny, which helped establish him as a sensitive and frightened character:

T: What was this story really about for Denny? What was his main concern?

J: Safe. He wants to be safe from Nuclear Freeze.

C: Nuclear freeze.

TH: No with his um um himself. That he's he's he wants to be safe.

T: So how is he feeling?

J: Happy at first and then sad and then happy again.

T: Why is he happy at first?

TH: Because he is going to his uncles. He's going to get away.

C: He's thinkin if I stay there (in the large city that he lives in) that I'll probably get get that stuff (referring to the nuclear waste that would occur if a nuclear war were to occur) in my lungs or something like that.

T: Does he want to be at his Uncle's farm?

J: Yeah. Because he likes the farm.

T: The story started out saying uhm "When Denny visited his uncle in Maine he came upon the cows one night and that changed him." How do you think he's changed?

C: It was like his mom and dad (uncle) were talking about it (nuclear freeze) and then he didn't like it so he left and then he was like taking a walk and he went down and saw them (cows).

T: So what made him (Denny) first go to them (cows)?

C: They were talking about the nuclear freeze and he don't like talking about it.

T: O.k. Why doesn't, why don't they, why doesn't he like them to talk about it?

J: Because he gets scared.

During the discussion of the story "Stray" other characters, besides the main ones, were also explored. In the following example the students use the actions of the mother and father to define their characters:

T: Tell me about the mother and father in this story.

TH: They felt mad. I know they wanted to keep the dog. It's just they can't keep it when they are poor.

T: How do you know they want to keep it?

TH: Cause they want to make their daughter feel nice. It's just that they don't have any money to pay for the food or enough for them.

T: O.k. Did the author ever say directly that the parent's wanted the dog?

TH: No. But you can tell by the way they talked.

T: What kind of people were her parents?

J: Nice.

TH: Nice.

T: How do you know that Jeff?

J: Cause Thad said it (laughs)

TH: But I think they are nice cause they didn't leave that dog in that stinky place (referring to when the father went to take the dog to the pound) and it would

probably make me faint and if they would have left that dog there it would have died.

This conversation then directed its attention to the character of the little girl, Doris. Her character becomes defined through her feelings of loneliness as an only child and her feelings of fulfillment when she is with the dog:

T: O.k. What kind of a person is Doris? Jeff?

J: A wanting person.

T: A wanting person? What do you mean?

C: Caring.

J: Caring - yeah.

T: O.k. But I liked your word wanting here better. What is she wanting?

J: The dog

T: Why do you think she wants the dog?

J: (quiet for a long time thinking)

TH: This is like Alan and Stormy (previously read book).

T: How?

TH: He wants that one black dog.

T: Why did he want the dog?

TH: Cause the dog listened to him and did whatever he said and that little puppy did (whatever Doris told it to do) too. It didn't go up the stairs unless told.

T: Ok. What do you think Chris?

C: She was like caring and wanting. She wants something but she cares about it (the dog) that's why she wants it.

T: Why was it so important to her to have this dog?

J: Cause he listened.

T: He listened to her?

J: Yeah.

C: Every time he wouldn't come over until you invited him or something.

TH: He would listen to you.

T: Think about her inside feelings. Who does she live with?

All: Her parents.

J: The dog.

T: But not in the beginning right?

C: Yeah. She's like an only child.

T: Uhuh. And what do only children feel like sometimes?

TH: They don't go no where to play.

C: When their not in school they really don't have friends.

TH: Yeah and now that she's not in school she has a dog o play with her.

T: So what would the dog be for her?

C: It could be kind of a comfortable (TH interrupts and says "comfort") yeah and helpful and like it would be helpful like it wouldn't..

TH: She'll have somebody to hold and give it lots of love.

C: ..and if she get's lonely or something she can talk to it and something.

Story Elements

In the discussions, comments were made either directly or indirectly which referred to story elements. These comments were often found indirectly in the discussions which discussed characters and their development. As the students discussed the feelings of the characters they not only defined them, but in an indirect way, created the mood and tone of the stories. In both the stories "Safe" and "*In the House of Sixty Father's*" the students constantly referred to the main character's feelings of fear and the anxieties they went through to find peace within themselves. In the stories "Stray" and "*The Castle In the*

Attic" the main characters feelings of loneliness are the overriding emotions mentioned repeatedly in the discussions which set the mood or tone of these stories.

In an attempt to understand an author's use of tension the students relied on their own feelings to guide them in their response. In the following example taken from "Slower than the Rest", the students' response show their simplistic understanding of how an author uses tension to keep a reader involved in a story:

T: How did the author make you feel as you read this story?

J: Exciting. (Makes you want to know) what happens next.

TH: That you want to see what happens next.

J: Makes you want to read it.

TH: Makes you see what's happening in the story.

T: How did you identify these?

C: It makes you feel like you want a turtle. It's like it makes you feel (what it was like)when they had a turtle and it's how they felt so like other people will know so they can go and get turtles in the same way.

In the discussion of "Safe" each student attempted to identify reasons why they liked the story. These comment indirectly relate to the tension the author creates through fear of nuclear war:

T: What did you like about it?

C: I liked it because it had like it was like it kinda like made you scared and at the end it was like all happy so you could it was like it made you scared but then it just happened to her and it happened and all they were doing was talking about them and the war.

TH: First I thought it was going to be like a story about Safe like he fell off a mountain or something and he got saved but uhm when then I realized it was about Nuclear freeze that it kinda scared me at first cause I thought he was going to die of the Nuclear freeze and at the end it made me happy because he didn't.

C: That's the same reason for me.

T: How about you Jeff? Did you like this story?

J: Yeah.

T: Can you tell us why you liked it?

J: Because nobody died and they didn't have the war. And and you don't know what that (if) there(s) really going to be a nuclear freeze.

Specific settings, and their bearings upon the story as a whole, were identified by the students through their Retellings. When trying to reestablish the story "Stray", an example used earlier in the discussion under literal Retellings, Thad noted that the story took place during a snow storm. This particular setting was significant because it prevented the father from immediately being able to take the dog to the local humane society to be destroyed. As a result of this delay the girl and the parents become attached to the dog and end up keeping it even though they couldn't afford it.

In their retelling of the story "Safe" the students were able to identify how the two settings affected the main character, Denny's, emotional state of being. By staying in the city where Denny lived there was a greater threat of nuclear war which was the source of his fear but somehow going to his uncles farm, in a different city and state, the threat would not be as strong and his fears are relieved.

Interpretations

Evidence that predictions were made and interpretations were drawn to create meaning was one of the more dominate strategies used by the students in this study. A clear example of their pre-reading predictions and how they used the title and accompanying picture(s) to make them came from the story "Stray":

T: Tell me what you think this story is going to be about.

J: A stray dog.

TH: About a dog that probably got lost and all that.

C: Probably a dog that's like someone trained it real good and it's a stray dog like Jeff said.

T: What makes you think that?

J: Cause that's the name of the story.

T: Just the title in the story tells you that?

C: No. It looks kinda sad, the dog, in the picture.

T: The dog? So the picture helped you make that prediction?

C: Yeah.

Throughout the reading of the stories the students constantly predicted and re-adjusted, or clarified, their predictions to further create meaning. The following discussion occurred after the entire reading of "Stray" and shows how the predictions made prior were re-adjusted to fit new understandings of the whole story:

T: Tell me what you thought of this story.

TH: It was cool.

C: I thought that I didn't think it was going to be like that I thought it was going to be more like that the dog was going to get lost or something. You know like when I heard like the snow and the dog was walking down the street and stuff like that I thought the dog they were gonna like throw the dog out and let it starve or something.

J: I thought that uhm I thought that this book was going to be like that one like that one story and that one turtle where they had to put up signs to help em hide it?

T: I don't get the connection.

J: You know that one story where they have the turtle? And we never got to finish it?

TH: (He means) Shells. We didn't (finish it).

T: How is that the same s this one?

J: I thought it was at the beginning. I thought it was going to be like that.

TH: I thought it was I thought if the dog would when I first read that the dog was walking down the street and been abandoned I thought it would die or probably get run over or something.

While Chris and Thad stayed with the text to re-adjust their earlier predictions Jeff tried adjusting his by making a connection to a story the group had read previously. In this story was a grouchy old woman who found, and took in, a stray cat. Jeff saw connections between the finding of the cat in the one story with the finding of a stray dog in the new story.

In contrast to "Stray" which was read in its entirety without interruptions, the story "Slower than the Rest," was read aloud with pre-planned strategic stopping points for discussion. This was done in an attempt to draw out predictions the students were making reading the whole story. In the following example the students respond to what the character Leo was feeling as he sat listening to his classmates present their reports on other forest animals:

T: Why do you think he (Leo) doesn't feel like it (laughing with the other students at a report on squirrels)?

TH: He don't really like people making fun of forest fires. He don't like squirrels and their talking about forest fires.

T: Okay.

J: And the squirrels can run fast and get away and they just leave the turtles there (in the forest during a forest fire) and don't help them.

C: It's like if they throw something into a rat hole or snake hole they have no way to get out (of a forest fire). They're stuck there whether their fast or not fast.

T: Okay. What do you think is going to happen next in this story?

C: There might be a forest fire or something like that.

TH: There might be a fire drill.

T: Okay.

TH: They might tell people to go out into the forest when there is a forest fire and help the animals.

After the story, *Slower than the Rest*, was completely read the students used a mixture of their predictions along with the text to come to make their conclusions:

T: O.k. Did the story end the way you thought it would?

TH: Yes. About that I thought Leo was going to go faster because of (getting) the reward.

C: I thought that the turtle was the slow person and that...

TH: Leo was the fast.

C: Yeah at first that's what I thought then I started getting the hang of it (the story) that it was the other way around and I thought they were both going to start going fast.

T: That they would both go fast?

C: That Leo would go fast and so would the turtle. That like if the turtle was fast when he got out of the fire, if there was a forest fire, the turtle could get out.

The story "Slower than the Rest" was read for prediction purposes but it also served as a smaller model of the reading and discussion format used with the novels. Each day, or every other day, the groups reading the novels would meet to discuss what chapter(s) had been read since the previous meeting. Since the whole stories had not yet been read these discussions generally focused on retelling and predicting what would happen next. In the following examples, taken from several different transcripts, the students are engaged in predicting what they thought might happen next in the stories relying strongly on what they had already read in the previous chapters. The first example comes from the discussion of "*A Castle in the Attic*". The students had just finished discussing possible reasons for why William was having such a difficult time shrinking himself and going to rescue Mrs. Phillips. The following predictions came out of this discussion:

B: I wouldn't (go) because if they don't find the coin then sooner or later you'll run out of food.

T: Okay. They might run out of food that's true.

TH: Yeah but they could go into the forest.

A: The knight lives on bugs and mice and other stuff.

C: Rats!

A: They have to get use to it. If they're really hungry they'll probably eat it but then they have to start getting use to it.

T: Okay. Bonnie, why would they run out of food?

B: Because all they have is like what he brought up and what he had in his backpack.

TH: They can go into the forest and kill animals.

T: But is there a forest there yet?

TH, C, & J: Yeah. It's right there. It's cool. (looking at the cover of the book).

A: Yeah, but aren't they a little to small?

T: He's up in the attic though right now remember? You guys are looking at the picture ahead.

C: Well when his father comes up he can jump on his leg or something.

TH: Yeah.

T: And carry him downstairs to find food?

C: (Nods yes)

(Several talk all at once - unable to translate)

TH: He ate the mice.

T: Yeah but where did the mouse come from?

A: The mouse was in the attic.

T: That's true. The mouse was already up there and what did he do to the mouse?

C: He shrunk it.

TH: He stabbed it with his knife.

J: Also there'd be giant spiders and everything.

TH: Yeah. They could eat the legs.

The students went on then to interpret why, if William had made the decision to shrink himself, did he still hesitated and wait several days before doing it:

T: He (William) makes the decision but he doesn't do it right away. Why not?

TH: Cause he's got gymnastics.

A: Cause he's not sure about it.

C: Because they'd think he was kidnapped or missing or dead or something like that.

T: Okay.

A: That he is having second thoughts about it because then he doesn't want to leave his parents though.

TH: Or his momma.

T: It says he doesn't do it right away after he made the decision.

J: Cause he don't know if he should.

T: What does he do during those few days that he is trying to he's made the decision to go but he can't just quite do it yet, what's he doing?

E: He's thinking it over. He just doesn't want to do it but at the same time he does want to do it.

B: (He's)thinking.

E: He's showing it in how he uses his body, like in gymnastics he turns to Mrs. Phillips and says that he might be showing it.

T: Showing what?

E: Showing that he's up to something (by the way he is performing or not performing in his gymnastics).

During one of the early discussions of the book *In the House of Sixty Fathers* the students discussed the fate of Tein Poa and the American pilot who's airplane had just been shot out of the air by the Japanese. The group uses a mixture of predictions and interpretations to discuss what they thought would happen:

C: Their going to probably like um their going to probably think that the airman is on the Japanese side and the airman is just going to go over to Tein Poa and pull out his weapons and just go boom.

T: Does the airman look like a Japanese?

EVERYONE: No. (Various negative sounds)

TH: He's a white boy.

J: Like you.

T: So he's not going to fit in with the Japanese is he?

C: No he's...going to fit in with the Japanese he's going to land the plane well he's going to crash the plane and the Japanese are going to go over there it's going to be like a trap and then their going to be like shooting and the guys going to have like a magazine or something ratattattat like that.

J: What was the questions?

(Laughter)

T: About how Tein Poa was going to meet up with the Japanese and with the airman and avoid the Japanese.

J: Very hard.

T: It's going to be difficult.

TH: I think that he's gonna he's gonna he's gonna find a guy and cut off his face or something and stick it on his. (Tape is stopped)

C: I think that well how he's going to met up with because Tein Poa is going to like send out the pig send the pig out and then the Japanese are going to run after the pig because their hungry and then he's going to run over to the airplane back to the airman and he's going to get him and he's going to drag him across the road cause the road where he was hiding and he'll hide to a different place and then uh what-cha-ma-call -it pig he'll like whistle to the pig and the pig will like go faster and he'll loose the Japanese and then the airplane man will just like live happily ever after.

T: O.k. Thad.

TH: I think that uhm that uhm that that he's gonna that he's gonna jump in the water he's gonna jump in a water or something..

T: Who? Which one?

TH: The airman he's going to jump in the water and he's going to have something he's goin stand in it and their goin think he's down under and drowned and he he's going to float all the way down and go around and then get uhm uhm Tein Poa and all them.

T: Does the airman know that Tein Poa is there?

J: No the airman doesn't.

C: The airman don't know that Tein Poa is there so Tein Poa will have to find him.

TH: Tein Poa could make a signal he could whistle.

C: No but all the Japanese will hear him.

TH: But they don't know.

T: Unfortunately....where is Tein Poa though?

TH: Behind a bush (several are talking and it is difficult to hear what is said at this point)

T: And is he going to have a hard time getting down?

TH: Yes.

J: He could whistle like a bird.

Another clear example of predictions and interpretations came a little further into this same story:

TH: I hope the airman lives and I hope he don't die cause he uhm Tein Poa can't survive by hisself out in the mountains and all that because..

T: Why do you think the airman might die?

TH: Because the wound on his leg got really bad and he's getting sick.

T: Do you think there's any place that they could find help?

TH: They could go to a village or something like that.

T: But who's all around them?

TH: The Japanese.

T: Yeah the Japanese.

TH: Uhm try to kill the Japanese and all that and then go but I don't think so.

T: Do you think Tein Poa Tein Poa felt like when the airman came and he talked about Tein Poa feeling safe do you think the airman's going to take care of Tein Poa or do you think it might happen another way?

TH: I think that the airman is going to take care of Tein Poa if he lives because Tein Poa can the airman could have like maps in his pockets and all that around the place

then they can go and find the place where he lived Tein Poa lives and when they get there they can find a doctor or something to heal all their wounds they made.

Through out the entire reading of the book *In the House of Sixty Fathers* tension is created through the feelings and actions of the main character Tein Poa as he struggles to survive in war torn surroundings. Because resolution for this character doesn't come until the final pages of the story the students continued their predictions clear to the end of the story:

T: O.k. Cause they come running out of the house? (nods yes) Continues to read aloud. "...the plane disappeared in the wink of an eye. And now there stirred in Tein Poa a great new idea." What do you think the idea is going to be?

J: Didn't uhm the uhm he's going to ask Lt. Hamson if he could take him up in the helicopter and look for his parents.

T: O.k. Let's go. (cont. reading) "...Couldn't the plane still follow the other roads from Henyang?" What do you think's going to happen?

N: He's going to find his parents.

J: Yeah. He's going to find his parents cause it's the last chapter.

T: (Laughs) The last chapter? Is that the only reason that makes you think that?

J: Yes.

T: What do you think Chris?

C: That they're going to go up in the airplane and they're going to just look for his parents and like Tein Poa and one of the pilots is going to see someone and go down there and it's going to be his parents and they're going to live in the barracks.

T: O.k. With his parents you think so?

C: Yeah. With all the soldier's and stuff.

T: O.k. Thad?

TH: Same thing as Chris. I think that he'll find his parents and all that and uhm he and all the soldiers there going to take em to uhm to uhm maybe uhm uhm the United States and all that after it's all done and their going to live all together.

T: O.k. What do you think Bonnie?

B: I don't think they will find them.

T: O.k. What makes you think they won't find them?

B: Because he his parent's live in a different place cause how he went down in the Sampan so maybe they live far from the sixty fathers.

Intertextuality: Literature Connections

Although the use of this strategy was not a particularly strong one used by the students in this study some interesting connections were made which enabled them to critically apply related information and connections crucial for creating meaning. Jeff, as discussed earlier under the category of interpretations, refers to the story "Shells", a story he had partially read earlier, in his attempt to understand the story "Stray". He is unable to clearly state what the connection is but it is evident that he is remembering similar events and attempting to apply them to the new story.

During the discussion of the story "Safe" connections were made between it and the book *The House of Sixty Fathers*:

C: Well I was uhm scared cause I thought it was going to be like the bomb movie and like a war like Tein Poa or something because when he said that he felt safer when he was in when he was in Maine because it might be a Nuclear freeze or whatever the stuff is called and he went down to the where his father gave him his uncle gave him a fishing pole where he spent most of the time down by the lake trying to trying not to forget about this stuff.

Chris began the connection of the story "Safe" to the novel which led into the following connections:

T: Would it be the same kind of war that Tein Poa was in?

J: No.

T: What makes it different?

C: They (*The House of Sixty Father*) were using just bullets and that kind of stuff and not nuclear stuff.

TH: And they just wanted to start a war.

T: O.k. So you're saying Chris that it's different because they're...?

C: They used bullets and their's was in China and they were China people.

T: How would this one (Safe) be different?

C: This one the pigs weren't pets but their farm animals and stuff like that and because they're both on the farm because they have Tein Poa (*The House of Sixty Fathers*) has to farm for his food and his Uncle (Safe) farmed for his food and stuff and it was kinda like this only it wasn't cause they were different weapons.

T: O.k. So the weapons were different. What else?

TH: I think that it it's kinda the same cause both stories have pigs and uhm I don't think Tein Poa lived in a farm he lived in a Sampan.

C: And it was different because they were they were Tein Poa was talking about a pig and all their talking about is cows instead of a pig.

The strongest use of this strategy, however, was seen in three separate discussions as Thad referred to the book "*Stormy*" (Kjelgaard, 1959) which he had read earlier in the school year. During the discussion of the story "Slower than the Rest" Thad attempted to understand the main character Leo by connecting to the main character in "*Stormy*". "He (Leo) was like Alan, he liked animals. He cared for them and all that." Again in the discussion of the story "Stray" he again refers to the book "*Stormy*":

TH: This is like Alan and Stormy.

T: How?

TH: He wants that one black dog (like the little girl in the story "Stray" wanting the stray dog).

T: Why did he want the dog?

TH: Cause the dog listened to him and did whatever he said and that little puppy (in "Stray") did too. It didn't go up the stairs unless told.

Thad again refers to the book *Stormy* (Kjelgaard, 1959) during one of his predictions while reading the book *In the House of Sixty Fathers*: "I think that in chapter three he's going to um he's going to find a lake or something and try and get a sticker and some rope and he's going to fish for some fish and he's going to tray and find out how to make A fire and cook em or eat em raw." His prediction of the possible actions of the new

character, Tein Poa's, are the exact actions that the main character in *Stormy* does when faced with a seemingly impossible situation.

Intertextuality: Personal Connections

Of all the strategies which the students used to critically create meaning, the use of personal stories and experiences, evoked by the readings and discussions, was by far the strongest. The following examples are only a few of the many individual comments made by each student which reflect their own personal experiences and connections with the central themes found in the stories. The first example comes from the story "Slower than the Rest". The students were discussing how the character Leo felt throughout the story:

C: He (Leo) was in a bad mood at first but after he got the award he felt better when he held the turtle and stuff.

TH: Because he was slow.

C: That's what I do with my when I had a hamster and rats whenever I was feeling bad that's the only one I had to talk to cause I'd pick em out of the cage and they'd crawl all over my hand and stuff. My hair use to be long enough that they would make a nest in the back of my hair. They would just crawl up there and sit back there.

The reading of "Slower than the Rest" also brought forth stories from the students of times when they, like Leo, had brought an animal to school to share:

T: Could you identify anything with him? Like with your life and Leo's life?

J: Bringing animals to school. Remember last year when my Grandpa brought me those snakes? (asking TH)

TH: Yeah. That was bad. His Grandpa brought him lots of snakes for our class for show-n-tell.

J: And mice with babies.

TH: Yeah. The mice with the babies bit (another student) in our class.

C: I brought my animals to school once. My rats. They couldn't be taken out of the cage because my teacher didn't want me to take no chances of gettin bit. But they never bite they just nibble.

In the story "Stray" the students make strong personal connections between the relationship of the character Doris and the dog she finds and animals they have had encountered in their own lives:

T: Did you like the story?

J: Yeah, I liked it.

C: I like it because it had like the dog and I like dogs and stuff like that and because every time we find a dog we wait until like a half hour or so and if it's still out there we take it in and feed it and stuff like that like they did (in the story) but she just took it in instantly. Or we'll like try to find a home for it or try to like go to the market and ask if this is your dog or whatever like that stuff.

J: I don't like doing that (referring to taking the dog to the market) cause people are always say like yeah sure that's my dog and then take it.

T: But maybe it is their dog.

J: For some people it ain't their dog and they just do it anyway.

At this point in the discussion, Jeff's reaction to Chris' good will efforts in trying to restore a stray dog with its rightful owner seemed excessively. When asked if he had ever had a similar experience he promptly denied any connection. However, later in the discussion Jeff talks about an encounter he did have with a stray dog which sheds light on where his harsh reaction comes from:

J: One time I seen a dog and he was real fluffy and he looked like a baby Doberman and he was real cute and everything and uhm and then this old man came and he said; "Did you see a little dog around here?" and we said yeah and we had to give it to him. It was sad.

T: You were sad?

J: (Nods his head yes)

T: Did you want to keep it?

J: (Again nods his head yes)

T: Do you have a dog?

J: No we're not allowed to have any in the trailer court.

T: When you found the dog did you feel the way the girl in the story did?

J: No cause I had to give it (the dog) back.

T: Okay. If they allowed you to have a dog what kind of a dog would you get?

J: A baby Doberman cause the one that I found I think it was like a mix or something cause he was real fluffy.

The students' discussion continued to embrace the story with their own personal longings and experiences:

TH: I think it's kinda cool cause when uh finding the dog was cool cause if you don't have a dog you end up having a pet and uhm then after school you'd have a pet to play with and all that.

T: Okay.

C: There's another reason like Thad was saying that when if she stayed home from school and stuff like that if she found a dog...(interrupted by TH)

TH: She wouldn't have found it.

C: She wouldn't have found it and uh the snow she would just be sitting in there with her father and mother that don't really talk to her like cuddles up with her or sleeps with her and stuff like that but when she found the dog it kinda changed her like it would change my life because then I would have had someone to like jump into bed with me and make me warm and stuff like that if she didn't find the dog she'd just go back to school.

During the discussions of the novels the students' personal connections were intermixed with predictions made when the students tried to decide what they personally would do if they were in the main characters position. In the discussion of *A Castle in the Attic* the students personally reacted to William's decision to shrink himself and try to save Mrs. Phillips:

T: What has he (William) decided to do?

J: Shrink himself.

TH: Go on the quest.

T: Do you think that was an easy decision for him to make?

All: No.

C: I wouldn't do it.

T: Why not?

C: Because what would happen if I never did get big again? (I'd) Be stuck a little miniature dude.

T: Would you do it Jeff?

J: No.

Others: Why?

J: Cause if I get shrunk it's I'll never see anyone again whether or not they come home early or not (refers to the characters parents returning and catching him shrinking himself).

TH: I would. Cause I could build them something. Like the castle. And I could visit my or all be with somebody I've been with my whole life. Mrs. Phillips.

E: I think I would because if I shrunk somebody like Mrs. Phillips I'd want to go back and get her back and make her into her real self before she had to stay little.

B: I wouldn't because if they don't find the coin then sooner or later you'll run out of food.

T: What are some of the things you would do the night before to get ready to shrink yourself?

J: Bring a whole bunch of food. I don't know. Write a note and say that you ran away.

T: Why would you do that?

J: So your mom won't think that you're in the castle.

TH: To shake off the cops.

C: So they can call the police and they can go look for you.

J: But it has to be 24 hours before anything though.

C: I know. When my sister came up missing they (police) came to our house and searched our house for letters and stuff like that.

TH: I know what you can tell em that your going to stay at your friends house for a night.

C: Yeah. I'd say I'm going to stay at Jeff house for two or three days and if I'm not back in two or three days I don't know what I'd do.

T: Okay. Jeff?

J: I'd make a hat on my pillow and put a whole bunch of pillows on my bed cause you know how they don't usually see you and stuff at night they'll just think your in bed.

Throughout the story *In the House of Sixty Fathers*, the discussions often revolved around the theme of fear. Through anecdotal records Jeff personally connected with the character Tein Poa's fear of being found by the Japanese while hiding in a cave from them. He told of a time when he and a friend were throwing water balloons at cars going by their house. They thought it was very funny until one car stopped and a man got out and came after them. Jeff told of his fear of being caught and said that this was what Tein Poa must have felt also.

Summary of Literature Discussions

Through the use of the transcripts and anecdotal observations it is clearly evident that the student involvement in literature discussions was very strong whether they were in a group which contained non-learning disabled peers or not. Each student participated willingly and worked with the groups as a whole to critically create meaning in the stories.

Extensions, Follow-ups, and Assignments

The final question of this study looked at the choice of extension projects which the learning disabled students chose to produce in response to the books they read. Following are the two projects the students produced, or were a part of producing, during the time of this study and how they were presented to the class.

During the reading of the book *Hatchet* Jeff was in a small group which consisted of three girls and himself. At the end of the book the group decided as a whole to work together on a puppet production. The focus of the puppet script was how to survive in the wilderness with a hatchet as your only tool. The group then wrote an original script based

on the events in the story. They worked co-operatively in creating both the script and the puppets. The final production included how to use a hatchet to cut wood, strike flint to start a fire, and how to build a shelter.

The second book for which Jeff completed an extension on was *In the House of Sixty Fathers*. Initially his small group he was in wanted to do a rap which would tell about the story. However, Jeff was not comfortable doing this and chose to illustrate what he felt the story was all about on his own. His final product included a large house with sixty stick figures inside it, a small boy and his pig on the outside knocking at the door, war torn landscape, and an airplane flying overhead which held Captain Hansom who is Tein Poa's friend and rescuer. Jeff stood before the class and explained each part of his picture in detail capturing the very essence of the story.

The first book that Thad read with a group was *The Forgotten Door* by Scott Key (1965). His small group decided to do a mural drawing/painting which would depict important scenes in the story. During the creation stages of the mural, Thad and his group were approached by the school Principal. Thad became the group spokesperson and told the Principal what the story was all about and gave him his copy to read telling him he "had to read it". When presenting the mural to the class, each person in Thad's group discussed the part of the drawing which he/she had made. Thad had drawn the beginning scene in the book depicting how the main character came to be on Earth instead of his own planet.

The second book, *In the House of Sixty Fathers*, (Dejong, 1956) Thad was involved in the group that presented the key points of the book through the creation of a rap. The rap included four verses along with the chorus. It is assumed that Thad helped write the lyrics but as a group they presented it complete with musical back ground and dance steps.

Chris' first book which he responded to through an extension project was *The Sign of the Beaver* by Elizabeth Speare (1983). His small group also decided to draw a mural depicting the main events of the story. This group brainstormed first all the main ideas that they wanted to draw. Then they each took several and began their drawings. One of Chris' strengths in school is drawing. Consequently his group soon came to rely on him for more than his share of the drawing as they asked him to do, or help do, their drawings as well. The group then presented their mural to the class with each student discussing his/her scene.

The final book in this study, as with the other two students, was *In the House of Sixty Fathers* (DeJong, 1956). However, Chris and one other student took a different approach to responding to this book. The two of them designed a board game which depicted the different events in the book. It began with Tein Poa being swept away from his parents, went through all the perils and trials as he worked his way back to his parents, and ends with him being reunited with them. They designed cards that had to be drawn telling the player how many moves they could take. The two boys worked with each other's strengths. Chris did all the drawing and his friend did all the written work. They both worked on the ideas and events to be placed in the game.

Summary of the Extension Projects

Each project which the students in this study created must be viewed within the context of the group as a whole rather than individually in order to determine if the projects reflected any ability to critically create meaning. Each project did in fact present the key elements from each story which told the audience what the books were all about. To what extent these show individual abilities, aside from Jeff's individually drawn picture, one must conclude that as a group member, each student in this study was able to create

meaning from the stories using methods which went beyond the traditional methods of paper and pencil evaluation.

Summary

Results of the data analysis concerning three learning disabled student's beliefs about their own abilities to read and their interaction within the context of a regular education classroom were interdependent and varied. The students, did in fact, participate in all areas of the program. During literature discussions they supported one another and considered each person's participation an important part in the creation of meaning. They worked willingly and collaboratively to answer questions and explore deeper meanings through both their talk and their choice of extension projects.

CHAPTER V SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Despite the current trend toward the use of literature as a method for teaching students to read, little research has been done to document how special education students respond to such programs. This study evolved out of personal teaching experiences which indicated that using literature with fifth grade students did increase reading abilities. However, these observations did not include students with learning disabilities. These students, traditionally, were pulled out of my classroom to receive remedial reading instruction from resource teachers and did not participate in the reading program in my regular education classroom.

The purpose of this project, then, was to discover how three learning disabled children would respond to a literature-based reading program which occurred within the context of the regular education classroom. Following are the specific research questions that guided this investigation:

1. What are the students' perceptions about reading, their reading strategies, and themselves as readers?
2. To what extent do the students participate in literature discussions?
3. Is there evidence of the students' ability to critically construct meaning from the literature in the language they use during literature discussions?
4. Is the students' ability to critically construct meaning from the literature reflected in the students' choice of literature extension projects?

Since the focus of this project dealt with individual case studies, an ethnographic approach was used to answer the research questions. The investigator was a full-time participant observer as well as the instructor in a fifth grade classroom. Three students within the investigators classroom, who were already classified as learning disabled, were

chosen to be participants in this study. The study began at the start of the second quarter of the school year and concluded at the end of the third quarter.

At the beginning of this study each student was interviewed by the investigator to determine personal beliefs, attitudes, and involvement with reading. Over the course of the study intensive observations during the reading period and any related events were documented on a weekly basis. Seven specific tape recordings of student dialogue during group discussions of the literature were transcribed in order to identify language patterns which would indicate ability to critically create meaning. Finally, student extension projects were recorded and collected when appropriate to gain further insights into response patterns of these three students. Each of the above documentations were the source of information during the data analysis.

In order to clarify the context in which the reading response events occurred, a description of teacher expectations and instructional goals along with a narrative account of a single day were included in the final analysis.

The results of the study indicate that the learning disabled students involved in this project were able to function within a regular education literature program successfully, provided that adaptive measures were taken to accommodate individual needs. All three students were consistent in their abilities to create meaning through the use of dialogue and through the use of non-traditional extension projects.

Discussion

An interpretation of the results found in this investigation will be discussed in an attempt to explore, and further clarify, answers to learning disabled students abilities to participate in literature-based reading programs offered in regular education classrooms. Each of the research question will be addressed separately and will be described as an interactive element when necessary to understand the relationships among the four

questions. The findings will be compared with current literature in the fields of special education and literature based instructional reading programs where appropriate.

Student Perceptions of Reading

At the beginning of the study each student was interviewed to help gain insight into personal beliefs and practices while reading in order to answer the first research question. Jeff and Thad believed they could read "a little" but would not choose to read on their own. Chris did not believe he could read at all and "never" chose to read on his own. All three boys' beliefs in their abilities greatly affected their involvement with literature of any type. They believed that reading was a difficult task and done only when assigned by a teacher. Reading for pleasure, such as comic strips or captions under pictures was not seen as "real" reading. When these students had opportunities to check out books from the library for pleasure, they relied on pictures found on the covers and inside the books rather than words to determine their selection. Their choices were often non-fiction books about sports or animals which contained lots of pictures with captions. None of the three boys felt that these were "reading" books because they didn't tell a whole story. On occasion they would check out a fiction book from the school library. When asked why they made this selection all three stated that the librarian required them to check out at least one "reading" book. Seldom were these books even opened unless they were accompanied by pictures.

Reading strategies were almost non-existent for these students. Unless a word was known by sight or very short and easily sounded out the words were simply skipped. No attempts were made to try and use the context to help decode unknown words. Thad was the only one who attempted to use any decoding strategies. By using the initial sound of an unknown word he would substitute words which began with the same sound. Rarely did these words ever make sense, nor did he make any attempt to correct his substitutions, but

this indicated a strategy beyond just skipping words. Due to their inability to quickly decode new words, each of the boys felt that a "good reader" was someone who could read words quickly and someone who read "real" books by choice rather than by assignment.

Because of their struggle with decoding skills these students relied heavily on their listening and speaking abilities rather than their reading and writing skills. Given these individual needs and attitudes, adaptations were made to ensure that these students could be successful. The daily schedule revolved around opportunities to gain information and experience about topics being studied through listening and discussing stories and articles read aloud by the teacher and/or other students. These group discussion times allowed all the students opportunities to hear reading modeled by the instructor, to experience the literature intrinsically, and then participate with their peers and/or the instructor in discussing how these experiences affected them. Through the social interaction of the groups the students were given time to interact in Vygotsky's (1976) optimal "zone of proximal development". Both students and instructor participated in a cooperative sharing of knowledge and experience all within the context of mutual respect and support.

Further adaptations, or scaffolding, within this program were made to ensure success. The intent of these "scaffoldings" initially were designed to help the three boys involved in this study but in reality benefited all of the students to some degree. To encourage student involvement, students were offered choices through novel selections, reading group or partners, and choice of extension projects. Books were chosen based on current thematic units which generally revolved around a social studies theme dealing with other cultures. The vocabulary within the books ranged between a fourth and seventh grade level. The three learning disabled students chose from the same books as their classroom peers. To ensure that they could participate in this activity in spite of their inability to decode well, several adjustments were made. The first was to allow these

students reading partners who were proficient decoders to read aloud with them. Second these students met in smaller groups to read aloud with peers or with an adult. Each child was required to make some attempt at reading the books but had the support of others to guide and help. Finally the students were allowed to listen to the stories on a tape recorder. Often more than one, if not all of these adaptations were used by each of the students in this study, as well as others in the class, prior to discussion. These adaptations allowed students the ability to experience the stories through a variety of means so they could participate more meaningfully in the discussions.

Student Participation

Because of my dual role as both instructor and investigator I knew that student participation in this study would not be a question. However, to what extent and how that participation would happen, became the focus of the second research question. The context of this program and the philosophy of the instructor that learning is a dynamic process in which students learn by interacting with the environment and people around them, allowed for a broad range of observations which reflected these students' involvement in the process of making meaning from printed materials.

Most of the observations and data collected to determine the extent of participation in this program came from teacher anecdotal records and the types of dialogue found in the transcripts of specific literature discussions. The analysis of these sources revealed that these students were involved with the text, that they interacted with one another, and made many personal connections which allowed them to further extend their understanding and comprehension of the stories.

Each of the students in this study were generally enthusiastic and willing to read the stories and participate in adaptation activities which helped prepare them for discussion times. This preparatory time prior to discussion was crucial to how much, and how well,

these three students could and would talk about the text. When given the time to prepare each student contributed his share to the discussion in creating meaning which accurately went with the text. It became obvious when one student had not prepared because his verbal comments either did not relate to the text or simply reiterated what another member had already said rather than sharing any new insights. However, as each student was motivated as a group participant this type of behavior became less common.

During the study I became concerned with the effect that the regular education students might have on the learning disabled students participation in this study. Would their presence intimidate or hinder their discussions in any way? In order to determine if there was any effect six taped transcripts of specific discussions, three with just the learning disabled students and the instructor and three with the learning disabled students, instructor, and classroom peers were transcribed and analyzed. The patterns which emerged from both the transcripts and anecdotal records showed that the learning disabled students had not been intimidated by their peers. Rather, their enthusiasm to talk would have dominated the discussions if the other students were not specifically asked for their opinions and thoughts by the instructor.

The type of talk that was generated in the literature discussion groups, however, was affected by the amount that was read prior to discussion. If a short story or a whole book was read in its entirety, comments often began with "I liked..." statements before moving into any analysis of what was in the story itself. When the discussions were a continuation of a story, as in discussing chapters from the novels, the talk focused more on retelling events followed by predictions as to what would happen next in the story.

During all of the discussions, Jeff was the quietest. He would, unless specifically asked, let the other group members start the discussions. He often entered the conversations by simply stating what he thought happened in the stories and was reluctant

to be drawn into the stories any further. Personal feelings and stories were often difficult for Jeff to share voluntarily. However, he became more verbal and willing to share his thoughts and feelings when the stories being discussed involved animals.

When Thad prepared prior to a discussion he was often the group leader. However, his idea of leadership meant that he dominated the conversations. He would try and tell entire stories and his interpretations without letting anyone else talk. He would frequently inject comments which were gory or inappropriate in his interpretations to gain group reactions. Because of these types of behaviors, and to ensure that every student was given equal discussion time, the instructor specifically directed the discussions. Thad was given his share of time to talk but was not allowed to dominate. His comments were then appropriate and insightful to the text being discussed. When Thad had not prepared for a discussion his behaviors followed similar patterns except he was not the first to discuss. Instead he would often wait for other comments to be made and would then try and make sense of what he hadn't read by making comments of agreement or simply retell what the previous student had just said. His personal stories, during discussions when he had not prepared, were often unrelated and aimed more at gaining reaction from the group than at any real connection to the stories read.

Chris was a group member whose participation often held deep insights despite his inability to independently read much of what was discussed. He listened carefully to all group comments and then offered his own interpretations. He was willing to risk opposing views if he thought the text supported them and was willing to change his own interpretations if other comments justified it. Chris made many connections between the stories and his own life and willingly shared them with the groups. Two important pre-discussion techniques seemed to help Chris discuss more deeply. The first was being allowed to listen the chapters or stories either on tape or read aloud. The other was to

partner him with a student which he thought was a "good" reader. This partnering motivated him to attempt reading some of the stories on his own and gave him the support he needed when he couldn't read all of them.

For the three students in this study, as well as the entire class, participation in the meaning making process was as much a group effort as an individual one. Each student had to prepare individually in whatever means best suited their individual needs as well as discuss and present their conclusions and interpretations. To not be part of this process meant that an individual student could not be part of the group. The group dynamics thus helped members, including the learning disabled, of the class participate in the process to critically create and extend meaning to and from the stories.

Creating Meaning: Language Patterns

In order to determine how, and if, the students in this study could critically create meaning from the readings they were involved with, a series of discussions were taped and transcribed. From the analysis of these tapes recurring patterns emerged supporting the use of specific strategies which the students were using to create meaning. All of the readings and discussions used in this study were conducted from what Rosenblatt (1937, 1978) calls the "aesthetic stance". Students were allowed the time and means to read and prepare before discussions paying specific attention to their own feelings and experiences as they read. These reactions, along with the text, then became the basis for the discussions.

From the transcripts five major categories emerged reflecting patterns and strategies used to critically created meaning. The categories included Literal Retellings, Character Development, Story Elements, Inference, Intertextuality: Literature Connections, and Intertextuality: Personal Connections. These categories are neither hierarchical nor linear but are descriptive in nature. For discussion purposes each category will be addressed individually.

Literal Retellings:

Throughout this study all three learning disabled students consistently were able to retell the events of the stories they read. However, their Retellings were greatly affected by the amount of time, or lack of time, given to read and/or listen to a text prior to discussion. These adaptations, giving more time to read and allowing time to listen to the stories either through a tape recording or through a partner reading to them, were crucial for these particular students. Without it they would often choose silence while other group members worked to recreate the events in meaningful patterns. With it, however, they were enthusiastic in their sharing of the literal events in the stories. This enthusiasm did not appear to be diminished by the presence of the regular education students involved in the discussions.

Character Development:

Character development in stories is defined by the actions and reactions of the individual characters as a story plot unfolds itself. In order to determine what the characters were like in each of the stories the students consistently used what the characters were feeling as a means of understanding individual actions and personalities. The strongest emotional connection they identified with in the characters were those of being happy or sad. Identification of events in the story which caused these emotions in the characters helped the students understand specific character traits which defined what kind of a characters were in the stories. Following are examples taken directly from discussions when the students were analyzing characters. However, when reading these examples it must be kept in mind that they are only a part of the discussions as a whole and have been some what artificially removed in order to identify specific instances of character development. These character traits, and their identification of them, were a vital step in

creating meaning which later impacted the choice of personal connections that each student chose to share as a result of reading the stories.

After reading the story *Slower Than the Rest* (Rylant, 1985) the student's identified the main characters feelings of being sad as a result of his "slowness" in his school work. Their discussion looked at why the character was sad and what he did to make himself feel better. Through the comments of all three students the character emerged as a boy who felt bad about himself in the beginning of the story but ended up finding self worth through his non-traditional methods of presenting himself to his classmates. The students' own understanding of the character slowly changed as they examined what the character did and how those actions affected his feelings about himself.

In the story *Safe*, (Rylant, 1985) again the use of the character's emotion was the strongest means by which he was defined. The students, when discussing this story, had misinterpreted Nuclear Freeze to mean Nuclear War. Yet despite this misunderstanding the fear that the character had at any mention of the word "Nuclear" was very clear. All three students were able to identify with this character's feelings of fear and shared personal times when they had experienced similar fears in their own lives.

In the story *Stray* (Rylant, 1985) the students identified with the main character through her feelings of loneliness at being an only child and her longings and desires to have a pet. They saw the parents not as cruel because they wouldn't let the girl have a pet but rather practical because they couldn't afford it. In the end, however, the concluding trait of the parents proved to be one of caring for their daughter as they kept the dog in spite of their economic reasoning. The emotions of the young girl in this story touched each student personally as each shared similar experiences or feelings relating to having, or not having, a pet. As each personal story was shared, deeper connections were made between

the story and real life as each student's personal story extended their own experience to the lives of the other group members.

In all the stories mentioned above all three students were able to identify character traits which were vital aspects in comprehending each story. Without these understandings and personal connections to the characters themselves, the stories would have had far less meaning for these students.

Story Elements:

Traditionally in basalized reading programs story "elements" have been taught in isolation with the assumption that comprehension only occurred after these skills were mastered. The transcripts in this study, however, show that these students understood these elements without prior teaching. Rather than a separate event from the books these elements were a natural and necessary part of each discussion which helped create meaning for each child. The story elements which clearly emerged out of the students' dialogue in this study were directly linked to both the strategies of retelling and character development.

Through the retellings the students were able to identify the time, settings, and plots of the stories. Identifying time often included comments about the season of the year the story was set or whether or not a character was in school. Time passage was also identified through seasons or events that happened one after another showing time had moved. The settings and plots were discussed in terms of where a character was and the effect these surroundings had upon both the character(s) and the story as a whole.

The tone, tension, and suspense of a story often revolved around discussions of what the main characters were feeling. Each student not only discussed the feelings of the fictional characters but also related similar experiences or feelings they had that created powerful connections for these students in understanding the intent of each story. Through

their own personal feelings and connections to the stories, the students began to identify an authors use of tension and suspense which held their interest until each story was read.

Inference:

Evidence that predictions were made and conclusions were drawn was one of the more dominate strategies these students used to help create meaning. During pre-reading discussions all three students used the titles and any available pictures to make predictions about the stories. During the reading of the stories they would make predictions and then adjust them based on new revelations in the stories themselves. These predictions were then either completely answered or changed at the end of the stories based on the information which emerged from the text itself and discussions that followed. The students consistently made predictions, adjusted them, and drew conclusions whether the story was a short one read in it's entirety or a longer book read chapter by chapter. The inclusion of their non-labeled peers during the readings and discussions appeared to have no effect, either negatively or positively on their abilities to predict and conclude.

Intertextuality: Literature Connections:

When a learner is confronted with new information it is only natural that a variety of strategies be used to create meaning. When a reader uses similarities from a story previously read to help create meaning in a new story, he/she has made a literature connection. Although making literary connections was not a strong strategy used by the students in this study, an interesting pattern did emerge. First, it must be reiterated that these students were not independent readers by choice. Thus it was not surprising to find that the few times they did use this strategy the references came from other books or stories we had read in class during the school year. Their ability to make any connection to stories beyond our classroom were nonexistent. However, the references made to other stories

did show a level of comprehension and use of a strategy which the students chose to help them make sense of the new stories. The further into the school year, and the more stories these students were exposed to, the more background experience they had in which to make these kinds of comparisons.

Intertextuality: Personal Connections:

Since reading was not a reality for these students beyond our classroom, their own lives and experiences became the strongest strategy, and base from which to draw and create meaning and understanding to the stories they read. During their discussions these students were encouraged to first share their "lived through" aesthetic responses (Rosenblatt, 1978) with each other. By doing this the reading event itself became another experience by which these students could collaborate and create meaning through the feelings and experiences that the stories evoked in each student. As a group, and individually, they were able to share these feelings and real life events to help create meaning in the stories they read.

A strong strategy used consistently by these students was their connections to the emotional state of the main characters. By experiencing the character's emotions vicariously the students were able to share personal stories from their own lives and emotional states. Through the sharing of these experiences each student was able to see the stories from a variety of perspectives which in turn evoked even further experiences and connections; all contributing to the creation of deeper meanings. These real life connections gave these students a method by which they could contribute to the discussions even if they did not understand a story completely. Often one personal story would be the catalyst for another thus allowing each student the opportunities to connect with the stories and with each other as well.

One particularly strong connection these students made between the stories and their own lives were ones which involved an animal. Each student had experienced animals as pets at some point in their lives and all had related feelings and experiences as the characters in the stories. They were able to make connections which were very real and sometimes very painful to their own lives. Both Thad and Chris identified strongly with feelings of fulfillment and companionship when discussing similar experiences they had had with an animal. Jeff, however, related more to feelings of anxiety and loneliness at the lack of a pet.

These students also focused on times when the characters were going through difficult times both physically and emotionally. During these discussions each student shared times of anxiety, fear, and loneliness they had experienced which were similar to what they thought the characters in the books were experiencing. These personal stories became a powerful tool in helping each student make connections from their personal lives with that of the fictional characters and events found in the stories.

Conclusion to Creating Meaning: Language Patterns

When examining the dialogue created by the students in this study it is important that the meaning making process be looked at as a whole as well as in part. For analytical purposes the dialogue in this study was categorized into specific instances of strategies employed by the students in order to understand what, and how, these strategies were being used. From these examples it is clear that the three learning disabled students were able to use specific strategies which helped them individually and collectively create meaning. Their discussions included all of the traditional elements of literature as well as their own personal interpretations, response, and related experiences. A question that surfaced early in the study was whether or not these three students' responses would be affected if their classroom peers were a part of their discussion groups and if so, then how.

The effect proved to be very positive. Rather than becoming withdrawn and intimidated, these students were even more motivated to verbally participate and share their feelings and understandings. Their talk was consistently purposeful and meaningful, and demonstrated a deeper understanding of what they had read than their written abilities alone portrayed.

The only consistent difference that could be seen in the transcripts themselves related directly to whether or not the discussion was about a story read in its entirety or a few chapters out of a whole book. In the case of chapters the students comments were often short and limited to retelling the events of the stories. Any personal feelings they were having as a result of reading those chapters often came only after a direct question was asked by the instructor. However, when a complete story was being discussed the students' reactions were much longer. Their initial comments during these discussions focused more on their own personal reactions to the story and elements and were much longer in content.

Creating Meaning: Extensions and Follow-up Assignments:

The final question in this study looked at the choice of projects the students chose to extend their understandings of the stories. Traditional methods of evaluation, as a general rule, consisted of paper and pencil tests in which students are expected to pass with some proficiency. How well the student answered these questions determined their level of comprehension of a specific story or subject. This reading program, however, allowed the students the opportunity to use a variety of sign systems beyond written communication in which to express their understandings of the stories. From the projects collected and observations recorded several patterns emerged reflecting individual student's abilities and understandings. Each student will be discussed individually.

Consistent observations and experiences throughout the entire school year proved that written communication was not a strength for Jeff. When asked to put into written

words any thoughts or answers he might have, Jeff became so emotional that he literally could not write a single word. As a result the alternative methods by which he chose to express his ideas and understandings became vital indicators in the evaluation of what Jeff was truly learning. His choice of expression came in the form of pictures. He would re-create the events in the stories by drawing pictures. Using these pictures he would then freely share and discuss with the class what he had drawn and why he thought those particular events were important to the stories as a whole. His pictures were accurate and precise accounts of not only the literal events of the stories, but also the emotions and thoughts of the characters involved in the stories as well. He enjoyed doing these pictures by himself and preferred to be alone rather than in a group. Later in the school year Jeff adapted this method of drawing pictures to help him study for tests which dealt with non-fictional information. He would draw a picture of a historical event or a scientific fact which in turn helped him correctly answer questions on paper and pencil tests. For Jeff, being able to draw was a crucial strategy which helped him express what he was thinking and learning; a strategy which might never have surfaced if dialogue and written communication were the only forms of assessment in this reading program.

Thad's choice of extension projects always included other students from the class. As a group member he tended to follow other group member's ideas rather than initiating any unique thoughts of his own. His participation, however, was done willingly and with enthusiasm. His first project was to help create a mural drawing of the major events in the story. He helped draw the beginning events and then told the class about it. His second project was to sing a rap which other members in his group had written. Although involved in these and other activities his participation within the group was not a clear indication of what Thad had personally learned. Thad was, however, able to express himself in writing better than the other two students involved in this study. His written

reflections and answers to specific questions about the stories were a better reflection of Thad's own thoughts and learnings than his involvement in the extension projects.

When Chris began this school year, both his decoding and writing skills were considerably lower than those expected from a student in the fifth grade. As a result he had learned to compensate by using his listening skills and his abilities to draw. He used these strengths to help him choose extension projects which specifically met his needs and accurately reflected what he had learned. The first project Chris was involved in was the creation of a mural to the story his group had read. As a group member he helped decide what the key parts of the story were. The group then relied on his expertise in drawing to create the scenes while they colored and decorated. The second project involved Chris and one other student. They designed a game, complete with questions and answers, to go with the story *In the House of Sixty Fathers* (DeJong, 1959). To begin, Chris and the other student determined all the events and feelings of the characters that they thought were important to the story as a whole. They then collaborated on creating questions and answers. The other student then wrote the words on the cards while Chris drew the pictures on the game board. They worked very well as a team drawing on each other's strengths. Their final product was a question and answer game which depicted all aspects of the story. Although Chris' written abilities, like Jeff, were limited, he too was able to express his understanding and comprehension of the stories by using alternative methods of evaluation.

Implications

Learning Disabled students, by definition, are students who have average intelligence but who are failing in one or more subjects in school. The assumption and approach to teaching these children has long been one of removing them from the regular classroom into resource settings where they could be taught using alternative methods.

However, in this study three learning disabled students were not removed from the regular classroom, but rather participated in a literature based reading program which allowed them to read and participate along with their regular classroom peers. The overriding question throughout this study was how these students would participate and what adaptations would be necessary for them to be successful. The results provide data supporting a growing body of research which indicates that learning disabled students can function successfully within such programs (Englert, in press; Mather, 1992; Goatley, 1991; Gilles, 1990) when appropriate adaptations are made to insure individual student success. Although the findings in this study are context-dependent it is reasonable to propose that generalizations can be drawn for future programs containing both learning disabled and regular education students.

The instructional approach in this study supported a sociocultural perspective as primarily presented in Vygotsky's (1978) work. Vygotsky contends that the community within which one functions greatly influences behaviors and thought patterns. Students, regardless of academic abilities, as well as teachers, in this study were seen as vital components in the process of creating a community of learners (Short, 1991) whose primary goal was that of critically creating meaning. Within this community learning is seen as the interaction which occurs with others in meaningful and holistic situations. Literacy tasks were approached through collaborative efforts that built on learners' past experiences while trying to make sense of new ones.

Another underlying assumption contained in this program was that all students could, and would, succeed within their own zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This study, as well as Englert (in press) indicates that learning disabled students are capable of negotiating and creating meaning along with their regular classroom peers when appropriate adaptations are made for individual learning styles. These adaptations

however, need not be separate measures taken for a few but rather can be a natural part of the program that allows for all students to be a part of the meaning making process. Following are the adaptations and aspects of this program that I feel were essential to making this literature program a success with both my regular and special education students.

Literature Rich Environments

The role and support of literature in this program can not be overemphasized; however, the encounter students have with literature must go well beyond the time which teachers have traditionally allotted for reading instruction. The instructional program in this study was embedded within thematic units. Through these themes, students were exposed to literature and information across curriculum rather than one specific subject and time. The chapter books read by these students, which are the primary focus of this study, were only one part of this information gathering system. Students were read to aloud from picture books daily as well as exploring science and social studies text which helped them gain a wide background from both fiction and non-fiction materials. Over time, this type of instruction gave the students the connections and language from which they could draw to help comprehend new stories and information.

Other key aspects of this program were the opportunities students had to support and validate each other's abilities and contributions. Through the use of reading partners, tape recordings, and supportive small groups the students were given opportunities to interact with their peers as they asked questions of each other and supported one another in their search to understand. By making use of these alternatives, or adaptations, the students who struggled with decoding problems were able to focus more on their own aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1978) response to the stories. As a result students were valued

regardless of reading proficiency because they each brought their own experience and reactions to the group discussions.

The literature discussion groups in my class did not emerge overnight. Rather the students needed extended opportunities, as well as instruction, in both what and how to share. Studies indicate that this is true with groups whether they are made up of either learning disabled students or a group of regular education students (Goatley, 1991; and McMahon, 1991). Since most of the students initially lacked the language skills necessary to express themselves, my involvement in the discussions provided a scaffolding in which the students were able to develop a language and structure by which they could express their ideas. Englert (in press) found that as teachers discussed and collaboratively constructed meaning with their students using similar scaffolding methods that the discourse and concepts eventually became those of the students and not just the teachers. Over time the students in this study learned to listen, respect, and even debate other opinions and insights based on the text they were reading. Over time the student's language began to reflect intertextual connections to other stories read and discussed in class. They also used other students' personal reactions and comments as spring boards from which new connections were made. The chapter books used, due to their length, provided long periods of time and text for the literature groups to repeatedly encounter and explore characters and plots. The groups learned to negotiate what they thought was occurring in the stories and grapple with questions which emerged during the readings.

Another key aspect of this program was the successful results found by using an alternative evaluation system. Traditional evaluation procedures have typically been limited to written expression. However, in a literature program that utilizes dialogue as a critical aspect in the meaning making process, we must make use of the specific language and interactions which occur in the discussion groups as an alternative to evaluating student

comprehension. Embedded in the the dialogue patterns of the three students in this study were the strategies that allowed them to consistently create meaning. By using the student's own language the evaluation process became learner-referenced rather than norm-referenced or criterion-referenced (Watson, 1991). Evaluation was based on the process as well as the product of each student's own abilities.

Further evaluation of the students in this study included their choice of an extension project. Initially ideas were given to the students to choose from which included, but were not limited to, drawings, readers theater, creation of original plays based on scenes or concepts of the stories, creation of songs, dioramas, murals, re-write of endings etc. The only normative part of these projects were that they had to represent what the creator felt was the main idea(s) of the story. These projects offered valuable and unique opportunities to evaluate students' comprehension of the stories they read. For the learning disabled students in this study, who all struggled with writing as a means of communication, this evaluation system proved invaluable as they utilized their strengths in oral and pictorial presentations. As educators we must be willing to look for alternative ways for these students, as well as other's in our classrooms who are struggling to express themselves, to find means of communication that fit the individual learner and not just what is easy for the instructor. Additionally, special education instructors will need to address the formal, standardized testing procedures that currently support behavioral or information-processing models of instruction rather than the social bases of learning that this and future literature programs will be based on.

A final implication which emerged from this study is the role of the special education resource pull out programs versus mainstreaming these students full time into the regular classroom. In this study the learning disabled students, with the help of scaffold instruction and alternative means by which to encounter text, were successful and felt

empowered in their own abilities to learn. Socially they were accepted as equals and given every opportunity that their non-labeled peers were. Mather's (1992) also concluded that:

"students with sever learning disabilities may learn to read in a whole language, mainstream classroom, as long as appropriate, supplemental instruction is provided, a variety of instructional techniques are employed, and the intensity and duration of the services are based upon the individual's needs."

However, the realities of our classrooms and the ever increasing ratio of students to teacher makes individual instructional time almost non-existent. Of the three students in this program the one affected the most by this reality was Chris, who entered my classroom and this program barely able independently read or write two and three letter words. His severe need for remedial decoding and writing skills made it essential that he get one-on-one instruction. Because of the demands of other students and curriculum instruction these severe needs can not be met by the regular classroom teacher alone. It is in these cases, where severe needs demand specialized attention, that the pull out resource programs or regular instruction that incorporates the physical presence of a resource teacher within the instructional period of the day, will have their strongest impact. Chris, and other students like him, can participate fully in the classroom programs which provide for their special needs but will still need specialized time and attention outside the classroom in order to remediate specific areas of need. We must begin to recognize that learning disabled students are much more capable of learning in the regular classroom when we accommodate for them but we must also recognize when such programs can be enhanced by traditional remedial pull out programs.

APPENDIX A
Sample Student Questionnaire

1. (Give the student a novel) What do you think this story is about? Why do you think this is what the story is about?
2. What kinds of books do you like to read? Why?
3. (Give the student a Social Studies book along with the novel) If I gave you the choice to read either of these books which one would you choose? Why? When would you choose the other book? Why?
4. Can you remember how you first learned to read?
5. Who is a good reader that you know? What makes _____ a good reader?
6. When you are reading and you come to a word you don't know what do you usually do?
7. When you are reading and part of the story doesn't make sense to you what do you do?
8. Do you think _____ ever comes to something he/she doesn't know when they are reading? What do you think _____ does about it?
9. If a new student came to our class and they were having difficulty reading a word how would you help them? Is there any other way you might help them?
10. What if this new student just wasn't understanding the story what could you tell them to do?
11. Can you think of a story or book that you have read before this school year that you really liked? Why did you like it? Did you ever tell any of your friends about it? What did you say?
12. Your best friend has just finished reading a book and told you you ought to read it. What kinds of things might you ask your friend?

APPENDIX B
Literature Group Discussion Sample

First Student/Teacher Short Story Reading
November 26, 1991

Teacher: (T)
Students: Jeff (J), Thad (TH), and Chris (C)

Story: *Slower than the Rest*
By Cynthia Rylant

T: O.k. I want you to look at the story and tell me what you think this story is going to be about.

J: A turtle that crosses the street.

C: Probably a slow turtle.

TH: A turtle that probably rests every seconds when he walks.

T: O.k.

J: A turtle that probably tries to rest but can't.

T: Let's start reading it and then we'll go on and do some questions at the end.

(Read story in round robin fashion with teacher assisting with unknown words. Chris had to be assisted with almost every word he attempted to read. Jeff read more fluently but needed to be assisted on the average 1-2 words per sentence.)

1st Discussion

T: O.k. What's happened so far in the story?

J: He found a turtle and he feels happy about it.

TH: The turtle stuck out his head and looked at the girl and she said it's an ugly face.

T: What else? Chris?

C: I don't know.

T: Has he ever had a pet before?

C: No.

T: Does his family have pets?

C: His father don't like it but his mother does.

T: O.k. Why do you think his mother does?

C: I guess she cares for animals.

T: O.k.

(Due to limited time the teacher reads the rest of the story aloud to the students as they follow along using fingers to track words the teacher is reading. The teacher periodically leaves words out that the students fill in to try and maintain student's attention. This was a known procedure that the students were familiar with from experiences in the regular classroom.)

...Put Charlie down and he would sniff at the air in a minute then take off as if no one had ever told him how slow he was to be.

T: How is Leo feeling right now?

J: Happy.

C: Happy.

TH: Happy that he found the turtle.

T: O.k. How was he feeling before? Chris?

C: Sad.

T: Why?

C: He's never had a pet before.

T: O.k. What happened to him at school?

C: He's really slow at everything and that they separated him from all of his other classmates and put him into a different room where all the other kids are slow like him.

T: O.k. How did that make him feel? Or how do you think it made him feel?

C: I'd be mad.

T: O.k. How else do you think he felt? Jeff?

J: What?

T: How else do you think he was feeling?

J: Umm like happy that he got the turtle and also that he

T: What was he feeling before that?

J: Huh?

T: How was he feeling before he got the turtle?

J: Sad cause he never did have a pet or anything.

T: O.k. What about what happened at school?

J: That he got separated from his class into another class cause...

TH: Cause he's slow.

J: Yeah, cause he's to slow then the other people.

T: O.k. And how is he relating to his turtle right now? Or is he?

J: Very easily.

T: How, I mean what do you mean very easily?

J: (Shrugs his shoulders in a negative fashion)

T: O.k. Well lets go on and we'll see. O.k.

(Teacher continues to read the story)

...He rarely hissed in the morning. He was a turtle who liked to sleep in.

T: Why do you think he doesn't want anybody to know?

TH: So nobody will say ahhh he's a turtle and start screaming.

T: Ok. Why else?

C: Because like when someone brings a pet to school it might be taken away or your parents might be called and you'd get in a lot of trouble and stuff like that.

TH: And your not aloud to have pets on the bus.

T: Your not allowed to have pets on the bus?

J: Yeah, if you have them covered up you, like in a box.

TH: Only in a cage.

J: Or in a box.

TH: Uhuh in a cage, they said in a cage.

T: O.k. Let's keep going.

(Teacher continues to read the story)

...Leo sat with his box and wondered if he should laugh at the dancers with everyone else. He didn't feel like it.

T: Why do you think he doesn't feel like it?

TH: He don't really like people making fun of forest fires. He don't like squirrels and their talking about forest fires.

T: O.k.

J: And the squirrels can run fast and get away and they just leave the turtles there and just don't help them.

T: O.k. What do you think Chris?

C: It's like if they throw something into a rat hole or snake hole or something they have no way to get out.

T: O.k.

C: Their stuck there whether their fast or not fast.

T: O.k. So he's thinking of the animals?

TH: And if there's ants or something the anteaters eat them.

T: O.k. What do you think is going to happen next in this story?

C: There might be a forest fire or something like that.

T: O.k.

TH: There might be a fire drill.

T: O.k. (laughing) there might be a fire drill.

TH: They might tell people to go out into the forest when there is a forest fire and help the animals.

T: O.k. Let's see what happens.

(Teacher continues to read aloud)

...For the first time in his life Leo felt fast.

T: What do you feel right now?

TH: That it's bad. That it's cool because he's fast now and he's not slow no more and he got an award for fastest.

J: He's just real happy, your real happy cause he's fast.

TH: When they told him to go on the stage he was moving fast.

T: O.k. What else? Chris?

J: You know what they were talking about "Leo it's you" What?

C: Yeah he was like day dreaming or something like that.

T: Where does this story take place?

TH: At school.

C: On the highway and then at the street then it's at his house

TH: His house and then it's at school.

T: O.k.

C: It takes place in like in four or five different places.

T: O.k. (deals with Jeff wanting to go out to the bathroom)

C: First their riding down the highway and he sees a turtle.

TH: And the second time their at the road and then at his house.

C: Yeah at his house.

TH: Then at the school then at his house.

T: What problem does the author start the story off with? What's the problem they start with?

J: He's just real real slow and he's bored to death.

T: O.k. How does the author create suspense or make you want to keep reading?

TH: It gets exciting.

C: Well like its exciting...

J: And it makes you want to know what's going to happen in the story.

T: Can you think of anything specific that the author did to do that?

J: No.

C: He made it all slow and then at the end you wanted to see if he was slow again or fast or something like that.

J: So we had the totally wrong idea on the tag (title) because we thought he was slow then fast.

T: So something to do with slower than the rest, something with resting?

J: Yeah.

T: O.k.

TH: Oh, he was slow then rested then slow.

C: Then also he got fast at the end.

J: I got three turtles.

T: O.k. If you had written the story would you have changed anything in it?

J, C, & TH: Humm..yeah.

T: What would you have changed?

C: I'd change Luis' name.

J: Leo's

T: You don't like the name Leo?

C: No. Like if I was writing the story I put a name like...

TH: Chris.

C: ...or a name I like or something. And like if there is a better name I'd put that in.

TH: I'd change the reward for him that he would have to go up and tell everybody like in the school.

T: Like what he told in the class?

TH: Yeah. And then he would get the award.

T: How about you Jeff? Would you change anything?

J: I was thinking that he would go on fire...

C: Like a fire station.

J: ..Yeah like a fire station and go there like when there is a forest fire and see how it is just to sit on the thing and see how it is and catch all the turtles as they are running out.

T: And catch all the turtles as their running out? I don't think they would be running to fast.

TH: The ants.

T: O.k. Did the story end the way you thought it would?

TH: Yes. About that I thought Leo was going to go faster because of the reward.

C: I thought that the turtle was the slow person and that ...

TH: Leo was the fast.

C:...Yeah at first that's what I thought then I started getting the hang of it that it was the other way around and I thought they were both going to start going fast.

T: That they would both go fast?

TH: They both are.

C: That Leo would go fast and so would the turtle.

TH: Yeap. Leo's fast and the turtle's fast. Because Charlie's the one who taught him how to go fast. Cause when he was going fast he went like Charlie.

T: O.k. Chris what were you going to say?

C: That like if the turtle was fast when he got out of the fire if there was a forest fire the turtle could get out but he said that the turtle was fast then when he took it into the classroom there are some animals that are so slow.

T: But when was the turtle fast? What was he doing with the turtle when he looked like he was fast?

(Silence)

T: Remember it said when he would pick him up and his legs would go real fast.

J: O yeah. That's how he's fast.

T: And then he would put him down and then he was slow.

C: All this weight he would have to wobble around like that (gestures with his hand).

T: Right. So if he still goes slow but when you pick him up it looks like his legs are going real fast cause they are waving in the air like that.

J: And he was running in the air.

T: O.k. What kind of a person was Leo?

TH: Like a turtle.

T: Not the turtle the kid.

C: He was ten years old.

J: He was a boy.

TH: He was like Alan, he liked animals. (Alan is the main character in "Stormy" the novel Thad is reading in class). He cared for them and all that.

C: And his father didn't care for them but his mom like did.

TH: His mom and his sister did.

J: And his two sisters screamed at him.

T: O.k. We know that he liked animals but does that tell us what kind of a person he is?

All: Yeah. A little.

T: What does that tell us?

C: That he likes them and that he must take care of them.

J: That he likes to take care of em.

T: O.k. Does it just tell us about animals?

TH: No.

C: It tells us about forest fires.

T: But what does it tell us about him, about Leo the person? Do we know anything else about him?

TH: I don't.

T: Caring for animals is that the only thing we know about him?

C: No. He goes to school. He use to be slow but now he's fast and everything. I guess the way he is going to school he must like school.

T: How does he change in the story? Does he change?

All: Yeah.

J: He goes slow to fast.

T: Does he?

J: Yeah.

TH: Yeah. It said at the end and Leo felt fast oh and he felt fast.

C: Yeah.

T: O.k. What was he how did he change what was he at the beginning of the story?

All: Slow. Real slow.

TH: At work and all that.

C: He's going to be put in a different room because he is so slow at the end like he felt fast he it leaves you hanging like it might he like starts to catch up and gets ready and starts to go a little faster then he use to.

T: Does the story tell us that his school work gets fast in the end?

All: No.

J: He gets fast.

T: So what really changes in this character?

J: He learned more faster.

T: Does it? Does it tell us that?

J: That he feels better?

T: That he feels better. O.K. So his feelings inside are what change. O.k.

TH: Where does the story take place at. The story takes place in the city doesn't it?

T: Yes. Were there any other characters? (Thad I need you to sit down and not be hanging on top of that. Thank you) Were there any other characters in the story that weren't so important?

TH: Yeah. His sisters, and mom and dad.

T: Ok. They were all at the beginning of the story. Go ahead.

J: And that kid that pushed him saying "it's you, go on".

C: The principal ain't really important but he's in there.

T: But he's in there, sure he is, he's another character.

C: He's important a little but not a lot.

J: Charlie.

C: Without a principal there ain't a school you always have to have a principal.

T: There's one more person in the story. (Silence) Who was in his class?

C: The teacher.

J: Oh yeah. I thought it was the kids.

T: O.k. Would this story have been the same if you had taken out any of those characters?

All: No.

T: O.k. Cause they all had parts. What kind of parts?

C: The kids have the part like screaming when he lifted up the lid, the principal had his part by handing him the award, and Charlie had his part by being a slow turtle and fast when he's lifted up.

TH: The teacher had the part teaching the class and crying and she had the part of waving to him.

C: And the kid had the part of telling him to get up and go get the award.

T: Oh that's right. O.k. What kind of a feeling do you get from this story. What is the mood in this whole story?

J: The mood?

TH: What kind of mood was he in?

T: Sort of.

C: He was in a bad mood at first but after he got the award he felt better when he held the turtle and stuff.

TH: Because he was slow.

C: That's what I do with my when I had my hamster and rats whenever I was feeling bad that's the only one I had to talk to cause I'd pick em out of the cage and they'd crawl all over my hand and stuff. My hair use to be long enough that they would make a nest in the back of my hair. They would just crawl up there and sit back there.

J: Remember last year when my Grandpa brought me those snakes? (asking Thad)

TH: Yeah. That was bad. His Grandpa brought him lots of snakes for our class for show-n-tell and..

J: And mice with babies.

TH: Yeah. The mice with the babies bit J.L. (another student).

T: Are those at your house Jeff? Do you have animals at home?

J: No.

T: You don't have any at home?

J: I had two birds. One died and the other flew away.

T: How did the author make you feel as you read this story?

J: Exciting what happens next.

TH: That you want to see what happens next.

J: Makes you want to read it.

TH: Makes you see what's happening in the story.

T: How did you identify it?

C: It makes you feel like you want a turtle it's like it makes you feel because then they had a turtle and it's how they felt when they were so like other people will know so they can go out and get turtles in the same way.

TH: I've got a turtle.

T: O.k.

C: I use to have a snapping turtle.

T: Jeff, how did you feel towards Leo as you read this story?

J: Hmm positive thought the end of the story.

T: O.k. Did Leo himself make you feel anything as you read it? Make you, Jeff, feel?

J: Hmm. Ahh?

T: Could you identify anything with him? Like with your life and Leo's life?

J: Bringing animals to school.

T: O.k. Because you brought them once?

J: Uhuh.

T: O.k. How about you Thad? What do you think?

C: (Chris answered) I brought my animals to school once. My rats. They couldn't be taken out of the cage because my teacher didn't want me to take no chances of gettin bit.

T: (laughs) Probably not.

C: But they never bite they just nibble.

J: We had a substitute and she didn't care. I think she likes em.

TH: Yeah, Ms. _____.

J: I thought it was Ms. _____.

TH: Yeah, it was Ms. _____.

T: Oh. Last year when this was..yeah?

TH: Yeah when Mrs. D. was gone.

T: O.k. Is Leo or any character in this story like anybody you've ever met in real life?

C: My mom. She likes animals a lot.

T: Oh. O.k. so the mother in this story is like your mother?

C: (nods yes).

TH: My brother.

T: How is your brother... who is your brother like in this story?

TH: Well like the one who likes the turtles, cause Josh when we go to the mountains that's what he looks under rocks and everything. Really big boulders and stuff.

J: Me and my grandpa we go up into the mountains and look for snakes and lizards.

C: Me and my brother have a bow and arrow set cause I like Indians and I'm part Indian and I like to make along time and I like made four or five before we moved over here and made one and _____ I can't remember what happened to it but then I made another one and that one's at home right now and before I learned how to make em to shave em we made em out of the oak stuff like and we went out into the desert one time and we were looking for rabbits and stuff to get their furs and stuff like because we could take them to

tanner and get em tacked for free because em my he's like the best friend his name is Dan he's the tanner and stuff and you can get like buffalo and bear done for free and stuff like that.

T: O.k. How is that like the story?

C: Cause like he when he when me and my brother went out like huntin for like we weren't really huntin for the snake all of a sudden this coral we walked right by this coral snake and it and we jumped acrossed it all of a sudden here it was but it felt scared because it was like when Louis (Leo) he saw the turtle he'd say you'd get scared cause you don't want to pick it up or anything she might have rabies or bite you or something like that.

J: I asked my grandpa to do that.

T: You asked your grandpa to do that?

J: Yeah. When we go down there we rent boots. And sometimes my grandpa uhm likes rattlesnakes and one time he didn't want any rattlesnakes at the time and he uhm saw this little biddy ole baby rattlesnake trying to bite at his boots cause uhm they can't bite through the boots and that's why they usually wear them.

C: I heard that baby scorpions and baby snakes aren't poisonous...

J: ...cause the poison is fresh...

TH: They they get their poison from their mom...

T: Is there anything else, think back to the story, is there anything else that this story made you think of? In your own life or anything to do with your life?

C: It made me feel like when I'm walking when I'm riding down the road I'm going to look like for a turtle or something else. He wasn't really looking for he just sat there.

J: Me and Fred we were driving down this road and every time after it rains there is a turtle that walks up and down the road. It's a snapping turtle. Me and him were riding our bikes

down the road and we seen it just walking along right there so we I picked it up and it bite me on the finger (tape ended and time ran out to tape any further).

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